Dissertation

Unequal Citizenship: Being Muslim and Canadian in the Post 9/11 Era

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Thesis Abstract
‘Unequal Citizenship: Being Muslim and Canadian in the Post 9/11 Era’
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My dissertation is the first empirically based study to closely examine the impacts of 9/11 on Canadian Muslim youth. It develops a critical analysis of how the general public supported by state practices, undermine the citizenship of Canadian Muslims, thereby impacting their identity formation. Conducting qualitative analysis, through the use of 50 in-depth interviews with Canadian Muslim men and women, aged 18 to 30, I have arrived at several important findings. These include findings related to citizenship, the racialization of gender identities and identity formation. First, despite having legal citizenship, Canadian Muslims often do not have access to substantive citizenship (the ability to exercise rights of legal citizenship), revealing the precarious nature of citizenship for minority groups in Canada. My research shows that the citizenship rights of Canadian Muslims may be undermined because they do not have access to allegiance and nationality, important facets of citizenship. Second, young Canadian Muslims are racialized and othered through increasingly stereotypical conceptions about their gender identities. Muslim men are perceived as barbaric and dangerous and Muslim women are imagined as passive and oppressed by their communities. As a result of these dominant conceptions, in their struggle against racism, young Canadian Muslims have to invest a great deal of time establishing themselves as thinking, rational, educated and peaceful persons. Third, to cope with their marginalization, many young Canadian Muslims have asserted their Muslim identities. In order to understand this social process, I extend the work done on ‘reactive ethnicity’ and theorize Muslim identity formation in a post 9/11 context, something not yet been done in academic literature. To do so, I coin the term
‘reactive identity formation,’ and illustrate that the formation of reactive identities is not limited to strengthening ethnic identity and that religious minority groups can experience a similar phenomenon. Furthermore, I find that while claiming their Muslim identity, most of my interviewees also retain their Canadian identity in order to resist the notion that they are not Canadian. By doing so, they attempt to redefine what it means to be Canadian.
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Chapter One
Introduction

I was born in Victoria, British Columbia, and grew up there during the 1980s and 1990s; it is a city that historically has been and continues to be predominantly populated with a ‘white’ British population (Schrier & Ip 1991). As the daughter of Sikh Indian immigrants, I remember experiences of racism throughout my childhood. I remember once going on a walk through my neighbourhood with my family; we were interrupted by a car full of young ‘white’ men hurling racial insults and yelling ‘get out of our country’. Another time, a simple trip to the gas station with my father was disrupted by a stranger screaming at us to ‘leave Canada’. My parents never explained why such incidents occurred. But I quickly realized that we were not always thought of as belonging to Canada and could be reminded of this at any time, leading me to question my Canadian citizenship. As a result, I began to feel ashamed of my Indian identity and avoided wearing Indian clothes or speaking Punjabi in public to conceal my Indian identity as much as I could. As the years passed, these incidents of overt discrimination began to disappear and became more of an exception than a rule. While I still faced instances of subtle discrimination, it was less acceptable for people to hurl racial insults in public in Canada.

On September 11, 2001, the world changed. As I watched the twin towers collapse, I remember feeling this was the beginning of a new era, which I now refer to as the post 9/11 era. The post 9/11 era has brought a number of significant changes.
Terrorism has become a key concern for Western nations, and countries worldwide have introduced anti-terrorist legislation. Security and surveillance practices, especially at airports and borders, have increased substantially (Helly 2004; Razack 2005; Thobani 2007). The United States has invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, claiming that these countries are fuelling terrorism directly targeted at the West. At the centre of these changes are Muslim communities which are increasingly projected as enemies to Western nations (Choudhry 2001; Macklin 2001, Helly 2004).

I personally did not realize the significant impact of the 9/11 era on Muslim lives until I moved to Toronto in 2003. Here, I made Muslim friends and witnessed Muslims facing discrimination. To my surprise, my Muslim friends told me stories of being asked to leave Canada, the stigmatization of their religion, and violent confrontations, leading me to question how prevalent this type of discrimination was in Canada among Muslim communities and the impact it was having on young Canadian Muslims. I decided to explore how the post 9/11 era was framing the experiences of young adults who were both Muslim and Canadian. Thus, in my doctoral thesis, I began a long and interesting journey that has provided rich and important insights about the lives and minds of young Canadian Muslims.

My dissertation, titled ‘Unequal Citizenship Being Muslim and Canadian in the post 9/11 era’, is the first empirically based study to closely examine how the post 9/11 era is shaping the lives of young Canadian Muslims. Through the use of personal narratives, it develops a critical analysis of what meanings dominant groups and institutions try to impose on young Canadian Muslims and how these young Muslims contest dominant conceptions by constructing alternative meanings.
In the development of this analysis, my dissertation responds to two main questions. First, what are the experiences of young Muslims in their interactions with state surveillance practices and in their daily interactions with mainstream Canadian society in the post 9/11 era? What do these experiences tell us about citizenship in Canada and the gendered and racialized processes in our society? Second, how do young Canadian Muslims negotiate their identities as Muslim and Canadians in the post 9/11 era, and how do theories of ethnic identity formation help us understand this process? Using qualitative analysis, my thesis arrives at findings related to citizenship, the racialization of gender identities, and identity formation.

First, I find that many young Muslims recall living in a hostile environment in the post 9/11 era in Canada. They perceive this harassment as challenging their citizenship as Canadians. Their interactions with state surveillances practices and mainstream Canadian society suggest to them that they are seen as potential threats, not loyal Canadian citizens. They feel their safety and security is jeopardized, they find they are victimized in public spaces, they suffer a loss of religious freedom, and their economic security is compromised. They report increased state surveillance that directly targets their Muslim identity, not only at airports and borders, but in their daily lives, suggesting to them that Canadian citizenship may not hold the same value for them as for others.

Second, young Canadian Muslims are racialized and increasingly othered through stereotypical conceptions about their gender identities. While Muslim men are perceived as barbaric and dangerous, Muslim women are imagined as passive, and oppressed by their communities. This racialization of gender identity has an impact on how they are treated by other Canadians and on how they experience surveillance. As a result of these
dominant conceptions, young Canadian Muslims invest a great deal of time establishing themselves as thinking, rational, educated, and peaceful persons.

Third, such experiences have an impact on young Canadian Muslims’ identity formation as Muslims and as Canadians. To cope with the stigmatization of their religion and in a bid to reclaim Islam, many young Muslims assert their Muslim identities. To understand this social process, I extend Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) work on ‘reactive ethnicity’ and theorize Muslim identity formation in a post 9/11 context, something not yet been done in academic literature. I find that while claiming their Muslim identity, most of my interviewees also retain their Canadian identity in order to resist the notion that they are not Canadian. In doing so they reshape what it means to be Canadian. Defining Canadian identity through multiculturalism and believing that Canada is more favourable to Muslim communities than other Western nations allow them to retain a strong sense of being Canadian in the post 9/11 era.

**Muslims in the Canadian Context**

This thesis uses a sample of well-educated young Canadian Muslims as a case study to understand how the post 9/11 era is shaping their lives. Canada has a growing and diverse Muslim population. The earliest record of Muslim presence dates back to 1871, when the Canadian census recorded 13 Muslim respondents (Yousif 1953). Since then, the number has increased tremendously, largely due to political and economic unrest in many Muslim countries (Abhu-Laban 1983). The Canadian Muslim community, for the most part, is a product of two waves of immigration – one pre- and the other post-World War Two, with the latter wave being the larger of the two (Abhu-Laban 1983). From 1911 to 1951, the overall growth rate of the Muslim population was slow, perhaps due to restrictive
immigrant policies. At the mid-point of this period, in 1931, there were only 645 Muslim residents in Canada, most from a Syrian and Lebanese background (Abhu-Laban 1983).

The major influx of immigrants came to Canada after the Second World War, mostly during the 1960s. Five factors influenced the immigration of Muslims during this period: economic advantages, educational opportunities, political alienation from their ancestral lands, the pull of kin and friends already in the country, and the freedom of faith and expression guaranteed by Canadian law (Nimer 2002). The single most important characteristic of this post-war Muslim immigrant wave was diversity. While they shared a common religious designation, immigrants came from different parts of the Arab world, from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iran, Eastern Europe, East Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere (Abhu-Laban 1983). These Muslim immigrants also had heterogeneous educational and occupational backgrounds.

Canada presented a host of challenges for first-generation Muslim immigrants. First, since they differed from the traditional Canadian archetype on a number of variables, including language, culture, and religion, the adjustment process to Canada was not easy. They had to learn a new language and become accustomed to new social practices (Nimer 2002). Second, they did not necessarily encounter a welcoming host country. They came to Canada at a time when there was an influx of immigration from Asia (the source region for a significant number of Muslims), and many feared that this immigration would have a negative impact on Canada’s Anglo-Saxon heritage. As a result, Muslim immigrants often experienced a hostile reaction from other Canadians and were vulnerable to discrimination (Abhu-Laban 1983; Nimer 2002; Helly 2004).
Since the 1960s, the Muslim population has increased substantially, with many second-generation Muslims being born and raised in Canada (Nimer 2002). In 2001, Canada’s Muslim population numbered 579,640, with 70 percent residing in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, all major Canadian cities (Statistics Canada 2001). In 2006, the Muslim population was estimated at 783,700 (Statistics Canada 2006). Muslims now constitute the largest non-Christian religious group in Canada (Statistics Canada 2001), and demographers claim that Islam is the fastest growing religion in North America (Nimer 2002).

Though they share a common religious affiliation, the Muslim population in Canada is diverse. As noted, the original source countries vary and include Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, India, Africa, Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and South and Central America. As a result, the Muslim population is diverse, representing many languages and religious traditions in Islam (Nimer 2002). It is well-educated, having the second-highest level of education attainment out of all religious groups in Canada. Sixty percent of Muslim adults have some post-secondary education, ten percent higher than the national average (Beyer 2005). However, the higher educational level does not correspond to higher income; there are more Muslims in the lower income bracket (earning $30,000 or less) than any other religious group (Beyer 2005). This suggests that Muslims may be facing some form of economic marginalization in Canada.

Since the September 11 attacks in the US Muslims in western nations are vulnerable to increased discrimination (Stein 2003; Fekete 2004; Helly 2004). Muslim religious identities are also increasingly subject to external social construction and are
used to organize social inequalities normally associated with racial minorities (Byng 2008). Therefore, in the post 9/11 era ‘Muslim’ identity can be understood as being a religious minority identity vulnerable to the same social processes of systematic inequality, external labeling, and otherness as other ethnic and racial groups.

However, it is important to note that like many western nations, anti-Muslim sentiment is not new in Canada. Academics note that since their first entry into Canada to the present day, Muslim communities have been subjected to Orientalist depictions (Helly 2004; Thobani 2007; Razack 2005). Said (1979; 1981) argues that from the end of the 18th century to the present day, reactions to Islam and Muslims have been dominated by a radically simplified thinking – Orientalist. Through Orientalism, anything seen as Oriental is categorized as inferior, traditional, and backwards. This depiction of Muslims has resulted in both first and second-generation immigrants facing negative stereotypes about Islam and their communities in Canada. Hence, it is not surprising that even before 9/11, Muslim communities were seen in a negative light, and were presented as a threat to the nation and to the equality between men and women in Canada (Helly 2004).

Popular media, for example, in both Canada and the United States portrayed Muslims as violence loving maniacs prior to 9/11. A study examining more than one hundred television shows between 1975-1976 and 1983-1984 that featured Arab/Muslim characters found that the image of Muslims as violent was pervasive in both Canada and the US (Badhi 2003). This negative image had a direct impact on Canadian Muslims lives, especially during times of political turmoil in Muslim nations.

During the Gulf War in the 1990s anti-Muslim sentiment in Canada was heightened, resulting in an escalation of discrimination towards Canadian Muslims.
Muslim students encountered explicit discrimination in schools, malls and other public places. Canadian Muslims also reported being targeted by the Royal Mounted Police (RCMP) and by Canadian Security Intelligence Services. Overall, many Canadian Muslims felt silenced, devalued, and misrepresented during this time period (Khalema & Wannas-Jones 2003).

Prior to 9/11 Muslim communities were also scrutinized for their religious practices. For example, in 1994, students wearing the hijab were expelled from schools in Quebec for wearing the hijab. This resulted in a national debate about Islam, fundamentalism, and women’s rights. While this ban was overturned by the government, the implicit comparison between Islam and terrorism remained in Canada and since 9/11 has intensified (Helly 2004).

As in the US and UK, the political environment has changed in Canada in the post 9/11 era, and Muslims face increased scrutiny through new security measures and anti-terrorist legislation (Choudhry 2001; Macklin 2001; Helly 2004). Bill C36, adopted on December 7, 2001, modifies 22 existing laws. This includes the criminal code, the protection of personal information, access to information, and the request for evidence (Helly 2004).

While studies have documented Muslims’ experiences of living in the US and the UK after 9/11 (Peek 2003; Gupta 2004; EL-Halawany 2003; Kundnani 2002), Muslims’ experiences of living in Canada post 9/11 have not been studied extensively. Although Canada has similarities to the US and UK, there are important differences in its integration of ethnic and religious groups. More specifically, Canada is often seen as the world leader in multiculturalism, and was the first nation to adopt a multicultural policy
Multiculturalism is state-initiated in Canada and includes legislation and official policies with their appropriate administrative bodies. By contrast, the US has a long-standing assimilationist or ‘melting pot’ culture which promotes the Americanization of cultures (Alba & Nee 2003). Although the UK does not follow the American pattern, it has not legalized multiculturalism (Bannerji 2000). Since Canada has taken a different approach to its incorporation of ethnic and religious groups, it is possible that Canadian Muslims’ experiences after 9/11 will differ from those in the US or the UK.

In order to fully understand Muslims’ experience in Canada, it is important to review the history of minority groups before and after the introduction of multiculturalism in Canada. This review is provided in the following section.

**Canada’s Foundation as a Racial State**

Although the Canadian state presents itself on the global stage as an egalitarian society through its multicultural policies, academics argue its treatment of Muslim communities post 9/11 reveals its foundation as a racial state (Thobani 2007, Razack 2005). Omi and Winant (1994) argue that modern nation states should be understood as racial states, as they were founded by deeply racialized processes which involved internal unification and the differentiation of peripheral others. In a similar vein, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) note that race and racism serve as a structuring principle for national processes in terms of defining both the boundaries of the nation and the constituents of national identity. Many scholars have argued that as in most other Western nations, ‘race’ has played a central role in the shaping of the Canadian nation state (Thobani 2007, Razack 2005,
Anderson 1991), and this can be seen through its treatment of the Aboriginal population and early racialized immigrant groups.

The Canadian state was founded as a racial supremacy, as evidenced in its overt racial dictatorship of the Aboriginal population under the Indian Act until the mid 20th century (Thobani 2007). In the foundational movement of Canadian nationhood, while the British and French were cast as the true subjects of the colony, Aboriginal people were expelled as the enemy outsider, thereby justifying their murder, enslavement, and torture (Thobani 2007). In fact, systematic racism and white supremacy has always been a part of Canada’s political culture, and its victims are not restricted to one race, ethnic group or religion (Boyko 2000).

Hence, it is not surprising that after marginalizing Aboriginal people, the Canadian state reaffirmed its racial supremacy as a homogenous and dominant white majority through its mistreatment of immigrant groups. This included racialized immigrant legislation such as the $100 head tax imposed on early Chinese immigrants (Thobani 2007). Although the Canadian state allowed immigration (from Asia for example) so that it could capitalize on the economic contributions immigrants brought during the 1950s and 1960s, it constructed immigrant families as a burden on the nation state, and through immigrant regulations, it provided them with unequal social entitlements. Despite their contributions to Canadian society, immigrant groups were imagined as a burden on tax-paying Canadians and a drain on social and economic resources (Thobani 2007).

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Canadian society underwent a transformation. Key policy changes included the elimination of overtly racial classifications in
immigration policies, increased access to Canadian citizenship for previously excluded groups, and the aforementioned adoption of state multiculturalism (Thobani 2007). The latter enabled the state to represent itself as having accomplished the transformation from an overtly racial settler state to a liberal-democratic format. It also allowed the state to silence the protests of immigrant groups demanding more rights (Thobani 2007).

While it enables the qualified inclusion of immigrants, multiculturalism has been criticized by academics. Thobani argues that multiculturalism maintains immigrant groups as cultural strangers to the national body. Bannerji (2000) emphasizes that multiculturalism is problematic because it replaces the focus on racism and power relations with a focus on cultural diversity which only allows its inferior citizens a language of representation. Since multicultural identity, ethnicity, and community are the basis for this language of representation, Bannerji believes that the emerging multicultural ethnicities are often the constructs of colonial, Orientalist, and racist discourses. In a similar vein, Wood and Gilbert (2005) argue this focus on cultural diversity leads to multiculturalism, hiding racism, discrimination, and marginalization.

According to many academics, the mistreatment of Muslim communities in the post 9/11 era brings to the forefront Canada’s foundation as a racial state, something which has been hidden by multiculturalism. Razack (2005) argues that the marginalization of Muslim communities has intensified the boundaries and borders that mark who belongs and who does not belong in Canada. Thobani (2007) says that the linking of immigration and Muslim communities with hatred and fear after 9/11 reproduces past encounters in the present moment, and that the reappearance of racialized peoples again makes possible the production of a white identity. In her view, the image of
the crazed non-Christian savage in the earlier era of Western expansion (attributed to earlier marginalized groups) has re-emerged on the global stage with a vengeance. While earlier immigrants and refugees were imagined primarily as a drain on social and economic resources, the Muslim population has been constructed as a serious threat to the survival of the West (Thobani 2007). According to Thobani (2007), this othering of Muslims is crucial to the sense of nationality among Canadians in the post 9/11 era.

The perceived terrorist threat from Muslim communities has allowed another round of public demands for increased restrictions on immigration and citizenship. Thobani (2007) mentions that before the events of 9/11, the London bombings, and the global effects of the US-led war on terror, Canadians might have considered the processes of outright exclusion from citizenship, such as those experienced by Japanese Canadians, as isolated – a shameful moment in the nation’s past. However, it is clear that these processes can be applied to Muslims or any other non-preferred group, resulting in the suspension of their citizenship rights and in their being presented as a threat to a nation in crisis (Thobani 2007). Academics such as Thobani (2007) and Razack (2005) feel that anti-terrorism measures implemented in Canada are profoundly reshaping the meaning of Canadian nationality and citizenship.

Canada’s close proximity to the US has played a role in undermining the citizenship of Canadian Muslims. In redefining its global reach, the US has claimed the right to override the citizenship of Muslims in other states, including Canada (Helly 2004). Thobani (2007) fears that by using its status as a more compassionate nation, the Canadian nation state is supporting this expansion of the American empire and helping hunt down and destroy the Muslim enemy as and where defined by the US. Furthermore,
Poynting and Perry (2007) feel that by failing to protect Muslim communities from a backlash immediately following 9/11, the Canadian state legitimatized the mistreatment of Muslim communities. For instance, they note while the Canadian government took immediate action to introduce anti-terrorist legislation, no public calls for peace were made, and no measures were introduced to reform hate crime legislation, which could have helped Muslim communities.

While academics have extensively written about how Canadian Muslims have been excluded from Canadian citizenship and cast as a threat to the nation, what remains unanswered is how Canadian Muslims have personally experienced this social eviction and how they have responded. Through the use of personal narratives, I explore how being seen as an enemy within the Canadian nation shapes the lives of young Muslims in Canada. Are they fearful for their safety and security? What forms of discrimination do they face? What impact does this discrimination have on their lives? Do they feel targeted by state surveillance practices? How does gender play a role in their experiences? How do young Muslims react to such discrimination? Do they resist? And how do they negotiate their identities as Canadians and Muslims in this climate?

**Important Theoretical Concepts**

Learning how the post 9/11 era has shaped the lives of young Canadian Muslims allows us to learn how such experiences impact their sense of citizenship as Canadians.

Citizenship has often been perceived as a static ideal, a juridical relationship between a person and a nation state. This form of citizenship, also known as legal citizenship, ‘is the formal status of membership in a state, or nationality as it is understood in international law’ (Macklin 2007: 334). Legal citizenship in liberal democratic states is supposed to
provide a continuum of legal rights and protections granted to individuals by nation states (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997). This includes the right to enter and remain in the country of citizenship and access to consular assistance (Macklin 2007).

However, although minority groups have legal citizenship in liberal democratic nations, they may still be treated as second-class citizens (Young 1998; Sassen 2004; Ong 2004; Nakano Glenn 2002). Sassen (2004) notes that legal citizenship does not always bring equal citizenship; groups that have been historically marginalized because of race, ethnicity, and religion, etc., may continue to face exclusions despite being granted legal citizenship.

In order to understand these different experiences of citizenship, Stasiulis and Bakan (1997) reconceptualize citizenship as being negotiated, arguing that negotiated citizenship is ‘subject to change, it is acted upon collectively, or among individuals existing within social, political, and economic relations of collective conflict, which are shaped by gendered, race, class, and internationally based hierarchies’ (1997:113). They see citizenship as dynamic; it is continuously transformed as ‘relationships are negotiated and re-negotiated in variable national and international conflicts’ (1997:118). In my analysis, I use these insights about citizenship to explore how the post 9/11 era may be redefining young Muslims’ sense of citizenship in Canada.

In my thesis, to fully understand the contradiction between formal citizenship rights accorded by liberal democratic states and the lived experience of citizenship for minority groups, I rely heavily on Nakano Glenn’s (2002) work. Nakano Glenn’s approach to citizenship is valuable to my research as it provides important insights on how citizenship is often given meaning at the local level in everyday interactions. For
instance, Nakano Glenn uses the concept of substantive citizenship to understand issues of citizenship. Substantive citizenship refers to the ability to exercise rights of citizenship (Nakano Glenn 2002) and has two important components. The first involves the ability to exercise one’s formal rights. The second involves how citizenship rights are recognized and enforced by national, state, or local government agents, and by members of the public (Nakano Glenn 2002). This encompasses an understanding of how citizenship is localized and is important because the boundaries and rights that define citizenship are often interpreted and enforced (or not enforced) by individual actors operating at the local level (Nakano Glenn 2002). Nakano Glenn writes:

In some cases the actors are state, county, or municipal officials, for example a welfare department social worker ruling on the eligibility of a black single mother for benefits. In other cases they are private citizens, for example a movie theatre owner deciding whether or not to allow Mexican Americans to sit on the main floor. It is these kinds of localized, often face to face practices that determine whether people have or don’t have substantive as opposed to purely formal rights of citizens. (Nakano Glenn 7:2002).

Nakano Glenn argues that the actions of individual actors are connected to the larger societal structure: when individual actors define and redefine citizenship boundaries, they draw on social norms and values. In the following chapters, I use Nakano Glenn’s concept of localized citizenship to illustrate how interactions with individual Canadians and state agents at the local level give important meaning to the citizenship young Muslims hold in Canada.

By also arguing that there are different meanings of citizenship, Nakano Glenn’s (2002) approach further helps to explain my interviewees’ experiences of lived citizenship. Overall, she notes citizenship is a matter of belonging, and this includes recognition by other members of the community. However, Nakano Glenn emphasizes
there are different facets of belonging to a certain community and not all facets are available to all groups. The first *standing* - being recognized as an adult capable of excising choice and assuming responsibility - shows how Muslim women are often prohibited from having access to this important component of citizenship. The second *nationality* - being identified as a part of a people who constitute a nation – is crucial to understanding how young Muslims experience the undermining of their Canadian citizenship. The last *allegiance* - encompassing being viewed as a loyal member of the community - helps to illustrate how being seen as threats to the nation opposed to loyal Canadian citizens directly undercuts Canadian citizenship of young Muslims (Nakano Glenn 2002).

Overall I use these insights about citizenship provided by Nakano Glenn to explore how young Canadian Muslims’ citizenship functions in the post 9/11 era. Despite holding Canadian citizenship, many report being harassed in their daily lives and at airports and borders. Do young Muslims feel they have substantive citizenship in Canada? How do they experience citizenship at the local level? Do they feel they have access to *nationality, allegiance* and *standing* in Canada? I explore these questions in the following chapters.

It is important to note that a current trend in academic literature is to conceptualize citizenship as a global and transnational phenomenon. Turner (1993), for instance, argues that in our increasingly globalized world, scholarship needs to incorporate the globalization of social relations and to extract citizenship from its location in the nation state. However, a number of scholars argue that despite globalization, nation states continue to play a significant role in the formal rights and benefits of citizenship
(Nakano Glenn 2002; Thobani 2007; Bloemraad et al 2008). While not dismissing the powerful role of global forces, in the following chapters, I demonstrate the continued relevance of viewing citizenship within the boundaries of the nation state. I do so by showing that the interviewees in my study value their Canadian citizenship and are upset when their citizenship is undermined by fellow Canadians and state agents.

Since citizenship boundaries have historically been drawn along racial lines (Anderson 1991; Thobani 2007; Razack 2004), I explore how young Muslims experience racialization. The concept of racialization was first used by Fanon in his analysis of the difficulties faced by decolonized intellectuals in Africa and has since been developed by Robert Miles (1989) who uses it ‘to refer to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities’ (1989:75). Miles argues that, historically, phenotypical characteristics such as skin colour have been used to racialize people. For example, he notes that during the Greco-Roman period and the period of European exploration, African skin colour was perceived as signifying a collective representation. During this time, he argues, physical characteristics were utilized to categorize people as ‘others’ and were thought to determine a person’s ‘race’. Miles notes a similar phenomenon in Europe and in North America today; categories such as ‘black’ and ‘white’ are used to label individuals and to categorize them into groups with no formal discourse of ‘race’.

Miles (1989) adds that racialization is a dialectal process. When one uses real or alleged biological characteristics to define the ‘other’, one defines oneself by the same criterion. For example, when European explorers defined Africans as ‘black’, they were
defining themselves as the opposite. He writes, ‘The Africans ‘blackness’ therefore reflected the European’s whiteness. These opposites were therefore bound together each giving meaning to the other in a totality of significance’ (1989:75). Miles sees racialization as a dialectical process whereby alleged or real biological differences are given meaning and used to categorize individuals into groups.

It is important to note, however, that Miles says characteristics other than skin colour are used to racialize people. These characteristics vary historically, and while they are usually visible, non-visible (alleged and real) characteristics can also be called into play. By and large, in his view, racialization is the representational process of defining the other, usually, but not exclusively, somatically.

Similarly, Chon and Arzt (2005) argue that race is not only about phenotypic characteristics; more important are the social meanings attached to phenotypical differences. Race is a concept shaped by social and political processes, and racial formation often involves the perception that some attributes are immutable. While religion is normally is seen as a matter of choice and is not immutable, they argue that since 9/11, ‘Islam is acquiring characteristics of immutability, innateness, inevitable inheritability, and inferiority’ (228). Although there are other attributes of race, such as physical markers (skin or hair colour), religion can be a determining element in the construction of an inferior racial category. Therefore, without focusing on religion, racial profiling in the post 9/11 context cannot be understood:

Although phenotypes still matters a great deal – it is probably more likely that someone who is dark skinned will be targeted than a light skinned Muslim – perceived religious difference is a critical component of the racial formation of the other in the context of terrorism. (Chon and Arzt 2005: 240)
These insights have proved useful to me in my bid to understand Canadian Muslims’ experiences of living in Canada.

Since scholars argue that the ‘othering’ of Muslim communities is a gendered process, I also consider how the experiences of young Canadian Muslims are gendered. Muslim communities have been historically viewed as oppressive to women through arranged marriages, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. The perceived sexist nature of Islam is used to paint an inferior picture of Muslim communities and to justify their surveillance and scrutiny (Ahmed 1992; Hoodfar 1993; Khan 1998; Glavanis 1998; Abhu-Lughod 2002; Razack 2004; Haddad 2007). Traditionally, the idea of oppressed women has been used in the rhetoric of colonialism to morally justify undermining or eradicating the cultures of colonized people. For example, practices of child marriage and dowry were used by the British to validate its colonization of South Asia (Abhu-Lughod 2002; Meeto and Mirza 2007). Razack (2004; 2005) argues that since 9/11, feminism has re-emerged as a tool to support imperialistic endeavours and to call for a Western secular tradition to protect women’s rights. The notion that Muslim women need ‘saving’ has provided fuel for the war on ‘terror’ and the subsequent US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. It has also permitted the surveillance and the undermining of Muslim communities in North America (Razack 2004; Haddad 2007; Abhu-Lughod 2002).

Alexander (2004) notes that while early fixation was on the oppression of women, there now is also a focus on the perceived violent identities of young Canadian Muslim men. She argues that Muslim masculinities are being racialized as deviant, dangerous, and socially and culturally dysfunctional. She adds that the construction of racialized Muslim masculinities draws upon the legacy of racialized pathologies, which in the past
were largely reserved for black identities. Black identities, she says, have historically been inscribed with a hyper-visible black masculinity that is perceived to subordinate to hegemonic ideals. In a similar vein, Connell (1995) notes that black masculinity has been constructed as sexual and a social threat in dominant white cultures. He goes on to elaborate that this gender ideology has been used to justify the rigorous policing and political racism directed towards black communities in a variety of Western nations, including the United States, South Africa, and France (Connell 1995).

Alexander (2004) argues that a similar phenomenon is now occurring with Muslim men. Muslim masculinities are increasingly linked with the apparent growth of religious fundamentalism. As a result, Muslim masculinities are now perceived as outside and acting against the hegemonic norms of male behaviour. Alexander emphasizes this gender ideology is used to justify the regulation and social control of Muslim communities. In my research, I explore if this gender ideology of Muslim men as dangerous and Muslim women as oppressed can help explain my interviewees’ understanding of their experiences in the post 9/11 era.

**Description of the Research**

I employ a qualitative research methodology for my study. The data derive from 50 in-depth interviews with 24 Muslim men and 26 Muslim women between the ages of 18 and 31. More information about the age of interviewees is provided in Table One on page 26, and a detailed description of each interview is provided in Appendix A. In-depth interviews are useful for studying the perspectives and opinions of marginalized groups, as they allow the dissemination of their stories (Esterberg 2002). By using a qualitative methodology, through the use of in-depth interviews, I am able to learn how young
Muslims recall their experiences of living in Canada in the post 9/11 era and how they negotiate their identities as Canadians and as Muslims.

The interviews took place between 2005 and 2008, thereby allowing me to learn about the experiences of Muslims in the four to seven years following 9/11. Permission was obtained from the University of Toronto Research Ethics to do this research. The interviewees are guaranteed anonymity, and hence, for confidentiality reasons, all interviewees have been given pseudonyms. Although an interview guide was used during the interviews, interviewees were encouraged to elaborate where they saw fit and to discuss any topic that they felt was important. The interview guide is provided in Appendix B. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded thematically. They were analyzed with the N-VIVO qualitative analysis software program which allows ideas and themes to be linked.

The interviewees chosen for this study had to identify themselves as Muslim. With the exception of one informant who had converted to Islam, all were born into Muslim families. Potential interviewees were informed that this study was exploring young Canadian Muslims’ experiences of living in Canada post 9/11. It is important to note there may be an inherent bias in the sample due to self-selection. Individuals often choose to participate in research projects in which they strongly believe. Hence, the sample of this study may include individuals who feel strongly about Muslim issues, especially those pertaining to 9/11. However, I feel this is beneficial to my thesis, as it allows me to study those Muslims who have been most impacted by the post 9/11 era.

Eighty-two percent (41/50) of the interviewees are Canadian citizens; 40 percent (20/50) were born in Canada, while 42 percent (21/50) are naturalized citizens. The
remaining nine interviewees are not Canadian citizens and had been living in Canada for five years or less. Overall, 30 interviewees were born in other countries, but the vast majority have been living in Canada for many years. A breakdown of how long they have been living in Canada is provided in Table Two on page 26. Interviews were conducted in Vancouver and Toronto. These sites were chosen because 70 percent of the Muslim population in Canada lives in metropolitan areas (Statistics Canada 2001). Further, by including interviews from both Vancouver and Toronto, the study documents the experiences of Muslims in eastern and western Canada.

I recruited interviewees using a variety of strategies. I relied on the use of personal networks to find interviewees. I directly approached some young Canadian Muslims who were known to me or to my friends to participate in my study. I contacted Muslim student organizations at the University of Toronto and at Simon Fraser University to find interviewees. Through meetings and phone calls, I developed key contacts with important executive members of these organizations. These contacts helped me find potential interviewees by sending out e-mails about my research project to their student group list-servs. To avoid over-sampling Muslim student organizations, I contacted other university organizations to find participants. At the end of each interview, I relied on snowball sampling and asked the interviewees if they knew of anyone else I could interview. However, I restricted the number of referrals from each interviewee to avoid over-sampling from a specific group.

During young adulthood, people go through important processes of identity formation; they explore a range of choices and begin to make commitments to interpersonal relationships, work, career, and ideology (Mannheim 1952). Thus, it makes
theoretical sense to focus on Muslims in their young adulthood because they are in an important stage of identity formation and may have been most impacted by the post 9/11 era. The young Muslims in this study are all well-educated; at the time of the study, they had all completed a post secondary degree or were in the pursuit of one. A more detailed overview of how many are still attending university and how many are in the work force is provided in Table Three on page 26. This study focuses on well-educated Muslims because the vast majority of young Muslims in Canada have some post-secondary education (Beyer 2005): 76 percent of Muslim men and 67 percent of Muslim women between the ages of 21 and 30 who immigrated to Canada after 1970 have some post-secondary education; 81.5 percent of Canadian-born Muslim men and 81 percent of Canadian-born Muslim women who are between 21 and 30 years of age have some post-secondary education (Beyer 2005).

Since the focus of this study is on young well-educated Muslims, the sample primarily consists of individuals from middle-class backgrounds. This study does not speak to the experiences of young Muslims from less privileged backgrounds and, hence, is not able to address how social class could impact Canadian Muslims’ experiences of living in Canada post 9/11. This is an important topic for future research. Nor can this study speak to the issue of how experiences of discrimination differ between younger and older Muslims. A cross-generational study is required to examine this issue.

The sample reflects the diversity of Islam. The interviewees come from different national origins such as India, Pakistan, Fiji, the West Indies, Libya, Bangladesh, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and East Africa. A more detailed overview of their national origins is provided in Table Four on page 27. They belong to a variety of Muslim traditions, such
as Ismaili, Shia, and Sunni, and they speak various languages. Even though many do not wear religious symbols, 12 women wear the hijab. With the exception of one interviewee who is half German and half Pakistani, all are visibly non-white. Diversity in the sample is important; findings are less likely to focus on experiences specific to a certain Muslim religious tradition or particular ethnic or linguistic groups.

Dorothy Smith (1987) argues that if we want to study what is happening to a group of people, it is imperative to begin from the actualities of those people’s lives. Therefore, my analysis focuses on personal narratives and seeks to understand how young Canadian Muslims have come to understand their experiences in the post 9/11 era. Furthermore, I use their accounts as anecdotal evidence of real existing forces in society and not just as subjective experiences. I realized first-hand the importance of doing so during my interview with Fardeen, a 26-year-old man who immigrated to Canada from Egypt three years previously. When I asked him whether he ‘felt’ that Muslims were subject to extra checked at airports and borders, he took offense at my use of the word ‘felt’. He replied that ‘it isn’t that I feel that Muslims are extra searched. The fact is they [Muslims] are subject to extra surveillance’. With this, I realized the importance of connecting personal experiences to broader social relations, and I attempt to do so in the following chapters.

Naturally, this study does not claim to represent all young Muslims in Canada. Since this is not a randomly chosen sample, it cannot be generalized to the wider population with any degree of statistical confidence. Rather, the sample is designed to take an in-depth look at the experiences and interpretations of as wide a range of young Canadian Muslims as possible and to do a close-up study of their Muslim, ethnic, and
Canadian identities in the post 9/11 era. Since my goal is not to evaluate the honesty and accuracy of their memories, I take the accounts at face value. That said, I do look for contradictions in their stories and for explanations and examples of what they say to avoid any inaccuracies.

Academics have come to understand that researchers hold multiple positions when conducting research: they are both insiders and outsiders (Naples 2003). This was the case for this study. I was an outsider because I am not Muslim. Although I did not explicitly tell my interviewees I come from a Sikh family, I did tell them if they inquired. I found that many could tell that I was not Muslim because of my very traditional Sikh first name. When I began this project, I was not sure whether I should be doing research on a community to which I did not belong. Could I adequately understand the experiences of young Canadian Muslims? Nor was I sure how receptive young Muslims would be.

In the end, my position as a non Muslim did play a role in my research, but not in a negative manner. My interviewees provided many details about their religion and their communities, as they recognized that I was not Muslim and would not know such things. This information provided great depth to my research. Furthermore, because I was not part of the Muslim community, interviewees may have felt a greater freedom to talk about their religion without a fear of reprisal.

When conducting this research, I discovered I also was an insider in some respects. Some interviewees indicated that because I was a visible minority from a South Asian background, they felt that I could understand their experiences. They felt comfortable discussing issues related to racism with me. Because I am in the same age
group and a university student, the vast majority felt a sense of kinship. We shared some common reference points, allowing me to build a rapport with my interviewees, and enabling them to share personal information with me.
### Table One – Age Distribution of the interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>22–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>24–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>26–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30–31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table Two- Number of years living in Canada for the 30 interviewees not born in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Years living in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>10 to 24 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 to 4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Twenty-two out of the fifty interviewees are born in Canada

### Table Three – Education Status of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree</th>
<th>Graduate/Professional Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the workforce</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In university</td>
<td>24 (in progress)</td>
<td>16 (in progress)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Four – National Origin Distribution of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>National Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>India - East Africa*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pakistan/Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘National Origin’ refers either to the birthplace of the parents of the interviewees or, if the interviewees were born abroad, to the respondents’ birthplaces.

*Although these interviewees or their parents were born in East Africa, their ancestral origins can be traced to India.

Plan of the thesis

A key focus of this thesis is the meanings dominant groups and institutions try to impose on young Canadian Muslims, and I devote Chapters Two and Three to this. Chapter Two examines how young Canadian Muslims experience these meanings in their interactions with individual Canadians. Chapter Three explores how young Muslims experience stereotypical conceptions of who they are through state surveillance practices.
As noted, my thesis is the first empirically based study to provide an in-depth exploration of how the post 9/11 era is framing the lives of young Canadian Muslims. To this end, Chapter Two sets the foundation for the thesis by providing a general overview of the wide range of experiences young Canadian Muslims have had with other Canadians. This overview shows how Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship is challenged through their interactions with other Canadians in various ways. First, in the post 9/11 era, they believe that attention has shifted from their racial identities to their religious identities. Second, they experienced a loss of safety and security immediately following 9/11. Third, in the post 9/11 era, public places, especially public transit, have become racialized spaces for them. Fourth, young Canadian Muslims feel their religious freedom is threatened by the lack of respect shown towards their religious traditions. Fifth, they face workplace discrimination which threatens their economic security. Sixth and finally, young Canadian Muslims feel they are othered through stereotypical conceptions about their gender identities. While Muslim men are perceived as dangerous and violent, Muslim women are imagined as submissive and oppressed. My research suggests that these stereotypical conceptions imposed on Muslim women may make them more vulnerable to physical harassment than Muslim men.

Chapter Two also shows the multiple strategies young Canadian Muslims employ to resist the dominant conceptions imposed on them. First, in an effort to stop the harassment, the interviewees report discrimination to the police and other institutions, efforts that are often not successful. Second, they try to be on their best behaviour to dispel negative stereotypes, something requiring a great deal of emotional work. Third,
they contest stereotypical conceptions of their gender identities by trying to assert themselves as educated, strong, and peaceful.

In Chapter Three, I shift my attention to how young Canadian Muslims experience and respond to state surveillance practices in the post 9/11 era. This chapter is essential for both policy makers and academics, as these issues have been overlooked in academic literature. In it, young Canadian Muslims recall the targeting of their Muslim identities by invasive questioning and intrusive practices at airports and borders. They perceive these state practices as attacking their Muslim identity and challenging their citizenship. Although they have legal citizenship, their experiences with state surveillance practices suggest to them that they often lack access to substantive citizenship. They experience surveillance through complex processes of racialization and believe their gender identity plays a role in how they are treated at airport and border crossings. The interviewees also report experiences of surveillance in their daily lives; this results in a climate of fear and further questions their substantive citizenship in Canada.

Chapter Three concludes by showing the ways young Canadian Muslims attempt to deal with the surveillance they encounter at airports and borders. They try to resist by refusing to fly, challenging security personnel, becoming politically active, and concealing their Muslim identity. Sadly, many still feel forced to comply with the surveillance, even though they believe such practices undermine their citizenship as Canadians.

Overall, Chapters Two and Three document that young Canadian Muslims believe they are often seen as an enemy to the Canadian nation. Their Muslim identities are perceived as dangerous, and they are not recognized as Canadian. In the remaining
chapters, I extend my analysis of how young Canadian Muslims react to these dominant conceptions and how they construct alternative meanings. I do so by focusing on how young Canadian Muslims negotiate their identities as Muslims, as members of different ethnic groups, and as Canadians in the post 9/11 era.

Chapter Four explores how Muslims make sense of their Muslim identity in a post 9/11 era. To reclaim their Muslim identity and resist the abuse of Islam, many young Canadian Muslims affirm their Muslim identity. Trying to cope with discrimination and becoming more appreciative of Islam after learning more about it has also influenced the interviewees’ decisions to strengthen their Muslim identity. To understand this social process, I theorize Muslim identity formation in the post 9/11 era, something not yet found in academic literature. To do so, I extend Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) theory of ‘reactive ethnicity’ and construct the term ‘reactive identity formation’.

Chapter Five fills another surprising gap in the academic literature by examining how the post 9/11 era is framing young Muslims’ attachment to their ethnic identity. The vast majority of interviewees do not indicate having a close connection to their ethnic identity in this era, and multiple factors play a role. The fact that their Muslim identities are highlighted by society, as opposed to their ethnic identities, is one such factor. Arguably, ethnic identity can be difficult to adopt for young Canadian Muslims born or raised in Canada. Further, there may be a push for a revivalist form of Islam among young Canadian Muslims.

Chapter Six represents the last piece of the puzzle by considering how young Canadian Muslims negotiate their identities as Canadians in the post 9/11 era. Although they are not recognized as Canadians by others and have had their Canadian identity
challenged, most interviewees retain their Canadian identity, and a few even report
strengthening it in the post 9/11 era. Three factors help to explain this occurrence. First,
many hold onto their Canadian identity as a way to resist discrimination. By doing so,
they attempt to reshape what it means to be Canadian and what Canadian identity is
supposed to look like. Second, many interviewees still see Canada in a positive light; they
compare it to other countries and feel Canada is more favourable to Muslim communities
than other Western nations. Third, young Muslims define Canadian identity through
multiculturalism, and hence, they perceive the discrimination directed at them as anti-
Canadian. Contrary to how multiculturalism has been conceptualized in academic
literature, most interviewees think quite highly of it. They believe it has been beneficial
for them and their communities. Since multiculturalism plays an important role in how
young Canadian Muslims make sense of their identity as Canadians, I conclude my thesis
by suggesting that it may be time to revise the academic discourse on multiculturalism.
Chapter Two

The Loss of Everyday Life:

How the post 9/11 era is framing the lives of young Canadian Muslims

As I stand on the platform waiting for the subway to come, I see a small Muslim woman walking down towards where I am standing. Her hair is covered, and she is wearing a black dress. As she moves her way down the narrow platform, a tall young man pushes her out of the way and says, ‘Terrorist! I hope you do not have a bomb under your dress…Get out of our country’. Although she does not respond, I wonder how this comment makes her feel. Unfortunately, I do not get a chance to see if she is okay as the subway arrives, and she disappears in the sea of people rushing to get on the subway.

I had only been living in Toronto for a few months when I witnessed the harassment of the woman described above. After seeing this incident, I wondered how someone could have so much anger towards a virtual stranger just because she is Muslim. Why did the young man think he had the right to label this woman a terrorist or feel entitled to demand that she leave Canada? Was this a random incident, or do other Muslims face similar discrimination? In this chapter, using my interview data, I explore these questions.

As mentioned in the Introduction, since 9/11, North American Muslim communities have increasingly been constructed as enemies to Western nation states and are vulnerable to discrimination and surveillance (Choudhry 2001; Macklin 2001; Morgan 2001; Helly 2004). As in the US and UK, the Canadian political environment has changed, and Muslims face increased scrutiny under the guise of security measures and anti-terrorist legislation (Choudhry 2001; Macklin 2001; Helly 2004). Academics argue that the construction of Muslims as enemies can result in discrimination in domains such
as employment, financial relations, and personal relationships (Macklin 2001; Thobani 2007).

Studies have documented the Muslim experience of living in the US and the UK after 9/11 (Peek 2003; Gupta 2004; EL-Halawany 2003; Kundnani 2002), but the same cannot be said for Canada. Although Canada has similarities with the US and UK, there are important differences in how it has integrated its ethnic and religious groups. Canada is often seen as the world leader in multiculturalism, and was the first nation to adopt an official multicultural policy (Wood & Gilbert 2005). The US, in contrast, has a long-standing assimilationist or ‘melting pot’ culture which promotes the Americanization of cultures (Alba & Nee 2003). Although the UK does not follow the American pattern, it has not legalized multiculturalism (Bannerji 2000). Since Canada has taken a different approach, it is possible that Canadian Muslims’ experiences after 9/11 will differ from those in the US or the UK. To take a first step in this direction and open the topic up for discussion, I use this chapter to explore some of these experiences.

My objectives in this chapter are twofold. First, I show that the imposition of dominant conceptions onto Muslims, including the notion that they are a threat to Canada and are not real Canadians, can have serious consequences. Second, I illustrate how young Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship is challenged through their interactions with other Canadians. Nakano Glenn (2002) notes that localized, face-to-face interactions, determine whether people do or do not have substantive citizenship – or the ability to exercise rights of citizenship. My research shows the powerful role individual Canadians can play in giving meaning to Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship. However, I do not seek to separate such instances from the state, for as Poynting and
Perry (2007) remind us, ‘hate-motivated vilification and violence can only flourish in an enabling environment’ and discrimination is often conditioned by the activity or inactivity of the state (2007: 161).

I accomplish these two objectives by giving a broad overview of the different types of experiences of young Muslims living in Canada in the post 9/11 era. This overview also provides the foundation for the rest of my thesis. The experiences of young Canadian Muslims can be roughly divided into seven sections: first, they recall experiencing a shift from racial to religious discrimination in the post 9/11 era; second, in the immediate aftermath of the attack, they felt a loss of safety and security; third, public spaces have become racialized for them; fourth, their religious freedom has been threatened; fifth, their sense of economic security has been jeopardized; sixth, young Canadian Muslims face the racialization of their gender identities; seventh, they adopt multiple strategies to resist discrimination.

**From Racial to Religious Discrimination**

Academics have long argued that Canadian identity has historically been defined by whiteness (Thobani 2007; Bannerji 2000; Razack 2004), and anyone who does not fit this identity is vulnerable to discrimination. Not surprisingly, then, being discriminated against both before and after 9/11 is a common experience for most of my interviewees. However, while young Canadian Muslims now face discrimination due to their religious identity, before 9/11 they felt that discrimination was related to their racial and immigrant identities. In some cases, this discrimination dated back to their parents’ arrival in Canada and included pressure to assimilate, marginalization, and the imposition of racialized identities. While a few interviewees mention instances of discrimination related to their
Muslim identity before 9/11, the majority do not. This drastically changed in the post
9/11 world.

Many of the young Canadian Muslims in this study grew up feeling like outsiders in Canada. Seventy percent of them, 35 out of 50, grew up in Canada. Of these, the majority, 23 out of 35 (66 percent), experienced discrimination while growing up; 12 out of 35 did not. Maria a hijab-wearing, 24-year-old woman, who was born in Canada to a Tanzanian immigrant family, is one of the latter:

I grew up in Waterloo and our neighbourhood was so nice, and all the kids were friends, and we didn’t fight about colour. My father is a business man, and his circle of friends is very diverse. They are all business men, so we used to go out fishing together and never felt any discrimination from anybody.

However, Maria is in the minority, as most do not paint such a rosy picture and stress a hostile environment.

Feeling like an outsider goes back to when the interviewees’ parents arrived in Canada and is often based on skin colour, as Sakeena, a 27-year-old woman born in Canada to a Pakistani family, says:

I often hear stories about when my parents first came to Canada in the 1980s. For instance, my mom would be in a store looking for clothes to buy, and the sales lady would just walk away. I think my parents have gone through a lot when I think about it…Especially because my parents used to live in a very small town that primarily was Caucasian; there weren’t a lot of coloured people there. And they struggled a lot to form a solid business there, and to be taken seriously, and to get customers, and all those kind of things. And I’m sure a lot of it had to do with discrimination because they were as well qualified as anybody, or more, but it comes down to the colour of your skin, I think.

Like their parents, the interviewees faced discrimination based on their colour before 9/11. A 22-year-old man named Zaahir, who immigrated to Canada from Saudia Arabia when he was four, recalls the following:
I faced a little bit [of discrimination] but I don’t think it was because I was Muslim. It was because of my skin colour. I remember being in middle school and people would call me racist terms, so I would get angry. At the time I understood it is part of school life that kids tease other kids, so that may be racism, but I don’t think I’ve been discriminated against officially, like teachers treating me differently.

Zaahir also has positive memories, but his overall experience contains a number of instances when he has faced the imposition of a racialized identity.

While some of the interviewees feel they were discriminated against because of their skin colour and ethnic heritage, others feel that their identity as immigrants was tied to discrimination. Saud, a 22-year-old man who was born in Canada to a Pakistani immigrant family, and Yazeed, a 21-year-old man who immigrated to Canada from the Sudan when he was 12, mention the following:

Saud: We have always faced discrimination. We lived in North Burnaby, and we went to North Elementary, and we were not the mainstream. We were like the only Indians at the school. So we always felt discriminated against. It was more to do with, we were Indians and Pakistani, so there would be accents, like childish things, like making fun of the accents. We integrated during grade seven but before that we faced the usual discrimination. It think it mostly had to do with looking different; it had very little to do with religion and faith. It was more Indo-Canadian discrimination than Muslim discrimination.

Yazeed: I faced racism on multiple levels. I had it from friends. I mean I used to call them friends. I came here at the age of ten. Grade five was perhaps the hardest one. Being a new immigrant, the new kid in, I did speak English, I knew how to speak English, I just had an accent, I think I still do. So I was treated differently from the other students.

Academics concur that new immigrants are often seen as outsiders (Thobani 2007, Bannerji 2000, Razack 2004). Since they do not initially fit into the mainstream culture of Canadian society, immigrants are sidelined and mistreated. Such experiences put intense pressure on immigrants to assimilate – and most do so.
Overall, the majority of the interviewees who faced discrimination while growing up in Canada feel it was connected to their ethnic/racial and immigrant identities, suggesting that these were the primary identities imposed on them by society. However, seven interviewees indicate discrimination directed at their Muslim identity. For instance, Dawoud, a 25-year-old man who came to Canada from Saudia Arabia when he was less than a year-old, mentions:

When I look back, I see incidents where maybe I was bullied in the cafeteria or someone said something derogatory about Muslims or Islam. This happened before 9/11. At the time I never really took it as that. At the time it was always personal – it was, well, it was never that someone said something about Islam. And I think part of the reason was, throughout my high school years, I did not really associate very strongly with Islam. So if anyone said something about Islam it didn’t offend me.

When Dawoud reflects on the discrimination, he now connects it to being Muslim. He did not recognize this before, partly because he did not identify himself strongly as a Muslim, and partly because his Muslim identity was not highlighted by society before 9/11.

It is important to point out that Dawoud is one of two men in my study to say they were discriminated against as Muslims before 9/11. The remaining five interviewees who report facing discrimination as Muslims before 9/11 are women; four wear the hijab. Amineh, a hijab-wearing, 23-year-old woman born in Canada to a Libyan immigrant family says:

Well, during my Elementary school time I was in a Muslim school, so I never was harassed, but when I moved to public school I was harassed big time. I used to have this one guy tell me, ‘Do you keep bombs under your scarf?’ and then one time he pulled it off…Everybody else treated me like I was a kind of weirdo, and nobody really wanted to be my friend in the beginning... um, I never got accepted into the popular school in high school. You know that you are not treated the same. I also get discriminated against by my counsellor because I came from the Muslim school, and he was like the standard of education is not that good in a Muslims school. He was like, ‘Your grades are too good. I don’t think that you
are going to do so well here’, and as a matter of fact I did even better, and I was better than all of the other students.

Evidently, there was some resentment of Islam and the wearing of the hijab in Canada even before 9/11. As Amineh’s comments suggest, the discrimination these interviewees faced from their classmates may have been enforced by school officials, directly impacting their sense of freedom to practice their religion and thus affecting their sense of belonging in Canadian society. Overall, these interviewees point to a general lack of respect towards Islam in Canada.

The hostility towards Islam intensified post 9/11, and attention has shifted from racial identity to religious identity. Atiya, a 30-year-old woman born in Canada to an Indian-Fijian immigrant family, notes, ‘Before the (discrimination) was mostly to do with my skin colour and not to do with my religion. Now it is definitely more to do with my faith than with my skin colour. The times have now changed’. Atiya is not alone. Helly finds a 16-fold increase in hate crimes experienced by Muslim individuals or in Muslim places between September 2001 and September 2002; the number of complaints reported to the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) jumped from 11 to 173 (CIC 2003). And the Toronto Police Service Hate Crime Unit reports that 57 hostile acts were committed against Muslims during 2001. This is a substantial increase from 2000, when only one hostile act against a Muslim was reported (Helly 2004). In 2006, when 17 young Canadian Muslims men were arrested for allegedly plotting a terrorist attack, CIC feared the possibility of a backlash. Their fears were not unfounded – within a day of the arrests, a major Toronto mosque was vandalized (Poynting and Perry 2007).

How prevalent is this type of discrimination among my interviewees? Thirty out of the 50 interviewees (60 percent) indicate that they have experienced discrimination
related to being Muslim since 9/11. But 41 interviewees (82 percent) have families or friends who have faced such discrimination since 9/11. Knowing that your friends and family have been discriminated against is upsetting, and the high percentage is important. Therefore, I include the experiences of friends and family in my analysis. While the remaining eight interviewees do not know of direct experiences of discrimination, they are still extremely concerned about the treatment of Muslim communities in Canada. In fact, only one interviewee of the 50 has no concerns about Muslims facing discrimination in the post 9/11 era.

Sadly, Muslim interactions with other Canadians often result in the degradation of their sense of citizenship as Canadians. According to Nakano Glenn (2002), it is important to treat citizenship as localized, because the boundaries defining citizenship are often interpreted and enforced by individuals operating at the local level. In the following sections, I will show how, in their interactions with other Canadians, young Muslims feel less safe and secure, experience the racialization of public spaces, become stigmatized because of their religious practices, lose their economic security, and suffer the racialization of their gender identities.

**Loss of Safety and Security**

In the post 9/11 era Muslims in North America have been constructed as a threat to the safety and security of Western nations. In this section, by citing young Muslims’ recollections of immediate reactions to 9/11, I will show how they lost their sense of safety and security. This loss was partly due to the Canadian government’s failure to protect Muslim communities from the backlash that immediately followed 9/11. Poynting and Perry write, ‘No public calls for peace and understanding were forthcoming; no
strengthening reforms to hate crime legislation were ever considered (in contrast to the rapid action on the anti-terrorist legislation) and nor were increased police or prosecutorial vigilance on the public agenda’ (Poynting & Perry 2007: 162).

This lack of protection from the government and law enforcement agencies resulted in serious consequences for my interviewees. Many of the young Muslims in this study lived in a climate of fear immediately following 9/11; this intensified as Muslims faced violence and discrimination. Canadian Muslims, especially women, became fearful in their daily lives, specifically in public places. As a result, they exercised caution in their everyday routines, became fearful of taking public transportation, and even refrained from going to shopping malls and grocery stores. Many were afraid to display their Muslim identity in public. Muslim events were cancelled, and some were afraid of practicing Islam in public or associating with Muslim organizations.

To begin, irrespective of where they were on September 11, almost all respondents say their first reaction to the events of that day was shock and disbelief. Amineh relays:

It was just so mind boggling that I did not even think anything. I could not even think anything. I was just in disbelief. And then I thought a lot about what Muslims would say, and the second thing was like, dear God, I hope it was not Muslims that did this. It can’t be Muslims that did this, you know. That Muslims can’t do something like this. Then you just go wonder what is going to happen next. There is just a feeling of dread.

Not only were they upset about the loss of life like the rest of the population, but they were faced with the troubling notion that Muslims were either going to be blamed for this or were actually responsible for it. They felt sorrow for those who died and expressed anger towards the perpetrators who had given Islam a bad name.
Immediately following 9/11, stories began to circulate about Muslims facing physical harassment, and this created a climate of fear. For instance, Aalia, a hijab-wearing 21-year-old woman who immigrated from Egypt when she was 13, recalls how she became concerned for her personal safety after hearing stories about Muslim mosques being vandalized:

I was not really afraid for Muslims’ security in the beginning, but then I heard of an incident where some people, who were in their last years of high school, five or six people, and they took a rock and crashed the door of our mosque in Peterborough and after that I was concerned that people do not realize that it was individuals that did that, and that it was not the religion that was the problem, so after that I was concerned because obviously there were some people that thought every Muslim that was too blame. So that was when I was worried.

Like Aalia, a number of interviewees describe the vandalization of mosques right after 9/11. Such violence is a clear attack on the religion, and it inspired fear in Muslim communities.

As a result, many young Muslims became fearful of frequenting public places and made changes to their daily routines. Atiya recalls:

Yes I was afraid, especially going out with my dad and with my mom because they distinctly look Muslim. My dad wears a little goatee beard, and my mom wears the scarf, and at that point I was not wearing a scarf, so we were afraid of going places together. We had kind of resolved that if we had to go pick up something, we would go with either my brother or my father, so at least one of the men would be there. So we were definitely scared… and we would get weird looks you know when me and my mom would walk into a store.

Things taken for granted by other Canadians such as going to the mall or grocery shopping became difficult for some Muslims in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Fardeen, a 26 year-old man who came to Canada when he was 23 as an international student from Egypt, recalls that some Muslim women who wear the hijab refrained from
using the subway in Toronto right after 9/11, because they were afraid someone would push them in front of the subway car.

Overall, I found more Muslim women than men feared for their safety immediately following 9/11. Muslim women who wear the hijab are easily identified as Muslim. However, Muslim women who do not wear the hijab were also fearful, leading me to question whether Muslim women feel less physically able to defend themselves against potential hate crimes than Muslim men.

Nevertheless, safety was also a concern for some Muslim men, and Fardeen mentions that a Muslim friend from Toronto moved in with his neighbour, who was not Muslim, for a few weeks after 9/11 because he was afraid that ‘someone would attack him in his home’. As this story shows, some Canadians offered support to the Muslim communities. Aaeesha, a 24-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada from Pakistan when she was five, says, ‘Because we’re from a small community, a lot of people would call my dad at work and stuff to make sure he was okay’. However, despite such support, I found that many young Muslims were afraid to frequent public places in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and this impacted their everyday lives.

As a result of this fear of public places, the interviewees debated whether to conceal their Muslim identity in public. Falak, a 21-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada when she was 16 and who comes from an Indian-East African background, tried to conceal her Muslim identity to ensure her safety immediately following 9/11:

I had started hearing things that had happened in England, like a Sikh man was attacked because people felt that he was a Muslim, so I was very scared, um, but I did not want anyone to think that just because I am a Muslim that I agreed with what had happened. I tried to stay away from situations or conversations about it, and if anyone asked me about my religion, I would tell them the sect that I am. I would not say that I was a Muslim. I would tell them that I am Ismaili, but not that
I am a Muslim. I refrained from it because I basically did not want people to get mad at me basically.

While Falak decided to conceal her Muslim identity, others refused to do so. In fact, most interviewees affirmed their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era, an issue explored in Chapter Four.

While many young Muslims chose not to overtly conceal their Muslim identity, they did make changes to how they practiced their religion in public, as described by a 30-year-old man, Barkat, who was born in South Africa and came to Canada as a young child:

I used to feel very comfortable praying in public. After 9/11, I didn’t feel very comfortable praying in public. Whereas before I used to just pray in the street anywhere… now I don’t really, not because I’m afraid, it’s just Muslims are out there a little more, and there is a little bit more negative press. And so it just circles in the back of my head. And I know that we’re in Canada, and Canada’s a pretty safe place, but it always just plays there like you know, ‘Dude, you better hurry up. Get in here, and get out of here’.

Some Canadian Muslims felt they had lost the freedom to practice their religion in public in the post 9/11 era. In fact, how to practice their religion immediately following 9/11 was an issue that concerned the community at large. A major celebration for Ismaili Muslims was postponed for a year after 9/11 in both Toronto and Vancouver because of the fear of retaliation against the community. Aamir, a 23-year-old man who was born in Canada to an East African-Indian family, says:

We have pictures of aga Khan [religious leader] and it’s quite common that people keep them in their cars or keep beads called ‘tasbeez’ that would clearly identify them as Muslims. And there were announcements in our mosque to take those down, and that it would be better not to be so visible because someone might damage the car or something. Yeah, so just for safety measures.
Although some interviewees were encouraged to deflect attention away from themselves by removing items that would identify them as Muslims, they refused to do so because they did not want to turn their backs on their beliefs and religion. Indeed, Aamir was shocked that his community leaders made such recommendations.

Being perceived as a threat and having their Muslim identity vilified had serious consequences for my interviewees. They lived in a climate of fear, afraid of public places and fearful of displaying their Muslim identity. As a result, conflicting feelings emerged among Muslim communities about how to handle the immediate aftermath of 9/11. While some felt compelled to conceal their Muslim identity, others refused to do so. An explanation of why young Muslims refused to abandon their religion, despite the safety concerns, appears in Chapter Four. Overall, my findings show how young Canadian Muslims’ sense of safety and security were jeopardized in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and their everyday lives were impacted as a result.

**When Public Space becomes Racialized Space**

In the previous section, I explored how in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, young Muslims were afraid of facing discrimination in public places. In this section, I show that since Muslims are increasingly othered and victimized in public places, public spaces have become racialized for them in the post 9/11 era. I will begin by discussing verbal and physical abuse in public places, arguably the result of misplaced hyper-vigilance. Next, I will demonstrate that public transportation has become a racialized space for young Canadian Muslims. Third, I will show that the harassment Muslims face in public places often involves assertions that they do not belong in Canada.
In principle, being able to utilize public places without harassment is the right of all citizens. However, academics have long argued that public places are not safe for all citizens. In looking at the experiences of middle-class black Americans, Feagin (1991) argues that public places, such as public streets, are dangerous for black Americans as they present the greatest public exposure to strangers and the least protection against overt discriminatory behaviour, including violence. He elaborates: ‘A key feature of these more public settings is that they often involve contact with white strangers who react primarily on the basis of one ascribed characteristic’ (102). On a similar note, Gardner (1988; cited in Fegain 1991) categorizes black Americans and women as ‘open persons’ in public places because they are ‘particularly vulnerable targets for harassment that violates the rules of public courtesy’ (102).

The verbal and physical abuse young Muslims recall facing in public places suggest that in the post 9/11 era, these have become racialized, and young Canadian Muslims should be considered ‘open persons’ in these spaces because of the verbal and physical intimidation of strangers. Aneesha, a hijab-wearing 20-year-old woman who immigrated from Pakistan when she was less than a year-old, and Yazeed comment:

Aneesha: Post-9/11, I was called a terrorist. I was walking home from school and a car with a bunch of White guys drove by and they screamed out, “Terrorist! What are you going to bomb next? Another time, I was told on the bus going home, ‘Oh, you’re making our soldiers die in Afghanistan’. So there was a blame being put.

Yazeed: Two years ago, right by my house, a guy came up to one of my friends and started swearing at him. He said, ‘You f___ing Muslim’. My friend, he is a big guy, built up. He’s pretty intimidating, but I think that guy hit him with a bike chain… My friend was very angry.

Thobani (2007) argues that in the post 9/11 public discourse, collaboration between ‘real’ citizens and law enforcement agencies of the state is presented as vital to the elimination
of terrorism. As a result, the new burden of citizenship includes a constant hyper-vigilance towards potential terrorists. The promotion of this new hyper-vigilance may help explain why some Canadians feel they have the right to verbally abuse Muslims and accuse them of terrorism. Wielding this hyper-vigilance, they impose the identity of a ‘dangerous Muslim’ on all Muslims, including my interviewees, seeing them as something to be controlled. In this fashion, they help to racialize public space and exclude Muslims from allegiance to Canada, an important component of citizenship (in other words, they are not viewed as loyal members of society).

Perhaps due to this hyper-vigilance, public transit has become extremely dangerous for young Muslims. The interviewees tell many stories of themselves and other Muslims facing discrimination on buses, Toronto subways, and the Vancouver sky train. Such instances involve being sworn at, facing negative comments, being spat upon, and having things thrown at them, as described by Nashida, a 23-year-old woman born in Canada to a Pakistani immigrant family, and Abdual, a 30-year-old man who came to Canada a year ago as an international student from Egypt:

Nashida: One of my sisters-in law experienced something on the subway. She was coming back from her university, and she is a very tall person, and she wears the scarf. And as she was getting off, she noticed this man staring at her and saying things – like muttering things. She was getting really scared, and she tried to call her brother, but no signal in the subway. So eventually when she got off the subway, the man got up and pushed her. She actually fell down. And no one helped her.

Abdual: One time we were in the subway station, one morning in the weekend. We were doing something in the summer with all the kids, and there was this white guy. He came and started to curse and swear to us very loudly. He was standing behind us and saying, ‘Go away Bin Laden go back to your country - leave this country’.
Being able to take public transportation without facing harassment is a right that is supposed to be available to all Canadians. My research shows this right being taken away for many interviewees, and public transit becoming a racialized space. The silence of others when Muslims are experiencing this harassment works to further ostracize Muslims from these public places.

Public transit may be a particularly problematic space for Muslims because terrorist attacks have involved transit, such as the London subway bombings and the airplanes hijacked for the 9/11 attacks. Consequently, mainstream society may have misplaced fears about using public transit with Muslims, as seen in the following story relayed by Haleema, a hijab-wearing 19-year-old woman who came from Jamaica when she was eight years old:

There was a Muslim guy on a bus, and he had gym bag or something like that with him. And everyone on the bus when he walked in there, they were looking at him, there’s this one guy who was particularly loud, and he said, ‘Oh, what do you have in there?’ And it got to the point where everyone was demanding to see what he had in that bag, and he opened it, and there was nothing in there. And I was upset about this and I’m thinking, ‘Well, if he didn’t open it someone on that bus might have thought something dangerous is in there or they might be more demanding the next time they were to see another Muslim who’s potentially a terrorist’ and things like that. But it makes me upset, because at the same time you think, ‘Well, why does he have to do that? Why should he do that because he’s not doing anything wrong?’ So we definitely have this scapegoat mentality within society.

Haleema’s story captures the issue’s complexity. On the one hand, the interviewees are angry that Muslims’ rights are being violated when they are treated with suspicion while taking public transportation. On the other hand, they recognize the fear about Muslim involvement with terrorism. These complex issues have an effect on the behaviour of some of the interviewees. For instance, Zeba, a hijab-wearing 22-year-old woman born in Canada and from an Indian background, is self conscious about how others see her on the
subway. She says that she never opens her bag to take anything out, not even her cell phone to check the time, because she does not want to scare anyone or draw attention to herself. Zeba’s self consciousness demonstrates the extent to which public transit has become a hostile space for young Canadian Muslims.

The interviewees recall instances of both verbal and physical abuse in both public transit and other public places. The verbal abuse often involves being told to leave the country, as Zeba and Dawoud mention:

Zeba: On the subways, I’d have people make comments to me like, ‘Oh, you stupid terrorist, leave’ or ‘Why are you wearing that thing on your head? You shouldn’t be oppressed in this country’. ‘Go home, go back to your home’, stuff like that. I get comments like that on the subway, in grocery stores…One of my friends, she walks home from UTM, and she had people drive by scream and shout at her, ‘Oh you terrorist take off your scarf! You don’t belong in this country’. And it’s not happened once – it’s happened repeatedly. My cousin, she was at the parking lot in the grocery store; she was putting away her groceries in the car. This woman came up to her and said, ‘You should go home. You’re a terrorist you don’t belong here’.

Dawoud: In different universities, Muslim students’ associations have always had traditions of doing an Islam awareness week. At Laurier University someone came up to us and said, ‘Why are you guys here? Why don’t you go back from where you came from?’

Being told that they do not belong in Canada and asked to leave the country challenges and devalues Muslim Canadian citizenship. If young Canadian Muslims are not recognized as Canadian, they do not have access to nationality – the recognition of being a part of a people who constitute a nation, an important component of citizenship. By hurling these comments, individual Canadians play a direct role in turning public places into racialized spaces.

These experiences also illustrate the entitlement some ‘white’ Canadians feel towards their own Canadian citizenship, wherein they believe they have the right to
decide who belongs and does not belong in Canada. The notion that Canadian identity is often defined through whiteness, an argument made by many academics (Thobani 2007; Bannerji 2000; Razack 2004), may help explain why some ‘white’ Canadians feel this entitlement.

My research raises important issue about the complexity of citizenship. Academics have long argued that while minority groups may hold legal citizenship, they may still be treated as second class citizens, not full citizens (Young 1998; Sassen 2004). As my research shows, Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship is frequently given meaning through their face-to-face interactions with fellow Canadians. Treated as second class citizens, they face verbal and physical harassment at public places which have become racialized and dangerous for them.

**Loss of Religious Freedom**

In this section, I will show how by having their religious practices stigmatized through the covert and overt actions of other Canadians, young Canadian Muslims feel the lack of religious freedom. For Muslim women, this often involves the stigma of wearing the hijab, but a few Muslim men also speak of a lack of respect for their religious traditions. Pressured to assimilate and abandon their religious practices, Canadian Muslims often do not know whether they are being treated poorly due to their religious identity or for other reasons. This lack of religious freedom may be reinforced at the institutional level. Overall, any sort of religious affiliation with Islam may be perceived as a sign of support for terrorism.

Wearing the hijab is a religious practice frequently stigmatized by other Canadians. The experience of Haleema, a hijab-wearing Muslim woman, illustrates this:
Sometimes people make comments: ‘You don’t have to go around hiding your beauty or ‘you don’t have to go around trying to be so modest’. People say, ‘Oh by the way you guys are very beautiful. You don’t have to wear the hijab, and you don’t have to be hiding your looks. You know this is Canada. You’re free to do whatever you please. You don’t have to wear that’.

Disapproval of the hijab may be covert, as Nashida elaborates:

I think a lot of things don’t need to be said in words. I think a lot of things can be read through the face as well. The way they look at you, um, the way they turn their faces, um, it takes more to frown than it does to smile, and it was definitely not smiles. I will experience just like, looks, like as if I have like, really hurt someone, um, like meaningful, hateful looks, um, you know.

A number of scholars have argued that the North American public has increasingly identified the hijab with Islamic militancy extremism, oppression of women, and anti-Western sentiment (Ahmed 1992, Hoodfar 1993, Haddad 2007). This helps to explain the hostility Muslim women experience when they wear the hijab and why they are encouraged to remove it. But reprimanding Muslim women who wear the hijab shows disrespect of the religion, and undermines Muslims’ religious freedom in Canada.

Pressure is also put on these women to follow Western practices of displaying female physical beauty. In addition, the assumption that these women are not exercising individual choice in the wearing of the hijab fails to recognize Muslim women as full citizens in Canada. As noted by Nakano Glenn (2002) standing - being recognized as an adult capable of exercising choice and assuming responsibility – is an important facet of belonging. Not being accorded standing further undermines the citizenship Muslim women hold in Canada.

When Muslim women who wear the hijab are treated rudely by others, they often do not know if they are being treated badly because they are Muslim or if there is another reason. Amineh’s experience of receiving poor customer service is an example of this.
She says:

There was this one store, and we wanted a shirt, and we asked if they would call the other stores if they had that shirt, and she just said, ‘We are too busy, here’s the phone number call yourself’, and there was nobody else in that store. There was no line up. You just don’t get the standard of customer service that you know that other people are getting.

What is important about this experience is not just whether the workers in this store are discriminating against Amineh because of her Muslim identity. What is also important is that when Canadians Muslims are treated poorly, they do not have the peace of mind that comes with knowing whether they are being discriminated against because of their religious identity or if there is another factor. In discussing white privilege, Wise (2008) writes, ‘No white person, turned away after a store had closed, or given bad customer service, would ever have to consider that perhaps that had been treated that way because of our race. That is deep privilege, and a deep and abiding psychological comfort’ (72).

Like other racial minorities, Muslims lack this privilege, and the post 9/11 era, when Muslim communities are increasingly stigmatized for their Muslim identity, has undermined this peace of mind for Canadian Muslims.

Not having religious freedom is also an issue for Muslim men. Barkat is a teacher; his experience shows that Muslim men find themselves in situations where religious traditions are not respected:

I was taught, men and women they don’t shake hands, they don’t touch. One parent was quite offended by the fact that I wouldn’t shake her hand. She said, ‘I want to thank you for teaching my son’, she put out her hand, and I said, ‘Oh, I don’t shake hands’, very awkwardly and uncomfortably. So she said, ‘Oh, Mr. X, we are in Canada, and you have to learn to be here…’, and I said, ‘Yeah, but still’. And then she said, ‘Well, I’m going to give you a hug then’. Then she gave me a hug in front of her son, and I just kind of froze and started to walk away. And it was like, ‘Oh my gosh, what was that?’ I just felt, I’m going to use the word violated. What I felt was, I told you ‘No’ because of my religious beliefs, and you decided what you thought was more important so you just step right over that
detail that I just told you, and you were just going to do what you wanted to do anyways because this is Canada. So I suppose my right to be able to practice my religion the way I saw fit, in a way that was not harming anyone else, was not good enough.

Muslims’ religious rights are often violated, and Muslim Canadians are pressured to assimilate by abandoning their religious customs and traditions. But as Barkat suggests, many take offense and try to retain their religious customs.

A few interviewees feel their religious freedom is threatened at the institutional level. Dawoud says:

I was involved with this youth group, and after 9/11, we started getting a lot of e-mails from various members who were in high school telling us that their prayer space has been taken away for various reasons by the schools. And it wasn’t taken away as, ‘Sorry, we won’t let you pray anymore’, it was always taken away as, ‘Well, we need more classrooms. We don’t have enough classrooms, so sorry you’re prayer rooms are taken away’. And there was at least four schools in the Peel District School Board which did that, and we worked with a lawyer to basically send a letter saying that, according to the Peel Board of Education at least, that they’re required to make religious accommodations, and this comes in under that. We found out later that there were a lot more schools across the GTA, not just in Peel Board, but across the GTA, where prayer spaces were taken away. And again the fact that all that happened just after 9/11, it was the second week of school when 9/11 happened, and they had their prayer space for the first Friday, but they didn’t have it for the second Friday. And it’s somewhat odd that all of a sudden they need more classrooms.

This incident leads one to question whether any sort of religious affiliation with Islam may be perceived as a sign of aggression and support for terrorism at the institutional level. If this is the case, this undermining of religious freedom at the institutional level legitimates similar treatment in everyday interactions.

Loss of Economic Security

Young Canadian Muslims feel that the discrimination and hostility directed towards them in the post 9/11 era spills into their professional lives; as a result, their sense of economic security is jeopardized. My interviewees mention the following three factors. First,
immediately following 9/11, they heard stories of Muslims being fired from their jobs and Muslim businesses losing clients; this resulted in a climate of fear. Second, they feel their Muslim identity is a disadvantage when they are looking for work. As a result, some feel compelled to conceal their Muslim identity during job interviews, while others feel pressured by potential employers to abandon their religious customs. Third, in their work environment, the interviewees face problems that they feel can be attributed to their Muslim identity.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, stories began to circulate that Muslims were losing their jobs due to 9/11 and as a result a climate of fear ensued. Zamil, a 29-year-old man who has been living in Canada for the past year and has a West Indies background mentions:

A friend of mine was fired for making a comment. At their office, they were collecting money for the people post 9/11 at New York. And he suggested to one of his coworkers that they should donate money or collect money for the Afghanistan kids’ camps. He was fired for wanting to fundraise for Afghani orphans. His comment had nothing to do with politics, and he was Muslim, and he just thought it would be civil and humane and do some fundraising for the orphans - I guess not. Well his boss got mad at him for making that comment, and then a week later he was fired. His boss was like, ‘What the hell are you doing? We are not going to side with the terrorists’. And this was in Vancouver.

Although Zamil’s friend lacks absolute proof that he was fired because he was Muslim, his experience suggests that this was the case. Again, this story shows that in the context of heightened anti-Muslim hostility in the post 9/11 era, when Canadian Muslims have negative experiences at work, they do not know whether they are being discriminated against because of their Muslim identity. This greatly undermines their peace of mind.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, many feared that Muslim businesses would lose clients. Aamir comments that the textile business of his close family friends has
‘gone down at least 30 percent after 9/11’. Aalia mentions that her family was worried that her father’s pharmacy would lose clients, though they have not.

Many interviewees discuss difficulties finding work. This is especially a concern for Muslim women who wear the hijab, as Zeba’s experience illustrates:

I went to look for a job in the summer, and I went to this hosiery store in Sherway Gardens. It’s a very upper-class mall. This lady interviewed me and spoke to me, and then she called her supervisor, and she spoke to her supervisor, and then she told me she’s like, ‘Frankly, I can’t offer you the job, not because you’re not capable but just because you wear a scarf, and in this mall there’s a lot of rich people. So I don’t know how comfortable they’ll be with this so I can’t offer you the job. I’m sorry, but this is the case’. I was 16 or 17, so it was very heartbreaking. It was the first time that something so large scale discriminatory had happened to me. I never experienced something like that. I was very upset, very shocked.

Wearing the hijab can have serious economic consequences for Muslim women, as it can limit their opportunities to find work and further compromise their religious freedom in Canada.

Not finding work because of their Muslim identity is also a concern for Muslim men. Dawoud, who was having difficulty finding a co-op work term mentions that he suddenly ‘began getting more interviews and job offers’ when at his career counsellor’s suggestion, he deleted his involvement with Muslim organizations from his resume.

Dawoud’s experience illustrates how some Muslim Canadians feel compelled to conceal their Muslim identity when looking for work. In some instances, this entails altering their Muslim names. Sanya, a 25-year-old woman born in Canada and from an Indian-East African background, notes:

I know of a friend who, he also has a name that’s very like obviously Muslim, and he was having trouble finding one [a job], and he just graduated from a really good program at Waterloo. And all his friends were getting jobs, and he wasn’t getting anything. And one of the employers told him, you know, he’s like, ‘I suggest that you change your name a little bit so it doesn’t seem so obviously
Young Canadian Muslims may try to conceal their Muslim identity in other ways. For example, Dawoud mentions instances when men shave their beards to obtain work.

Samir, a 23-year-old man, who is a naturalized Canadian citizen with an Indian background, comments that some Muslim women ‘took off the hijab out of desperation because they couldn’t get a job otherwise’. Overall, some Canadian Muslims feel they have to hide their religious identity and customs to obtain work. Having to do so is a sign that they lack religious freedom. By changing their names, shaving their beards, or taking off the hijab, they conceal their religious identity, and compromise their sense of self.

Some young Canadian Muslims feel pressured by potential employers to abandon their religious customs. Umar, a 22-year-old man who immigrated to Canada four years ago from India, says:

I have a friend who is a mechanical engineer, and he went to one of the firms to have an interview, and the last thing they want to know is that he’s a Muslim. He goes there wearing a dress pant, and he was wearing the Islamic cap on his head, and he has a long really long beard. And the person interviewing said they encourage their employees to go clean because they meet a lot of people on the job. It’s offensive to him because you are calling him dirty because he has a beard, and he didn’t want the job after that. So for me, it is discriminatory. I was working at a restaurant, and I was told to shave my beard. I told the owner of the restaurant this is who I am, and it’s my right to practice my religion, and you cannot stop me, and I would go behind the store away from the dining area, and I prayed over there. And they finally understood I liked my job because I take my job seriously. I work sincerely as fast as I could. I got a lot of tips. Customers would come to the store manager and say things like, ‘He’s a nice guy, he smiles’, and the manager got to know me and understand that I need to pray and dress in a certain way.

It could be argued that these potential employers may disapprove of the interviewees’ religious practices for other reasons. Perhaps Umar’s boss did not want him to have the beard for reasons of hygiene. However, what is important is that when young Muslims
have these experiences or hear these stories they interpret them as a challenge to their religious freedom and pressure to assimilate. Umar’s experience also illustrates that some young Muslims feel they have to earn the right to practice their religion and are not automatically accorded this right.

A few young Canadian Muslims recall harassment from co-workers. Saud remembers the following:

I worked at Save on Foods. You would have the really loud guys that would sort of try to say things that are inappropriate like not come out and directly say that you are a terrorist, they would be a little more careful about it, but they would use the word Bin Laden a lot. I would tell a store manager and call them on it, and I would win the day, and the manager would say apologize. They would apologize in front of the manager, and then they would do it again.

The stereotypes attributed to Muslims, such as being associated with terrorism, can shape how Muslims are treated in the work environment. This is particularly the case for Muslim women. As noted, in the West, the hijab has increasingly been associated with oppression of women and with anti-Western sentiment (Hoodfar 1993; Glavanis 1998; Alexander 2004). This hostility towards the hijab can affect how Muslim women are treated in the work force, as Amineh’s experience illustrates:

I know this one girl that never used to wear the hijab, and then she started to wear the hijab, and all of her businesses jobs got cancelled. Like her boss was, like, you are not going to go on any of these customer relations stuff. He was like, ‘You are not the face of business that I want to be sending across the country’. My friend was pretty not impressed. She reported it.

Given the hostile reactions, some Muslim women are hesitant to wear the hijab at work. Aaeesha says:

My sister-in law wears the hijab, but she doesn’t wear it to work. And especially when she was starting her job last year [as a dental hygienist]. Sometimes I think at work, like with patients that she deals with, she finds that they treat her differently if she does wear it. So she doesn’t wear it to work.
Clearly, some Muslim women feel they lack religious freedom at work.

Some young Muslim women fear that the stereotypical image of Muslim women as oppressed and uneducated can jeopardize their career prospects. Bushra, an 18-year-old woman born in Canada and from an Indian-East African background, and Maria say:

Maria: I am a physiotherapist, even with my sisters, one of them is a lawyer the other is a teacher, and we are professional people, but people do not recognize us as that.

Bushra: Some of my friends wear the hijab and are trying to get jobs now, and they're not taken seriously, because a lot of my friends wanted to have, you know, a full career, and they were like, ‘Oh what about time for your family?’ and things like that, and she was like, ‘Well you didn't ask that girl’, and you know, just because I'm a traditional Muslim woman doesn't mean that I'm going to devote my entire life to my family either.

The gendered identity imposed on Muslim women as docile and submissive may have serious consequences for their professional lives.

My research shows that many of the young Canadian Muslims in this study feel their economic security has been jeopardized. They have trouble obtaining work, face pressure to conceal their Muslim identity, encounter workplace harassment, and worry about their future career prospects. Even though many are students and have not spent much time in the workforce, they have faced many problems in their limited time working. This suggests that discrimination against Muslims is prevalent in the workforce. More research on this is urgently required.

**Racialization of Gender Identities**

It is important to note that more women report facing discrimination than Muslim men. Out of the 30 interviewees who report experiencing direct discrimination, 18 (60 percent) are women, and 12 (40 percent) are men. Muslim women also report more threatening forms of abuse. Most of the incidents of discrimination that include physical intimidation
such as pushing and hitting, involve Muslim women. These findings are echoed by a study conducted by Cainkar (2005), which found that Arab Muslim women were nearly twice as likely to face verbal assaults as Muslim men in the US, three years after 9/11.

Although previous literature in the US also found that more Muslim women face discrimination than men, what remains unanswered is why this gender difference exists at all. My research suggests three reasons. First, due to the hijab, Muslim women are more visibly Muslim than are the men and therefore more easily targeted. Second, the hostility people express towards the hijab may help explain the intense discrimination directed at Muslim women. Third, Muslim women’s gender identities have been racialized.

By wearing the hijab, women are visibly Muslim. In fact, 72 percent (13 out of 18) of the Muslim women in my study who have experienced discrimination wear the hijab. Similarly, Cainkar’s (2005) study found that when assaults against Muslims occurred in a public space, a Muslim woman wearing the hijab was present more than 90 percent of the time. Dawoud mentions:

I think there can be some frustration on the mainstream community because they do not understand the concept of the hijab. They say, ‘Why do you continue to put yourself in a state where you are oppressed? Why are you wearing a hijab against your will? Why are you letting your husband or your brother dictate what you’re going to do, how you are going to look, how you are going to dress?’ It just boggles their mind. And if you have that idea in your head that they are doing it against their will, it just boggles your mind.

The hijab is seen as a direct challenge to Western notions of modernity, gender equality and the Western model of cultural behaviour. Hence, Muslim women may face more discrimination because of what the hijab has come to represent in the Western world.

Muslim women must also cope with the racialization of gender identity. In the post 9/11 era, Muslim women are increasingly othered through stereotypical conceptions.
While Muslim men are perceived to be barbaric and dangerous, Muslim women are imagined as passive and oppressed by their communities, as described by Rubina, a hijab-wearing 26-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada as a young child from Egypt:

They definitively think Muslim women are oppressed. Muslim women don’t have a choice to do anything that they want to do. They are submissive, and that they are domesticated – they just want to stay at home and have all sorts of children. They think that men are the opposite of the Muslim women. The men are oppressors of women and are anti-Western. They think Muslim men are very hardcore and passionate about everything that is anti-Western. They are violent...aggressive.

Academics argue that the primary gender identity imposed on Muslim women is oppression (Hoodfar 1993; Glavanis 1998, Alexander 2004, Alexander 2000). They also say this oppression is used to construct a negative image of Muslim communities as engaged in fundamentalism and opposed to Western freedom. This, in turn, allows the perpetuation of beliefs about Western dominance and calls on the Western tradition to protect women’s rights (Hoodfar 1993; Glavanis 1998, Alexander 2004).

Arguably, because of these gender identities attributed to Muslim women, some people may feel safer discriminating against Muslim women than Muslim men. Yazeed and Alisha, a hijab-wearing 26-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of 20 from Pakistan, comment:

Yazeed: It is much easier for a guy to pick on a woman than it is to pick on another guy. If you look at me, I am intimidating. People are intimidated by me. So you are going to think twice before you come after me. So I guess it has more to do with being coward and just going after the easier target.

Alisha: People think that a Muslim woman would not talk back to them. She wouldn’t raise her voice, she would just walk by, she wouldn’t even give it a second thought. People think you can call out against them on the street, and they would not talk back to you, they would just walk by. Whereas a man, they would think yes he would talk back, and he would be like, ‘Why did you call me by this
name?’ and so on, just that there would be retaliation from them, but not from the women.

Other interviewees agree that Muslim women are more singled out than Muslim men because people do not expect them to retaliate. Aneesha recalls that when she has spoken out against people who make derogatory comments, ‘they would always be dumbfounded. They’d be just confused. They couldn’t think of how a Muslim girl would be able to react to something like. I guess they would assume that with the hijab you would have to be very reserved and shy’.

My research shows that this gendered identity imposed on Muslim women as oppressed has serious consequences. Because people assume Muslim women are weak and lack agency, they may feel safer expressing their hatred to Muslim women than to men. Ironically, the attention paid to how Muslim women may be oppressed in their own communities makes them more vulnerable to discrimination from the outside.

**Resistance**

As demonstrated in previous sections, in the post 9/11 era, many of the interviewees in this study live in a climate where they increasingly feel that their Muslim identities are victimized. These interviewees no longer feel safe in Canada, they face harassment in public space, they experience the stigmatization of their religious practices, a loss of economic security, and the racialization of their gender identities. How do they deal with this? How do they contest the dominant conceptions imposed on them, including the assertion that they are a threat to Canada and do not belong in the country? In fact, they employ multiple strategies of resistance. First, they try to contact police and other institutions, often not with the best results. Second, they try to be on their best behaviour to dispel stereotypes about Muslims. Finally, they challenge the stereotypical conceptions
of their gender identities by acting differently from what is expected. All in all, young
Canadian Muslims invest both time and effort in their struggle against racism.

To begin, some interviewees try to resist verbal and physical abuse by contacting
the police. When Zeba’s friend was verbally harassed and called a terrorist by people
driving by, she contacted the police; Zeba comments that the police officer was very
helpful: ‘He calmed down her friend and said he would try to identify the people in the
car’. While the police were helpful in this instance, this is not always the case. For
instance, Abdual says that the police did not help when his wife, who wears the hijab,
was verbally and physically harassed on the street:

It's happened two times to my wife. One time it was a real attack from a homeless
individual that. He was swearing a lot and saying, ‘Muslim – you're friends of Bin
Ladin get out of my country’, and he's trying to touch my wife; he's trying to
attack her. Even my son was there, he's like 6 years old, and he was scared and
nobody tried to help her on the street. She was on Bay Street, a very lively area at
around 5pm, all the people are going, and nobody tries to help her, and she called
the police…The really bad thing is that she was waiting at the place for one whole
hour waiting for the police to come, and they didn't come. And she called me
here, and I said to her ‘Just go home’, and they went to home, and I called 9-1-1
again and they came around 11pm – which is 6 hours after what happened. We
had thought that we are in a country that is safe. It can't be that you call the police
and say ‘Somebody is attacking me’, and police don’t come. It's something
similar to what happened in rural areas in Egypt, which we are always making fun
of. It was really a bad experience. We are not living in the best of place as we
should be.

The lack of police response to discrimination can weaken Muslims’ sense of safety.

Abdual says that after this experience, he started to regret his decision to move his family
to Canada from Egypt.

The lack of response comes from other institutions as well. For instance, Maria
talks about how the administration at the University of Toronto failed to respond after she
and a friends were verbally and physically harassed at Hart House, a student athletic centre. She recalls the following:

This woman starts shouting, ‘Go back to your country’. I was born in Kitchener. And she continues, ‘You terrorists’. She looked so mad. She’s screaming at the top of her lungs. It is 12:20, and Hart House is full, and there are tons of people there in that room, and not one person got up to say anything. I told my friend ‘Let’s just get out of here’. When we get to the Hart House desk, we told them that there was this angry woman shouting at them, and asked them to call the campus police. We called right away, and the police did not show up. They just didn’t respond. We went to the campus police ourselves – you have to cross campus… and they said, ‘Oh we got that phone call’, and I was ‘Like that didn’t sound urgent to you’, and we were actually scared because she looked so angry. I’m generally not scared of people, but if you have the guts to touch me in public, you have the guts to do much more. So we went to the police ourselves, and gave the description of the two women and what they did. But nobody called us, nobody contacted us, and nobody asked us anything,... We assumed that they would. We thought there would be a protocol when something happens…At least a call from the diversity officer or the campus police or Hart House or somebody but nobody really contacted us.

Frustrated by the lack of university response, Maria and her friend went to the Muslim Student Association, who later organized a workshop about Islamphobia on campus.

They invited the university administration to discuss the incident, as Maria remembers:

The workshop was good, but it was just odd because it was put on by students and not by any administration. The University of Toronto diversity officer at the workshop told us ‘Not to make a big deal’, and we said, ‘We wouldn’t have made a big deal out of it if you guys had done something’. And then we went talk to him personally, and then he did apologize as well. The ironic thing is that there should be university protocol when something like this happens, like there’s university protocol when there’s sexual harassment. There is still not protocol for racial harassment.

Poynting and Perry (2007) note that hate motivated violence can only flourish in an enabling environment. By failing to reprimand hate crimes, law enforcement agents and major institutions like universities enable those who commit them and reinforce the discrimination against Canadian Muslims. But as my research shows, interviewees like
Maria refuse to be silenced and challenge institutions that fail to respond to discrimination.

Since such attempts to report discrimination are often unsuccessful, the interviewees contest the dominant conceptions of Muslim Canadians in their daily lives by constantly being on their ‘best behaviour’. Samir says:

If you make one wrong comment, and you’ve kind of screwed yourself over. It might be something as small as a joke. If it’s taken the wrong way, people are going to paint Muslims with the same brush. I have to be on my best behaviour. Like I have to be the best Muslim possible. If not, it’s going to affect all Muslims. If I do something, people are going to expect that all from all Muslims. So for example, if that Muslim guy lied to me, so that means all Muslims are liars... Let’s say if I was a Christian Caucasian male, and I just happen to lie to somebody, it’s seen as you know – he lied – he is a bad person. Whereas you know, if it’s a Muslim it’s like, ‘He lied, he’s a Muslim – it’s part of his faith’.

Some young Canadian Muslims feel pressure to be a positive representation of their faith, and this affects their daily lives. Since they do not have the privilege that other dominant groups have in Canada, they feel their actions will be seen as representative of their entire faith. This pressure to be on their best behaviour is especially felt by Muslim women who wear the hijab, as Rubina and Atiya describe:

Rubina: I always feel that I have to be on my [best behaviour]. Because I know that people look at me, and I know that I represent my religion, and I worry about everything that I do know – that this is what represent, and I know what people think about it, and on every occasion if it’s possible maybe I try to change their minds about Islam.

Atiya: I feel like I have more responsibility. Like if I was experiencing road rage before, and I wanted to flip the bird, I would have done it before. But now I am wearing the scarf, and now they are going to look at me and feel that all Muslims are like this, and so I feel that I have to be more aware of my actions. I had to be more careful because I know that people are not going to be, ‘Oh she is a crazy driver’. They are going to say that ‘Muslim is a crazy driver’. So I have to be on my best behaviour all of the time. So yeah, it has made me more aware of my actions and how people would react. So even if I am having a terrible day, I will still smile at people because people are just going to think that I am a crappy Muslim. And because I wear the scarf, I am representing my faith the entire time.
In short, to present a positive image of Muslims, the interviewees may conceal their negative emotions and work to display a positive image. Haleema, who wears the hijab, says she wears bright colors to look more positive and ‘less oppressed’. She states, ‘I try not to wear all black because I think that that is another stereotype or idea that Muslims are so gloomy and that they always dress that way...So I try to and put a positive image to kind of counter that negative image’.

While Haleema tries to create a more positive image of Muslim women through her clothing, Alisha tries to be on her best behaviour while using public transportation. She mentions:

Yeah, like when you walk on the subway, you want to get up your seat every time an old lady passes by, I really want to get up and let her have the seat – yes it’s a part of my religion – but it’s also so people don’t think that I am rude.

As noted earlier, public places, especially public transportation, have become racialized spaces for Muslim Canadians. To deal with this, young Muslims like Alisha may try to be as courteous as possible while using public transit, in an effort to make these places less hostile.

Overall, my research shows that young Canadian Muslims invest a great deal of time and energy into counteracting the negative images of Islam and Muslims. In some instances, this involves emotional work – they conceal their negative emotions and behave in a positive manner. In other instances, it involves changing their appearance or being extra courteous to other Canadians.

The interviewees also work hard at challenging stereotypical conceptions about their gender identity. As previously discussed, in the post 9/11 era Muslim women are increasingly imagined as passive and oppressed by their communities, while Muslim men
are perceived as barbaric and dangerous. As a result of these dominant conceptions, in
their struggle against racism, young Canadian Muslims invest a great deal of time
establishing themselves as thinking, rational, educated, and peaceful persons. Alisha and
Haleema say the following:

Alisha: I’m doing biochemistry. And professors, they don’t expect a girl wearing
a hijab to walk into their class. They think someone like me wouldn’t be
interested in university life, or if I was I’d more interested in social sciences. A lot
of us try to shatter these stereotypes, but yes, we do carry an added burden of
having to shatter them. I try to be more outgoing in class and be nicer to non-
Muslims. In class, I try to give it my best. I try to impress the prof. I try to ask
[smart] questions and just try to be intelligent. Even when I am talking to a
‘white’ person in general, I try not to ask dumb questions. I also try to be more
outgoing – something I am not – but just to shatter their image of me being
obedient and you know just staying at home and not doing anything. It makes my
life more difficult because I have to shatter these stereotypes. So in that sense, it
makes life harder on me.

Haleema: Me being in school should show you that Muslim women can be smart,
they can be intelligent. And don’t stereotype us in that way that we should stay
home, and cook and clean, and you don’t stereotype us in that way. …I think a lot
of minorities feel, especially when you are the only minority in class, you feel that
you have to excel because you feel that extra burden. You have something to
prove. Like speaking up more in tutorials and what not, especially when you are
the only Muslim girl.

These two experiences illustrate the attempts by Canadian Muslim women to challenge
the stereotypical conceptions of their gender identities. The feel they have to go out of
their way, even if it means not acting like themselves, to challenge the preconceived ideas
about what it means to be Muslim women, which, in turn, causes more work for them. It
is important to note that both Haleema and Alisha wear the hijab – this may make them
even more determined to challenge stereotypes.

Some Muslim women who wear the hijab challenge the gendered stereotypes by
directly confronting their detractors:
Aneesha: First, I would not just reply back if someone said something mean, and then the other time someone said I was ‘making soldiers die in Afghanistan’. I actually went up to the person and said, ‘How I am causing anything?’ And I had a discussion with that person. I said, ‘How can I as a Muslim practicing my religion in Canada be causing people to join the army and cause them to die?’ I tried to be rational with them. The person was dumbfounded. They couldn’t believe how a Muslim girl was able to react to something like that.

Atiya: My mom and us, we often get people giving us these weird looks, and I have this very aggressive character, and so sometimes, I say, ‘Hey what are you looking at?’ and that kind of freaks them out because they are like, ‘Oh wow she is really speaking out against to us’. But it is me saying you are not going to intimidate me.

By doing the opposite of what is expected of them by society, these women attempt to constructive alternative meanings about what it means to be Muslim women.

A few Muslim men also feel compelled to challenge how their gender identities have been racialized. This includes contesting the notion that they are dangerous and violent, as Abdual and Dawoud say:

Abdual: I am the father of two daughters. I want people to know that we are good Muslims. I want people to see that I am not some crazy and tough Muslim guy with my daughters. So it’s a lot of burden. I feel like we need to show others that I actually do listen to my wife. So yes, I have this burden.

Dawoud: My outreach work in a non-Muslim community has been more about being an example. Being a visible practicing Muslim, who would fit the profile otherwise of someone that they would be scared of. But then behaving in a manner they should learn to accept me and not be afraid of me.

As Abdual and Dawoud’s experiences suggests, constantly having to challenge gendered identities is a burden. Although young Muslims may challenge stereotypical conceptions, it is not easy for them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I show how the dominant conceptions imposed on young Canadian Muslims, including the notion that they are not really Canadian and are a threat to the
nation, present serious consequences for them. While most of the interviewees grew up in Canada feeling like outsiders because of their racial and immigrant identities, this changed after 9/11, when the simple fact of being Muslim garnered attention, and Muslims were increasingly perceived as dangerous.

Being seen as a threat to the nation has resulted in the interviewees losing their sense of safety and security; simply stated, they live in a climate of fear. They feel particularly vulnerable in public places and can be afraid to display their Muslim identity in public. Public spaces have become racialized for them as they now experience verbal and physical abuse because of their Muslim identity. Public transportation, in particular, has become a racialized space. Harassed in public spaces, they are repeatedly told they do not belong in Canada.

The vilification of Muslim identity goes hand in hand with the lack of respect shown to Muslim traditions and customs. Young Muslims feel their religious freedom is threatened when their religious practices, such as wearing the hijab, are ridiculed by other Canadians. This lack of religious freedom may be supported at the institutional level. As a result of such experiences, when young Canadian Muslims are treated poorly, they may not know whether they are being treated poorly due to their religious identity or because of another reason; this uncertainty affects their peace of mind.

The interviewees feel the hostility directed at Muslim communities in the post 9/11 era spills into their work and professional lives. Immediately following 9/11, many feared that Muslims would lose their jobs, and Muslim businesses would lose clients. Because they feel that their Muslim identity is a disadvantage when they look for work, some feel compelled to conceal their Muslim identity or are pressured by others to do so.
Some of the interviewees recall workplace harassment, which they feel is due to their Muslim identity.

Young Canadian Muslims also experience the racialization of their gender identities. Muslim men are imagined as barbaric and dangerous, while Muslim women are perceived to be passive and oppressed by their communities. These dominant conceptions about Muslim gender identities can be particularly dangerous for Muslim women. Because people assume that Muslim women are weak and have no agency, they may feel safer in physically harassing them than Muslim men. Furthermore, Muslim women are highly visible if they wear the hijab, and given the general hostility towards the hijab, they may be more vulnerable to discrimination.

Young Canadian Muslims try very hard to counter the dominant conceptions that are imposed on them. They try to be on their best behaviour, in a bid to reverse negative stereotypes. To contest the racialization of their gender identities, they create alternative meanings about what it means to be a Muslim man or woman. All in all, the interviewees invest a great deal of time and energy in their struggle against racism.

As noted earlier, Nakano Glenn (2002) argues that it is important to treat citizenship as localized. In this chapter, I have illustrated the powerful role individual Canadians can play in undermining the Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship. Through their negative interactions with other Canadians, many young Muslims in this study have lost their sense of safety in Canada, public spaces have become racialized for them, their religious freedom is threatened, their gender identities are racialized, and their economic security is jeopardized. Significantly, Nakano Glenn (2002) argues when individual actors define and redefine citizenship boundaries, they draw on social norms and values
established by the larger societal structure. The state plays a large role in defining these social norms. Similarly, Poynting and Perry (2007) emphasize that state practices that stigmatize or marginalize traditional oppressed groups, whether at the institutional or local level, legitimate the mistreatment of these same groups on the streets. An issue I have not yet explored is how the state may actively work to marginalize Canadian Muslims. Therefore, I dedicate the following chapter to examining how surveillance practices sanctioned by the state impact young Muslims' sense of belonging and citizenship in Canada.
Chapter Three

Flying without Citizenship:

Canadian Young Muslims’ Experiences of Security and Surveillance

In the summer of 2006, Maria and her friend, both Canadian-born Muslims who wear the hijab, went to Egypt for the summer to take part in a special training practicum for their occupational therapy Master’s program. While they had a great time in Egypt, their travel back to Canada was anything but fun. When they were connecting through London and were in line for the security check, two male security guards shouted, ‘You two get out of line’. After taking them aside, the security personnel told them to ‘leave the airport’. When the girls replied that they couldn’t leave because they were going to Canada, they were ‘further checked and … interrogated for five hours’. This interrogation involved security personnel looking though the girls’ belongings, including ‘extensively’ looking at Maria’s MRI x-rays which she had with her for medical reasons. Maria found this ‘quite intrusive’ and had to stop them from putting her x-rays through the scanning machines, as this would have ruined them. The security personnel asked questions about their background, why they had gone to Egypt, and why they didn’t just do the special school program in Canada. When Maria finally decided to protest, the following happened:

Finally I got a little upset, and I asked them why they are asking me this, and why they didn’t ask anybody else, and in front of everybody, the security guard said, ‘Why do you dress like that if you don’t want to be questioned?’ And so I didn’t say anything; I just shut up. Cause if somebody is going to say something like that, no matter what I say, they are going to refuse everything I say based on what I’m wearing. The only thing I said in response was ‘It’s sad to know that racism still exists’.
This is an example of the mistreatment Muslims are subject to at airports and border crossings and how they feel forced to comply with such surveillance, despite attempts at resistance. During the course of 50 in-depth interviews with young Muslims, I heard a number of similar stories. Many emphasize that for them, one of the most profound consequences of 9/11 has been this increased surveillance.

Although academics have acknowledged that the security measures implemented in North America post 9/11 specifically target Muslims, making them vulnerable to discrimination (Macklin 2001; Helly 2004; Lyon 2006), their actual experiences of surveillance have not been extensively examined in academic literature. In a bid to fill this gap, I focus on three key issues in this chapter. First, I explore how Canadian Muslims experience surveillance at airports and borders. This includes examining how they experience the targeting of their Muslim identity through intrusive questioning and searches, the undermining of their sense of Canadian citizenship, racialization, and gendered surveillance at airports and borders. Second, I examine how young Muslims have handled and responded to the surveillance they face at airports and borders. Third, I investigate how they experience surveillance in their daily lives. Exploring these issues gives an opportunity to learn the meaning of surveillance practices to young Canadian Muslims and how they use individual agency to resist dominant conceptions attached to being Muslim.

Canada’s Anti-terrorist Legislation

After 9/11, Canada joined the US and the UK in introducing and strengthening anti-terrorism legislation. Canada’s anti-terrorism Bill C36, adopted on December 7, 2001, modified 22 existing laws, including the criminal code, the protection of personal
information, access to information, and the request for evidence. This new legislation also led to the creation of criminal offenses such as facilitating and enticing terrorist acts (Helly 2004; Poynting & Perry 2007). Since the bill was passed just a few months after 9/11, it has been criticized for being conceived with little time for thoughtful reflection or public debate (Poynting & Perry 2007). It has also been accused of allowing the profiling of Muslims by security services at borders and airports. Academics argue these new measures enable the Canadian Security Intelligence Services (CSIS) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to collect intelligence from people active within the Muslim community and from Muslims whose immigration status is uncertain (Helly 2004; Poynting & Perry 2007). Poynting and Perry write that Canada’s anti-terrorist legislation, ‘allows for an unprecedented extension of intrusive law enforcement activities on one hand, and contraction of individual and collective rights on the other’ (2007:163).

The introduction of anti-terrorist legislation and the increase in surveillance in Canada is connected to Canada’s geographical proximity to the United States. The US is Canada’s primary political, military, and economic ally. Not surprisingly, then, after 9/11, the US demanded that Canada align its policies on immigration control, political asylum, and security with American ones (Choudry 2001; Macklin 2001; Morgan 2001; Helly 2004; Lyon 2006).

The enactment of Canada’s anti-terrorist legislation has been accompanied by protests from Canadian human rights groups and Canadian Muslim organizations, who caution that these measures not only make Muslim individuals vulnerable to intrusive surveillance, but reinforce public perceptions that Muslim communities are a threat to Canada (Helly 2004; Poynting & Perry 2007). Their fears are not unfounded. Through
the use of the new anti-terrorist legislation, Canada has invoked ‘national security’ to block incarcerated Muslims from learning what evidence is being used against them (Dossa 2008). Since 2001, security certificates have been used by Canada to jail six Muslims suspected of potential terrorist activity, with no trial and without any evidence shown to them, their lawyers, or the public. Furthermore, on June 3, 2006, when seven Toronto Muslim men, five under the age of 18 were arrested for having ‘intent’ to engage in terrorism, no evidence was made accessible to their lawyers or the public (Dossa 2008).

Muslim Canadians have also been subject to increased surveillance in their daily lives. A 2004 Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CANADA) report documents that many Canadian Muslims have been questioned by law enforcement agents. Out of 467 respondents, 8% had been contacted, and among those not contacted, about half (43%) knew at least one Canadian Muslim who had (CAIR-CANADA 2004). These encounters with law enforcement agents often involve the following: aggressive and threatening behaviour; threats of arrest; problematic and suggestive questions; improper identification; attempts to recruit participants as informants; and interrogation of minors (CAIR-CANADA 2004).

Simply stated, these and other measures of social control, policing, and legislative regulation that have emerged in the post 9/11 era undermine the citizenship and sense of belonging of Muslims in Western nations. Fekete writes that ‘new legislation, policing and counter terrorist measures are casting Muslims, whether settled or immigrant, as the enemy within’ (2004: 3). Stein notes that racial profiling dehumanizes Muslims, constructs them as the enemy, and gives government the opportunity to increase security
and surveillance practices substantially. Thaler (2004) emphasizes that social control, policing, and legislative regulation have resulted in the racialization of Islamic personhood. What is further problematic is that the use of security and surveillance practices to construct Muslims as the enemy can result in discrimination in domains such as employment, financial relations, and personal relationships (Macklin 2001; Thobani 2007).

When trying to understand the increased surveillance of Muslims, it is important to investigate what purpose it serves. Fekete (2004) mentions that the labelling of Muslims as the enemy gives governments the opportunity to substantially increase security and surveillance practices. Since 9/11, citizens have been led to think of any bombing in any part of the world as an immediate threat to their own personal security. Fekete says, ‘The constant reference to spectacular events, like those of 9/11 serves a wider political arena; that of manufacturing consent to increasingly intrusive surveillance and the circumscription of personal freedoms through the evocation of fear’ (2004: 7). Hence, Muslims are depicted as threats, becoming scapegoats in a bid to garner support for the increased security and surveillance perpetrated by Western states upon their citizens.

In a similar vein and referring to the situation in the US, Stein argues that the construction of Muslims as the enemy provides an effective way to control the domestic population. In other words, it leads to citizens projecting their fears and frustrations onto Arabs and Muslims. So too, Grewal (2003) says that the categorization of Muslims and those resembling Muslims as the enemy allow people to ‘share this knowledge of threat and act on it, and thus to become secure by managing this threat’ (2003:504). Grewal
(2003) points out that the categorization of Muslims as the enemy has allowed the resurgence of American nationalism: ‘thus within the racial hierarchies of the US, another racial formation was created that produced a new other that could produce “Americans” through their solidarity with those who died or suffered in the attacks and through their difference from the terrorists’ (2003: 548).

Thobani (2007) and Ahmad (2002) argue that the racial profiling of any minority group is indicative of the problematic relationship that all racialized people, immigrants and non-immigrants alike, have with Western democracies. Thobani says that racial profiling puts racial minorities ‘back’ in their place as outsiders in the West. Similarly, Ahmad (2002) and Macklin (2001) note that racial profiling and the detention of ‘Muslim-looking’ individuals fall in line with past racialized American and Canadian immigration policies, such as Asian exclusion laws or Japanese internment during the Second World War.

Much has been written about the security and surveillance practices implemented post 9/11. However, as noted above, the academic literature does not provide an adequate understanding of how young Muslims have personally experienced these new security measures, how they have come to understand their experiences at airports and border crossings, and the impact on their lives. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate ethnic and racial profiling but to consider what these experiences mean for young Muslims’ sense of belonging and citizenship in Canada.

Airports and border crossings are a focal point for my research, because here, Muslims directly interact with state policy and state agents. Choudhry (2001) says:

First there is the use of profiling at the border, with respect to the degree of scrutiny that travelers-be they citizens, permanent residents, or visitors –
by customs and immigration officers as they enter Canada. Second, there is the use of profiling by airport security, prior to boarding, on both domestic and international flights (Choudhry 2001: 370).

Although racial profiling is not officially sanctioned at Canadian border and airports, racism as a racialized discourse may be manifested in the articulation of state policies and practices (Badhi 2003). In this work, I contend that a racialized discourse is implicit in government attempts to ensure safety and security. More particularly, by authorizing ‘differences’ and ‘similarities’ between individuals at airport and borders, state practices are deeply involved in undermining individuals’ sense of citizenship.

Airport security has become an increasing concern in Canada since 9/11 (Lyon 2006). Through section 4.7 of the Aeronautics Act, employees of commercial airlines and airport security personnel have the discretion to decide if a person or his/her possessions should be searched (Choudhry and Roach 2002; Bahdi 2003). They can also remove someone from an aircraft. People who appear to be Muslim or Arab may face more scrutiny due to this discretionary power (Bahdi 2003). Furthermore, under section 4.83 of the Aeronautics Act, airline carriers can provide information about their passengers to governments. As a result, Bahdi notes that individuals who are Muslim or look Muslim may be subject to surveillance in the US despite having Canadian citizenship. Hence, Muslims are affected not only by Canadian laws but by international policies. However, Bahdi (2003) also says that because racial profiling takes place on the ground and is often the result of discretionary decision-making, it is difficult to determine the extent to which it occurs. By exploring how young Muslims understand their experiences at airports and borders and how they attempt to deal with them, I hope to contribute to the limited knowledge about racial profiling at airports.
While no official legislation calls for profiling at border crossings in Canada, Pratt and Thompson (2008) find that despite official denials, many border officers admit that racial profiling does occur. Border officials use the ambiguity about what actually constitutes racial profiling to engage in it without repercussions. Some define racial profiling as the explicit and official directive to target specific racial groups. Pratt and Thompson (2008) say that officials use this narrow definition to deny that profiling occurs. Racial profiling also involves ‘less official patterns and organizational mechanisms of racialized decision making that include ‘race’ but that extend also to other eclectic blends of ethnicity, culture and religion’ (621). Pratt and Thompson find that border officials use an awkward mix of racial, national, and regional indicators to profile individuals. While they explore the strategies used by border officials, however, they do not document how these counter terrorism measures impact upon the experiences and lives of young Canadian Muslims.

**Young Muslims experiences of surveillance at airports and borders**

There is a widespread belief among the interviewees that Muslims are subject to extra surveillance at airports and borders. When asked whether they thought Muslims underwent extra searches at airports and border crossings, 49 out of 50 interviewees say yes. Sixty percent of the interviewees, 30 out of 50, recall feeling unfairly treated by security personnel while travelling. Meanwhile 78 percent, 39 out of 50, say their family and/or friends have faced similar problems. This high percentage is important. Having people close to you face discrimination can be just as troubling as facing discrimination personally. Therefore, I examine not only the experiences of my interviewees, but consider the experiences of their friends and family as well.
Overall, the young Muslims in this study describe in detail 81 incidents in which either they or people they knew experienced unfair treatment at airports and borders by security personnel. Fifty-seven (70 percent) of these incidents occurred at airports, while 24 (30 percent) occurred at border crossings. The higher percentage of incidents at airports may be a result of the interviewees travelling more through airports than through border crossings. Forty-seven (58 percent) of these incidents occurred while the interviewees were in the US or trying to enter the US. Twenty-six incidents (32 percent) occurred in Canada, six (7 percent) occurred in England, and one each in Italy and Israel. These findings suggest that Canadian Muslims are indeed impacted by state practices at airports and borders in the US.

Arguably, the majority of the incidents occur in the US because young Canadian Muslims travel more to the US than to Europe or other parts of the world due to its close proximity. Because the US substantially increased security and surveillance after 9/11, it is possible that Canadian Muslims are more vulnerable to discrimination at airports and borders when travelling there. In fact, many interviewees frequently face problems while travelling to the US. However, since 32 percent of the incidents occurred in Canada, the extra surveillance of Muslims at airports and borders is not restricted to the US, but is a problem in Canada as well.

As noted above, while previous literature has acknowledged that Muslims face extra surveillance, how they experience this at airports and border crossings has not been explored. Therefore, in the following sections, I first explore how feeling they are questioned and searched more than others at airports and borders gives young Muslims the sense that their Muslim identity is perceived as a security threat. Next, I examine how
they feel their Canadian citizenship is threatened through surveillance practices. Then, I look at their experience of racialization. I conclude by focusing on how young Muslims experience gendered surveillance at airports and borders.

**Experiencing invasive questioning and intrusive searches**

By and large, my interviewees say state surveillances practices treat their Muslim identities as dangerous and as potential security risks. There is a prevalent feeling that Muslims are subject to greater physical intimidation at airports and border, and this intimidation involves intrusive questioning and invasive searches. They say that religious practices are targeted as security risks. But by labelling searches random, the interviewees feel official attempts are made to hide this targeting of Muslims. Because airports and borders have become a hostile environment for Muslims, even when they undergo a standard search, their emotional experience of being searched is different than it is for others.

Many young Muslims recall facing invasive questioning at airports and borders. Samir, a 23-year-old man who immigrated to Canada from India as a young child, and Aatifa, a 24-year-old woman who is a naturalized Canadian citizen with a Saudi Arabian background, say:

Samir: If you’re travelling with a group, you’ll be taken in separate interrogations and you’ll be asked really specific questions. Even if one question happens to be a little bit off from maybe one of your peers, even if it’s the most irrelevant thing like, ‘How long have you lived at your current residence?’ Maybe your sister will say three years, and maybe you’ll say two years. Something as insignificant is taken as ‘Oh, maybe they’re hiding something. This is their story, they messed up’.... So the whole being interrogated, one thing. Two, being interrogated separately from your peers, and three, just that fact you’re being interrogated for travelling. Like, you haven’t done a crime in the air, you’re just travelling.

Aatifa: This was very recent one, last year. Before that I’ve never had any kind of a weird border experience. But the [security] guy, first of all he couldn’t say
Bangladesh; instead he read it as Baghdad. I don’t know if he was having fun or not. But he asked where we were going, so my dad said we were going to visit my uncle’s place. And he started asking how long have you known them? How long have they lived there? Where do they live there? Do they rent a house or have they bought the house? All these nitty gritty things which I didn’t think they were important, but he started asking these. We kind of got a little cynical at that point thinking the only reason he might’ve asked all those questions is just because he was waiting for an opportunity for us to get angry or say something like, ‘Why do you need to know all this?’ so then they can justify pulling us over maybe.

As these comments show, young Muslims react with anger and frustration at being treated as potential security threats just because they are Muslim. Worse, they think security personnel try to trick them into saying something damaging or into acting hostile so they can be detained even further.

This intimidation frequently targets their religious practices. Maria says she has been ‘questioned’ about her faith, a fact that she finds ‘ironic’. She notes that security personnel will ask ‘if you’re practicing’, ‘what you believe in’ which is ‘funny cause what does it have to do with searching my bag?’ This questioning of religious practices suggests that some security personnel at airports and borders equate Islam and being Muslim with suspicion and terrorism, a point also made by academics (Helly 2004, Fekete 2004; Thaler 2004). Having their religious practices questioned in such a manner is interpreted by the interviewees as a direct attack on their Muslim personhood.

In addition to extra questioning at airports and border crossings, the young Muslims in this study believe that they and their belongings undergo extra searching at airports and borders. For instance, Sakeena who is Canadian-born citizen with a Pakistani background, and Zaahir, who is a naturalized Canadian citizen with a Saudi Arabian background, say:

Sakeena: Oh, in the airports actually, I’ve noticed a lot in the airports. I’ve done quite a lot of travelling post-9/11. And for instance I’ll be with all Caucasian
people, and I’ll be the one that’s stopped to go through my luggage, and things like that.

Zaahir: When my brother and I were about to board the plane [in the US], we were asked to come on the side for a security check where they checked our luggage again. They say it is random but to me it doesn’t seem very ‘random’. I think people who are working there are privileged with exercising their judgment which I think might be discriminatory.

These examples capture how Muslims from diverse ethnic backgrounds and gender recall being singled out by negatively biased security personnel.

The discretionary power given airport security to determine who should be searched allows for the scrutiny of those who are Muslim or who appear Muslim. My research shows this can result in traumatic experiences for Muslims, thus impacting their sense of safety and dignity. One of Amineh’s friends who wears the hijab was strip searched at the Washington airport despite not triggering the metal detector; she later successfully sued security officials for violating accepted procedures. To this, Zeba adds:

My friends when driving down to the States through the border, and they’ve had their entire car searched; they’ve had dogs come around their car. They have small children in their car, and they’ve had the dogs come around their car. They’ve been withheld for about two, three hours at security.

The distrust of Muslims is so high that security personnel may have no regard for children with Canadian citizenship; they may even violate official surveillance procedures. Because these state practices often involve being detained for hours, some Muslims have ‘come close to missing their flights’; in some cases, they actually have.

Also as noted above, many interviewees feel that official attempts are made to downplay discriminatory practices at airports and borders. Most mention that when they are interrogated at airports and/or border crossings, they are told it is a ‘random’ search. Yazeed says:
They say they have ‘random’ checks, but they don’t seem ‘random’ to me because I do get checked every time I go through them. They say it’s a ‘random’ check, but I do always get checked. Chance alone says it shouldn’t be happening.

Many interviewees express frustration at being picked out of a line and told it is a ‘random check’, when they firmly believe they are being targeted due to their Muslim identities.

It is important to question the purpose of classifying these checks as ‘random’. Does it allow security personnel to conduct checks under the guise of fairness? Does it silence potential protests? Does the classification of searches as ‘random’ bolster the official discourse which states that no racial profiling occurs at airports and borders in Canada and the US? Or does it help to hide the violation of Muslim’s citizenship rights?

Overall, most interviewees believe that their Muslim identities are treated as security risks, and as a result, state surveillance practices are targeted towards Muslims. Because airports and borders have become such a hostile environment for them, even when Muslims undergo standard searches, the emotional experience of being searched at airports and borders is different for them than it is for others. This can be seen in Aaeesha’s account of her father’s experience of being searched after 9/11:

My dad was really angry. Because he wouldn’t have any trouble, he’d go through fine, and now it’s, like, he is stopped. He has to take off his belt and everything, and before (9/11) he didn’t have to do that.

It may be argued that non-Muslims also have to take off their belongings while going through security check points. However, when Muslims are searched at airports and borders, they fear they are being targeted because of their religious identity, and this affects their emotional experience of being searched.
Experiencing the challenging of their citizenship

Surveillance at airports and borders is experienced by the interviewees as a direct challenge to their Canadian citizenship. Having difficulty re-entering Canada and not being recognized as Canadian by other nation-states indicates to Canadian Muslims that they lack access to allegiance and nationality, two important components of citizenship. Furthermore, since citizenship is often given meaning at the local level, being mistreated by security officials and facing hostility from the general public at airports and borders makes them question how their Canadian citizenship is valued in society.

Seventy-three percent (22 out of 30) of the interviewees who recall facing discrimination at airport and borders are Canadian citizens; 40 percent (12 out of 30) were born in Canada, while the remaining 33 percent (10 out of 30) are naturalized citizens. When these interviewees and their family members face surveillance at airports and borders, they see it as a direct challenge to their Canadian citizenship. Aaeesha and Farah, a 20-year-old Canadian-born Muslim women who does not wear the hijab and who comes from an East African and Indian background, comment:

Aaeesha: You could be a Canadian citizen, and you could have lived here for years, and yet they will stop you. I don’t agree with that. And I find that they do that more and more. I think that the trust citizens had before 9/11 is not there anymore.

Farah: It is saddening that a country that you live in would do that to you, that they would do that to a loyal citizen that had been living here for so long.

Clearly, Muslims’ sense of citizenship and belonging in Canada is impacted by the surveillance procedures at airports and borders within Canada. They feel allegiance is not allocated to them (in other words, they are not viewed as loyal members of society), and as a result, they face intrusive questions and searches.
A few interviewees are especially troubled about the difficulty some Canadian Muslims experience re-entering Canada after travelling abroad. Asima and Zaahir describe the following:

Zaahir: Coming back to Canada has always been a problem. People would see that I am born in Saudi Arabia, that I am Muslim, my family is all Muslim, so based on that they spend a lot of time going through our belongings or doing security checks. The reason why I see it as unfair is that we have been Canadians for 18 years without a blemish or any bad records.

Asima: When my dad was coming back, it was not actually in the States, it was in Canada. In the airport, they stripped all of his stuff, went through everything, and they made him take off his shoes. And he was a Canadian citizen. He has been here for 23 years. They checked everything, and they still kept him there for so long for questioning. And to everybody else was they were saying, ‘Just go through’. He was really upset about that, especially because it happened in Canada. He was not expecting something like that to happen in Canada. It kind of scared him. Flying after an incident like that and then being harassed just got to him, and he got really upset about that.

Many Muslims feel that they are treated as potential threats to Canada – not as its citizens. According to Macklin (2007), an unconditional right of legal citizenship is the right to enter and remain in one’s country of citizenship. Although Canadian Muslims have legal citizenship, some feel they have to fight for this unconditional right, which is reluctantly granted by security personnel. Although these interviewees have formal legal citizenship in Canada, they do not always feel they have substantive citizenship – the ability to exercise rights of citizenship. Even though they are Canadian citizens, they fear their rights can be revoked.

Since some Canadian Muslims have had problems re-entering Canada where they hold citizenship, it is not surprising that they also feel interrogated when they try to enter other nations. Dawoud’s experience of being questioned at the US border is an example of this:
They start off with a simple, ‘What do you do? When did you move to Canada?’ I normally get picked up after they say, ‘Where were you born?’ and I say, ‘Saudi Arabia’, and you see their expression change, and they immediately send me inside. So they ask questions like, ‘Why did you move to Canada?’ and I’d say, ‘Well, my parents moved’. And, ‘Why did they move?’ ‘Well, they wanted a better education for their kids and a better future’. ‘You’re done your education now’. ‘Yes’ ‘Why haven’t you gone back?’ Like, ‘I’m not a Saudi citizen. I never was’. I was a Pakistani citizen because Saudis don’t give citizenship. And I am a Canadian citizen now. It’s my home. I look at it as my home. So sometimes the questions become very annoying. And I’ve been asked that question every single time, ‘Why don’t you go back?’

Dawoud’s experience suggests that other nation-states can play a role in undermining the citizenship individuals hold in their countries of nationality. Hence, Canadian citizenship may be undervalued for Muslims, both in Canada and internationally. As Dawoud’s comments show, Canadian Muslims may lack access to another component of citizenship, namely, nationality, which involves being recognized as a part of people who constitute a nation (Nakano Glenn 2002). Although Muslims may have Canadian citizenship, they feel they are not recognized as Canadian by others. They are treated as if they do not belong in Canada, even though they are Canadian citizens, and Canada is their home.

Nakano Glenn (2002) argues that citizenship is often localized, and the actions of state agents at the local level determine whether certain groups have substantive citizenship. By specifically targeting Canadian Muslims, security officials at airports and borders actively participate in the interviewees’ sense of citizenship and belonging in Canada. Many are troubled about the manner in which they are treated by security personnel. Two women who wear the hijab, Alisha and Zora, a 22-year-old naturalized Canadian citizen from a Bangladeshi background, mention:

Alisha: They [security personnel] just direct you more. They try to be more rude. And they just try to have this thing, like this, not superiority, just... just try to be
hard, just try to be more.... I don't know... try to be more rude. ...just cause you're Muslim they try to be more rude so that you'll feel intimidated.

Zora: When I flew one time, and I was entering the US, I was asked questions like, ‘Have you ever been to the Middle-East?’ ‘Are you from Iraq?’ And ‘have you ever been to Baghdad?’ ... um, ‘Do you support the regime there?’ ...um, ‘What is your religion?’ You know? It was not the questions themselves, but the manner in which they were asked that was quite aggravating. They were trying to provoke us. The guy was pretty sarcastic in his tone. Like, it’s obvious that I am Muslim, but he’s like, ‘What’s your religion?’

Badhi (2003) suggests that racial profiling gives people legitimacy to express racist attitudes. She also notes that when security personnel search Muslims, they do not approach them with a clean slate; instead, ‘decision makers operate against a backdrop of ingrained, but often unconscious stereotypes’, including the notion that Muslims are fanatical and prone to violence (306). The tendency in the West to view Muslims from an Orientalist perspective, which involves seeing them as radical, inferior, pathological, and backwards (Said 1979), may help explain why Muslims are treated with such hostility at airports and borders. Under the guise of security, these security checks may allow some security officials to express their hatred toward Muslims. However, it is hard to determine how prevalent this is among security officials. In cases where this happens, security personnel may actively challenge the interviewees’ sense of citizenship and belonging in Canada.

Nakano Glenn notes that the maintenance of citizenship boundaries relies on ‘enforcement not only by designated officials, but also by so called members of the public’ (52). In the southern United States, for example, bus segregation was made possible not only by white drivers, but by white passengers who imposed sanctions on blacks when they violated boundaries. A similar phenomenon may be occurring at airports and borders. Amineh, and Aneesha, both who wear the hijab, say:
Amineh: One thing that I noticed after 9/11 is that flight attendants, especially Air Canada were very rude to me. They were giving out pops, and I just wanted another pop, and she was just like, ‘Oh, so you are the one that is all picky about it that you just should be happy that I am giving you a pop’. She was very rude and plus a dirty look on top of that. As for other passengers, there was this one time that we were told by the passenger to go back to our country. We were traveling, and this lady was pregnant, and the chair was bothering her and touching her stomach, so my mom just asked the lady in front of her to ‘pull up the chair’, but that lady was like, ‘No why don’t you just go back to your country? You have no right to speak and make demands’, and my mom called out a flight attendant, and she was, like, ‘there is nothing that I can do for you’, and she just basically sided with the woman.

Aneesha: A guy was praying before going on a flight [and] a woman felt uncomfortable and complained. They wouldn’t allow him on the flight. And for us in Islam it’s mandatory to do five prayers a day, and you don’t disturb anyone. He went to pray, and he wasn’t allowed to go on the plane.

The undermining of Muslims’ sense of Canadian citizenship has multiple dimensions. They feel their negative treatment is reinforced by fellow passengers, security personnel, and other airport workers. In their view, Muslims are seen as undeserving of common courtesy and face animosity from the general public. The wearing of the hijab, in particular, seems to result in hostile reactions from both security personnel and the public, an issue explored later in the chapter.

Peter Neyer (2006) argues that post 9/11, the birth-right citizenship of individuals born in the US to non-citizen parents, particularly Muslims, is now deemed simply ‘accidental’. And this concept of ‘accidental citizenship’ has been used to undermine the ability of some native-born citizens to claim the rights and entitlements of birthright citizenship. A few of the interviewees believe that they are experiencing this phenomenon, as Maria’s sentiments illustrate:

Muslims who are born in Canada to everybody there are not considered Canadian; they are considered Canadian born. Which is a difference, because as Canadian, you are part of this country, you contribute to society, you have some sort of pride. Canadian born means you were just born in Canada. A Muslim born in
Canada is considered Canadian born. They are not considered Canadian, which is so different.

Thus, although born and/or raised in Canada, many young Muslims feel that their birthright citizenship is being challenged, and they are seen as not belonging to Canada. This reinforces Thobani’s (2007) view that racial profiling does not distinguish between those born in North America and those here for temporary purposes, thereby illuminating the precarious nature of citizenship for all racial minorities.

**Experiencing Racialization of Muslim Identity**

Since citizenship boundaries are often drawn along racial lines, it is important to look at how young Muslims experience racialization at airports and borders. The interviewees’ experiences are complex. Although physical markers such as skin colour are used to profile them, the critical element in the racialization of their personhood is perceived religious difference. As a result, markers such as country of birth, names, and clothing also play a role in the racialization of Muslim identity. These, in turn, are used to undermine their Canadian citizenship and lead to extra surveillance.

Many interviewees believe that state surveillance practices racialize Muslim identity by using physical markers such as skin colour, as described by Fareeda, a 19-year-old naturalized Canadian citizen with a Bangladeshi background:

> There is so many different kinds of Muslims. Muslims range from being the darkest skin tone to the whitest, blue eyes. But it is naturally the quintessential Middle-Eastern guy who has dark skin and a beard that they [security] are targeting.

Academics such as Miles (1989) note that the characteristics used to racialize people vary historically; for example, in the post 9/11 era, beards are now used to racialize Muslim
masculinities. (The role of gender in how Muslims are treated at airports and borders will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Chon and Artz (2005) argue that because Muslim identity has been racialized to accord with dark skin colour in the post 9/11 era, non-Muslims of Middle-Eastern descent, non-Muslim South Asians, and other people of colour are lumped together with Muslims. As my research shows, these groups may also be targeted at airports and borders, implying that surveillance practices at airports can impact on non-Muslim racial minorities. For instance, Bushra, recalls that in 2007 when her high school class went on trips to places like Vancouver, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong, during security checks at these airports, a non-Muslim Indian student was always picked out, along with her and other Muslim students for extra security checks, while the rest of her class was left alone. Similarly, Leela, a 20-year-old Canadian-born, Muslim woman from an Indian background, says:

My family and I were stopped, and, yeah., my dad got very upset. Like, there were a few other families, but all the people that were pulled aside [at the airport] were ‘brown’. And not necessarily Muslim, but we were all just ‘brown’, the colour of our skin. And my dad got angry, and asked the guy who pulls aside and said, ‘Why are you pulling only brown people aside? This is discrimination’, and he’s like, ‘No, no it’s a random check’.

Because Muslim identity has been racialized, people who simply look Muslim due to their skin colour may be treated with the same suspicion as Muslims. The use of skin colour to differentiate between individuals at airports and borders suggests lingering differences in how citizenship rights are allocated to racial minorities. It also suggests that security and surveillance procedures play a role in the racialization of Islamic personhood.

However, the racialization of Muslim identity is complex, and Chon and Arzt
(2005) argue that dark-skinned Muslims are more likely to be targeted than light-skinned Muslims. However, they believe that in the post 9/11 era, perceived religious difference is the critical component of racial formation of the ‘other’ (Chon and Arzt 2005). In this context, light-skinned Muslims may not be easily identified as Muslims, but once they are, they will be seen as belonging to an inferior racial category and will be subject to extra surveillance by security personnel. Sanya mentions:

I have a friend who is very, very, light skinned; she always gets told that she’s Jewish, but she’s actually Persian, and she was born in Iran. Just looking at her, and even her name is very anglicized, like, it’s not a Muslim name really. But when they [airport security] see that she’s from Iran, they sort of have to second-guess, and then they start to question her a bit more. So I think that the country that you were born in or that you’re coming from might also have an impact.

Since religious difference is now the crucial component, being born in the Middle-East is used in the racialization of Islamic personhood. Fahad, a 28-year-old man who is a naturalized Canadian citizen born in Syria, conveys:

I think for me, one of the reasons I’m being questioned every time is because it says on my passport I’m born in Syria, and it says when I got my Canadian passport.

These experiences raise concerns about how citizenship functions for those individuals who acquire citizenship but are not born with it. Macklin (2007) argues that ‘the fact that Canadian passports still identify place of birth reveals something about the lingering differences in the heft of citizenship for the birthright versus the naturalized citizenship’ (Macklin: 365). In the post 9/11 era, this information may be used by security personnel to racialize Muslim identity and to subject Canadian Muslims to extra surveillance.

Having a Muslim name can also lead to the racialization of Muslim identity, as Zaahir mentions:
Actually one time I went to the airport with my brother in law. It was in Buffalo, and the lady actually pick[ed] up the phone and said ‘I have one of those people with names’, so that sort of stuff. I think it’s kind of silly.

Zaahir’s experience captures how once someone is identified as Muslim, he/she is treated with suspicion. The fact that Zaahir has been a Canadian citizen from the age of four loses meaning when he is assigned the identity of a dangerous Muslim.

Wearing traditional Muslim clothing may be identity factor in racialization as well. Consider Sakeena’s experience returning to Canada from Pakistan while wearing a Pakistani shirt:

I remember at immigration they gave me a huge hassle, and as I walked out, my sister asked what took me so long, and as soon as she looked at me, she said, ‘It’s because you’re wearing that’. And I did realize that at that time. I was like, ‘You know what, I should’ve worn a Western shirt’.

Sakeena’s experience, however, illustrates that anything seen as foreign, even a simple Pakistani t-shirt on a Canadian-born citizen, may be treated with suspicion and is used in the racialization of Muslim identity. For Canadian Muslims, then, being born in Canada or holding Canadian citizenship is not enough to be recognized as Canadian. They also have to act and dress in a certain way to be recognized as Canadian, thereby calling into question the much-vaunted Canadian multiculturalism.

*Experiencing Gendered Surveillance*

What roles does gender play in the surveillance of Muslim communities? As has been noted, Muslim men are increasingly projected as dangerous, and Muslim women are imagined as submissive in the post 9/11 era. Nevertheless, my research does not show a large difference in their actual experiences of surveillance at airports and borders. While men had more such experiences, both recall facing intrusive questioning and searches. This may seem surprising, given the general perception of Muslim women as passive and
weak. This suggests they are seen as a threat to security simply because they are Muslim, regardless of their gender. Further, because security personnel treat the hijab with suspicion and fear, women who wear it are vulnerable to intrusive surveillance. Finally, because Muslim women are often imagined as oppressed, state agents may fear that Muslim men are using them to carry out terrorist activity.

Alexander (2004) notes that in the Western world, Muslim women are seen as oppressed and submissive, and Muslim men are projected as radical and violent, thereby resulting in the racialization of Muslim gender identities. She argues that Muslim masculinities are racialized as deviant and dangerous, and as acting against the hegemonic norms of male behaviour. This gender ideology is then used to justify the regulation and social control of Muslim communities (Alexander 2004). In my research, I wanted to see if gender ideology could explain my interviewees’ understandings of their treatment at airports and border crossings. When I asked if there are differences between Muslim men and women, a general feeling is that Muslim men have more difficulty. Saud says:

I would have a reason to believe that women would not be as discriminated against as men because simply on the basis that all of the hijackers were men, and it is typically perceived that within the patriarchal gaze that men are the ones who are more act to be militant, act more to be violent, and to promote these kind of organizations which promote violence. So I would say that the males are more feared.

The experiences of Kareena, a hijab-wearing 21-year-old Canadian born woman with a Bangladeshi background, and Sanya correspond with the feelings expressed by Saud. These women say that while travelling with their male relatives, the men have been set aside for extra questioning, while they were left alone by airport officials.

Despite this difference, my research shows that Muslim women are extensively
searched at airport and border crossings. Among my interviewees, there is an equal split among men and women reporting problems at airport and border crossings. Out of the 30 interviewees who report problems themselves, 15 are men, and 15 are women. However, when I examined all 81 incidents which involved both the interviewees and the people they know, a slightly different picture emerges. Out of these incidents, 23 involve women, 40 involve men, and 18 involve both men and women. Hence, men are involved in 50 percent of the incidents, in comparison to 30 percent of women. This suggests that Muslim men, at least in my study, may face more problems at airports and borders than Muslim women. There may also be differences in the nature of searches between men and women, an issue for future research.

However, my data do not show a large difference between the male and female experience *per se*. When asked why they feel Muslim women face intrusive questions and searches at airports and borders, my interviewees come up with three possible reasons, as noted above. One is that Muslim women are seen as a threat simply because they are Muslim, despite their gender, as discussed by Yaman, a 25-year-old man who was born in Canada and comes from Saudia Arabia:

> I think the perception behind that I think is that if you’re Muslim you could be involved in a terrorist attack there’s no really much differentiations between a Muslim men and a Muslim women.

When it comes to security and surveillance, the attribute of being dangerous is not restricted to Muslim men but extended to the entire Muslim community. This helps to explain why elderly Muslims and Muslim children are subjected to hostile treatment, although they do not fit the image of a young male terrorist.
As mentioned above, the surveillance of Muslim women may also be tied to the hijab. Out of the 15 women who have experienced problems at airports and borders, 10 (67 percent) wear the hijab, and these women recall frequently being asked to take off the hijab when going through security check points. When discussing their experiences, Maria and Zeba say the following:

Maria: I think it has to do more with making you feel discomfort. After going through ten security check points, what are you going to hide in your hijab? What about sweaters, shirts? You are asked about your hijab. You’re not asked about your pants. Does it make any sense? But I think its discrimination. Although I comply, I know there’s no reasoning behind it.

Zeba: I think there’s an inherent fear in society about something that you don’t know. Anytime you don’t know something, you’re going to be scared about it. Because a lot of times Eastern cultures or the Islamic culture seems very foreign, it’s not very common in a supposed secular world, so when a woman is wearing a hijab, she’s an overt sign of religion, and a religion in a society that you know determines itself on a secular nature. I think there’s a fear involved. There’s a tension about religion, and there’s a tension about the foreign. The idea of the other, that’s an issue as well.

Like Maria, a few interviewees say they are frequently asked to take off their hijab when travelling because security personnel treat it with suspicion and fear. This reaction echoes what is said in the literature. In Ahmad’s (2002) view, the hijab has become a site of confrontation in the Western world because it represents the perceived evils of Muslims, Islam, and the Middle-East, including the oppression of women. So too, security personnel may interpret the hijab, a sign of religious difference, as a sign of aggression conveying anti-Western sentiment and, hence, may subject Muslim women wearing it to extra surveillance (Fekete 2004).

Muslim women are often perceived to have no agency, as noted earlier. Accordingly, some interviewees feel that state agents fear Muslim women are being used as tools for terrorism. Zeba says:
Because people think they are influenced by the men, so if the men influenced them in a negative way, they are going to have the negative actions. So they could be a potential terrorist as well, because they’re influenced by the men, so there’s that issue.

Other racialized women have been perceived in a similar manner. For example, Mexican women and black women may face extra surveillance: because of their ethnicity, they are often seen as drug mules. Muslim women may be a new addition to the list of racialized women whose citizenship rights are undermined. They may not have access to a crucial component of citizenship, *standing*, which as noted above, refers to being recognized as an adult capable of exercising choice.

**Young Canadian Muslims Response to Surveillance at Airports and Borders**

The focus of this chapter thus far has been on how young Muslims experience surveillance at airports and borders and what meanings these state practices impose on them. In this section, I explore how young Muslims react to and attempt to handle the surveillance, an issue which, as noted above, has been overlooked in academic literature. Their response is complex. Some report heightened anxiety when travelling; others try to conceal their Muslim identity to avoid surveillance. While a few try to resist harassment, by filing official complaints, for the most part, interviewees feel forced to comply with security officials.

*Heightened Anxiety*

One consequence of facing surveillance is heightened anxiety related to travelling. Samir and Asima comment:

Samir: Honestly, I’m a little bit hesitant to fly as much. Like, I feel like I don’t want be caught in a bad situation, maybe they’re having a bad day, maybe some guy’s just going to pull me in. Like, I’ve heard stories about people being called in and just kind of disappearing… I mean, every time I travel, like before travelling was just like, you’re going on a plane. But it’s like, ‘Oh God, what if I
get stuck in the airport?’ Let me go there four hours early. Let me write a will before I leave. So you never know what’s going to happen.

Asima: Oh yeah. Every time. Every time. My father gets very anxious [about travelling]. He gets very uptight when we have to go across the border or even if we have to go to the airport. Even if he’s not traveling, even if he just has to go the airport, he gets very uptight. So, um, yeah. He’s very anxious. He can’t handle it. He loses his temper really easily about the whole situation.

To deal with this anxiety, many interviewees go to the airport hours earlier than what is required in case they are held up by security. They make sure they ‘do not have anything extra on them’, such as jewellery, which could result in security personnel stopping them.

Similar feelings of anxiety are expressed by other groups. Badhi (2003) notes that African Americans who experience racial profiling while driving have reported feeling fear and humiliation. Kashmeri (1991) has found that during the Gulf war, children in the Arab and Muslim community experienced psychological harm when they and their communities were considered dangerous. A similar phenomenon seems to be occurring with some of the interviewees in this study. When young Muslims are perceived as potential threats at airports and borders, my research shows that their sense of safety and security are jeopardized.

Resistance

How do Muslims react to this undermining of their safety and security? Some protest mistreatment through individual agency. Recalling the experiences of her father, Aatifa says:

My dad, ever since that episode we had at the border, at the Canadian-American border, he just kept saying, ‘I’m never going to the States ever again unless it’s very, very important’. Because he just felt humiliated and insulted. So he feels a little more strongly that he doesn’t want to go to the States.
Like Aatifa’s father, a few interviewees say that they now refuse to travel to the United States because of problems with security personnel. Although young Muslims cannot control how they are treated by security personnel in the US, they can control whether they go there. Others respond to mistreatment by becoming more politically active. Rashid, a 22-year-old man, who is a naturalized Canadian citizen with an Indian background, wrote an article about the mistreatment of the Muslim community after airport officials at the ‘Washington airport detained and strip searched a good friend’ for eight hours.

I heard of two incidents where individuals consulted the government after being mistreated. Samir recalls that when one of his friends was told that he was on the ‘No Fly List’ in Canada and was therefore not able to fly to the US, he ‘managed to get off the list by contacting his MP’. However, contacting the government did not prove beneficial for another man. Amineh says:

My dad actually asked for an explanation for an investigation from the border people or from the RCMP or actually the commission that deals with discrimination in BC. We have it at home. The sent back the report saying that ‘there was no discrimination there’. But they quoted an officer saying that ‘I saw that they looked very Islamic so I pulled them over just to make sure’. If that is not discrimination than what is? I think a lot of people just don’t realize what they are doing is discrimination…They quoted the officer saying that but they still said they found no evidence of discrimination.

On some levels, the government may support the racial profiling of Muslims, thus making the racial profiling of Muslims systemic. The failure of the government to recognize this as discrimination is illustrative of how Muslims may face instances where they lack access to substantive citizenship.
Compliance

Although some interviewees, such as Rashid, speak out against the mistreatment of the Muslim community, most comply with security personnel, even though they feel their rights are being violated. Barkat and Samir mention:

Barkat: The last time I travelled on an airplane was in 2003, and it was to Europe. And I think that I was a little bit anxious. I was anxious going to Paris and then when I got to the UK, I was asked all sorts of weird questions at the airport. He asked who I was staying with, and I was staying with my friend. And he said, ‘Where does he live?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know, close to Baker Street station’. And he says, ‘How long are you planning to stay?’ ‘A week and a half’. ‘Why are you here?’ ‘Going to a friend’s wedding’. And then he started asking questions like, ‘How much money did you bring? How much money do you have in your bank account? Do you plan on finding work here?’ And a whole bunch of other really bizarre questions that I just wasn’t even expecting at all. But again I complied instead of, ‘Why the hell are you asking me this for?’ I really wanted to. There was this voice inside me that says: ‘Ask him why?!’ But I didn’t do it because you don’t want them to detain you because you’re being difficult, so you just go ahead and answer their questions in as few words as possible and move on.

Samir: I think you just tend to comply, because if you don’t comply it’s kind of seen as, ‘Oh, what’s he hiding?’ So you just kind of comply, you have no other choice. What do you want to do? You don’t want to get detained, right?

The reasoning behind this compliance is complex. One is the fear of being detained or interrogated further by speaking out. The fear of missing flights or being refused entry into another country also plays a role. Dawoud says:

I’ve always complied. Because I always have to travel, you know. Turning back would have resulted in personal or economic consequences.

A few interviewees feel that security personnel are provoking them to speak out to ‘justify pulling us over’. They believe that by complying they are not likely to be further interrogated.

For a few interviewees, the extra searches have become routine practice; in their view, complaining would only prolong the experience. Leela says:
I just go with the flow. Like what are you going to do, argue with them every time? Others mention that they would like to complain, but they do not know how to do so.

Fahad notes:

I haven’t actually complained, and my brother also has not, because there is nobody to call and complain to. I don’t know who I’d complain to, and I don’t think it would change anything.

In short, although their citizenship rights are undermined at airports and borders, a multitude of factors force Muslims to comply with mistreatment rather than speak out against it. The fear of being detained, being refused entry into the countries they are travelling, not knowing who to complain to, all work to silence them.

Concealing Muslim Identity

Some interviewees and their families deal with the undermining of their citizenship by making physical changes to their appearance and trying to conceal their Muslim identity. This is particularly the case for women wearing the hijab; Atiya says:

I will not wear the black scarf because that always has negative connotations. Um, and also pink lipstick seems to help because it looks friendly, like light colours and pastel colour. It is less intimidating and foreign. The image they get of a Muslim woman is in all black and, yes, colours really seem to help with travel.

Atiya acknowledges that wearing the hijab presents difficulties and admits that her parents have asked her to remove it for safety reasons. She refuses to do so, choosing instead to play with colours to make herself look less foreign to security personnel, even though she was born in Canada.

Other women take off the hijab when they are travelling. Asima and Amineh recall:

Asima: When my dad was in the States, and my aunt who was originally in Africa, and she wears the whole hijab and everything. And they were going to the States, and she took off the hijab just to avoid [problems], and that was a big
thing. We were like, ‘Was that a good thing or was that a bad thing?’ Do you fear something like that, and then take off something that you really believe in? So yeah, there are issues like that.

Amineh: My mom takes it [the hijab] off. The first time she took it off was a few weeks ago, and she just wore a hat. And she was, like, there was a huge difference in the way she was treated. My mom has been harassed a lot more than I have. They have held her up for an hour and grilled her and honestly all sort of stuff. Honestly, my mom has been through a lot more than I have. So my mom has had a lot of bad experiences. So this time she just did not feel like going through it, so she just took it off, and she said, like, no one bothered her, and no one harassed her. None of the border people said anything.

Some Muslim women recognize their lack of religious freedom and take off the hijab to avoid problems. However, this is not an easy decision. Are they being disloyal to their religion and to themselves by doing so? Or is taking off the hijab warranted in these circumstances?

Making physical changes to one’s appearance is not restricted to woman. It is an issue for Muslim men with beards, as noted earlier. Ali, a 19-year-old man, was born and raised in Bangladesh and has been in Canada for one year; Radi is a 25-year-old man who was born in Canada and comes from a Pakistani background. They say the following:

Ali: My father, when he came to America, he trimmed down his beard because you know what you have to face. You can't fight against something like this. You are going into their country, so you have to do what they tell you to do. When I travel internationally, my dad tells me to shave properly and to look decent.

Radi: Well, we were all told by our fathers: ‘If you’re going to travel, wear a suit. If you have to keep that beard, trim it down as low as you can. Look as Canadian as you possibly can’.

Surveillance procedures at airports and borders force some young Muslims to give up symbols of their religious roots and follow the social norms of North American society; Samir says:

Although, I choose to wear traditional clothes at times, I’m not going to travel in it because I know it’s not going to make it any easier for me.
Yet Samir refuses to trim his beard when he travels, and Asima says her father has the same response. They both comment:

Samir: I don’t shave my beard when I travel. I don’t really choose to alter my religion for other people. I keep a beard because I feel like it’s something that I want to do. And you know a lot of people keep a beard. If it is going to get me stopped, it’s going to get me stopped. I’m not going to change my lifestyle, but at the same time, I will be more careful. You’re a lot more careful of what you say and what you wear, you don’t want to look suspicious, you don’t want to avoid eye contact, at the same time, you don’t want be staring at somebody because it might seen as being suspicious.

Asima: As much as my dad is paranoid about travelling, I think he almost purposely does not shave his beard, and he avoids that. I remember my mom once said, ‘You should dye your beard’, because when his beard is white, he looks completely Muslim. You better dye your beard, and blah, and he’s like, ‘No, I am not going to dye my beard. What are they going to do? I have nothing to hide’. Like, he gets very, he avoids trying to change himself. Um, one thing he has done is that he has started to use his middle name more than his first name. That’s because his middle name is not as Muslim as his first name. I think that is something that has just evolved. I think that is one thing that he has changed about himself.

Young Muslims’ reaction to surveillance at airports and borders is complex. Some refuse to give up their religious roots because they believe by doing so they may be disrespectful to their religion and are yielding to the pressure to confirm to Western norms. Men who refuse to shave their beards and women who refuse to take off the hijab may utilize other practices to avoid being interrogated at airports and borders; they may be extra cautious, not drawing any attention to themselves, and using their middle names. My research shows that because Muslims feel they do not have religious freedom, they are constantly negotiating with themselves about appropriate ways to handle extra surveillance without jeopardizing their religious beliefs.

This section has explored how young Muslims cope with extra surveillance and the undermining of their citizenship. Some express feelings of humiliation and anxiety
related to travelling; in these instances, their sense of safety and security has been jeopardized. Others demonstrate individual agency, refusing to fly into the US, for example, where much of the discrimination towards Muslims occurs. A few become more politically active. Some try to conceal their Muslim identity to avoid problems, but this results in conflicting emotions. However, for the most part, interviewees comply with airport and border personnel for a variety of reasons: not wanting to be detained further, fear of being refused entry to the countries to which they are travelling, trying to avoid being tricked by security personnel, and not knowing who to complain to. All these factors result in silencing Muslim communities.

The failure of the government to recognize the racial profiling of Muslims legitimizes the undermining of their Canadian citizenship and helps explain why interviewees comply with security personnel rather than complaining. Considering the wide range of problems Muslims face, a way to deal with discrimination at airports and borders is urgently needed.

**Experiences of Surveillance in Daily life**

The targeting of Muslim communities is seen in the overall surveillance of the Muslim community in Canada, even though this may not be as extreme as in the US. Bill C36, adopted in 2001, increases the power of police and government agencies to conduct secret searches, use electronic eavesdropping, monitor overseas communication, conduct inquiries without warrants, etc. (Helly 2004; Poynting & Perry 2007). These changes in legislation directly impact the lives of Canadian Muslims and undermine their citizenship rights. Some interviewees say that mosques and other Muslim organizations are under surveillance. A few mention that Muslim students have been interrogated at their
universities by law enforcement agents. Sometimes these surveillance practices can be quite traumatic, and Muslims who are religious or involved in Muslim organizations may especially be vulnerable to surveillance, and this most certainly compromises their substantive citizenship. This undermining of their citizenship may be reinforced by their fellow Canadians. As a result of such experiences, Muslim communities have a fear of surveillance; this includes being afraid of phone taps, using the Internet, being followed, and expressing certain political opinions. This persuasive fear of surveillance points to the lack of substantive citizenship felt by many Muslim Canadians.

Particular areas facing increased surveillance after 9/11 are mosques and other Muslim organizations. Dawoud says:

CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Services) has openly said, for example, they have an informant in every mosque and every organization. We, a bunch of Muslim youth activists, had a meeting with CSIS after the 18 guys were picked up. And they said, ‘Oh, we know very well what’s happening in the Muslim community. We have informants in every mosque and every organization’.

The intensified surveillance of the Muslim community post 9/11 has many consequences for Muslims. For one thing, it labels them as disloyal members of the community, thereby prohibiting Muslim communities from having allegiance, an important facet of citizenship, as noted above. Umar comments:

Muslim students have been approached by Canadian security authorities. RCMP officials have showed photographs of other Muslim youth to them and have questioned if they know about terrorists, questions like that. I know of a lot of Muslim youth who have been occasionally approached by security authorities and are asked questions which sometimes can be quite offensive. That’s a regular phenomenon.

In a similar vein, Dawoud mentions the bugging of the prayer room at Ryerson University. He recalls that ‘they found recording devices behind the curtains near the top of the windows’; as a result, fear spread throughout the community. In such instances, young
Canadian Muslims are not treated like regular university students but are viewed as a threat. Although universities are supposed to be venues for learning and self-exploration, some young Muslims see them as places where they face scrutiny and interrogation; this can impact their sense of belonging, not just in their educational institutions, but in Canada.

In some cases, government surveillance may be more invasive. Yazeed recalls the invasion of his friend’s house by the police because of their suspicions about one of his workers:

One friend of mine, his place of business got hit [by the police]. It was a printing shop in Toronto. The police hit simultaneously their home and their business, and that was a really bad situation. I think that is a stain on the Canadian government, because from what he was telling me, there were guns pointed at his sisters who were five and six. I think they were screaming. It is not really nice to have, like, 30 or 40 people coming into your house and business with guns and to force you to go into the floor and put you in handcuffs and treat you like you have done something already. Part of the reason was that one of his workers was sending money to his mom, and it wasn’t even large sums of money; it was a small sum of money he was sending to Algeria, I think. So they guy was deported. This happened within the first year [after] 9/11.

Clearly, such measures jeopardize Canadian Muslims’ sense of security in Canada.

The surveillance of the Muslim community also affects their freedom to participate in religious organizations. Rashid says:

My friend, he was a part of this Muslim organization, and I was also part of this organization, and I was, like, his right hand man. He was given a call saying that the Governor General would like to meet with you. The motive seemed really nice. It was like we are getting good publicity – like the Muslim perspective on something. Then he goes and comes back to me at the end of the day. ‘Yeah it wasn’t the Governor General. I went, and there a CSIS woman that told me that “the Governor General thing, that’s not true, and I am from CSIS. I would like to ask you some questions”’. So there was deceit right from the very beginning. Then he started feeling very uncomfortable. She would ask questions like this, ‘Is there anyone in your organization that prays excessively?’ and this was a theologically religious organization, right. Or ‘Is it quite religious?’ and [does it] ‘follow certain sects like the sect that is dominant in Saudi Arabia?’ And then he was, like, ‘No I don’t’. My point is that even if we do, who cares and so what?
Muslims who are religious and who belong to Muslim organizations may be treated with suspicion – they may even be subject to extra surveillance. This, along with the extra surveillance of mosques and other Muslim organizations, suggests that that Muslims may not have access to religious freedom.

To reiterate, my research shows that the surveillance of the Muslim community by government organizations undermines their substantive citizenship. However, as noted previously, this undermining may be supported and enforced by their fellow Canadians.

Amineh and Maria recall:

Amineh: CSIS came to the Muslim school, I worked at. They came and checked everything out and they did not even have a search warrant and we were just like, ‘We have nothing to hide you can come and look’. The neighbours had just reported us. They said that we had suspicious activity. We were building an extension to the gym, and CSIS came checked it.

Maria: There is this Muslim help line that came up in Mississauga; it’s a hotline for Muslim children who have parental problems or abuse, having troubles at school, or with drugs or alcohol. It’s just a helpline. An article was published in the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail that claimed it was jihadist or something (laughs), which is so dumb because it’s a helpline.

Nakano Glenn argues that the maintenance of citizenship boundaries is often enforced by the general public at the local level. Amineh and Maria’s experiences suggest that government agencies may use surveillance practices that undermine young Muslims’ citizenship rights simply because they have the support of some Canadians.

Perhaps due to such experiences, a constant fear of being under surveillance exists among the Muslim community, regardless of whether this is actually the case. Nashida and Dawoud say:

Dawoud: We actually have a friend, who works for Bell, and we were having some troubles with our phone. We would pick up our phone at home, and it’d be like about three seconds before the tone would come. And we called him and said, Something’s wrong with the phone, what’s happening?’ He looked into it and
said, ‘Your phone is bugged’. And a lot of people felt that their phones were behaving differently.

Nashida: I’m involved in the MSA [Muslim Students Association]. One of the girls whose husband is in jail for the Toronto 18, she was involved in MSA, and she asked me to join one of the events taking place at University of Toronto, Mississauga. She called me on my cell phone, and I noticed that my cell phone had this flashing thing after she called me. It said forwarding online, and it had the weirdest, like, you know your own phone, and you know when something appears that you never seen before. I wasn’t sure what it was but, I think I can use my own judgment on it, and I was told and I also believe that my phone was being bugged.

This fear of phone tapping illustrates the level of insecurity Muslim communities feel about their citizenship rights in Canada.

In addition to using the phone, some Muslims are fearful of using the Internet. For instance, Zeba says:

Post-9/11 my dad was very concerned. For the longest while, we wouldn’t talk on the phone about anything related to 9/11. We’d talk in person. Like, he was insistent that we be careful of our e-mails, MSN messages, anything internet-related just in case, because there was this rumour that CSIS was tapping all Muslim phone lines. I don’t know how much of that is true, and there’s scare tactics involved in that as well. But I know, like, for the Toronto 18 that was a real case, and a lot of their families and friends’ phones were tapped.

Simple things such as using Internet, taken for granted by most, become problematic for young Muslims.

In some cases, interviewees mention a fear of being followed. Aneesha says:

I have heard people follow Muslims in malls with security cameras, but I don’t know how true that is. Like there’s always rumours too, that’s the other problem. Because there’s so much random stuff happens in the Muslim community, they’re all about conspiracy, so they assume things. They’ll be like, ‘Oh, it’s a conspiracy. You’re being followed’, and stuff like that. But I do know phone tapping happens. I’m pretty sure sometimes there are people that go to our conferences just to make sure they’re not promoting terrorism in any way and stuff.
Other interviewees are fearful that expressing their political opinions could result in surveillance. Amber, a 24-year-old woman born in Canada to a Pakistani father and German mother, notes:

> I have been to a number of protests, and I have been very politically active, and I know very well that my name is on some file somewhere put away. Like, I have seen people take pictures of me when they have no reason to take pictures of me. Even in our mosques, we were afraid of saying the simplest things such as pray for our brothers and sisters in Palestine because we were afraid we would get reported. There was just this climate of fear that you could just not say anything without being labelled as a terrorist sympathizer if not a terrorist.

Some interviewees are afraid of showing allegiance to other Muslim communities in the world or of supporting certain political issues, and this undermines their political citizenship.

To sum up, due to actual experiences of surveillance, the fear of surveillance is quite persuasive in the Muslim community. This involves being fearful of phone taps, using the Internet, being followed, and expressing political opinions. What does this say about Canadian citizenship? Safety and security are supposed to be important components of citizenship. However, my findings reveal that Canadian Muslims do not always have access to this, leading us to question how citizenship functions for Canadian Muslims in the post 9/11 era. While they may hold formal citizenship, on many occasions they may lack substantive citizenship.

**Conclusion**

I began this chapter by describing Maria’s experience of being harassed by security personnel while travelling back to Canada from Egypt. The chapter goes on to fill an important gap in the literature by examining how other Muslims experience surveillance and what these experiences mean for them. My research finds that young Canadian
Muslims feel that through intrusive questioning and searches, state surveillance practices treat their Muslim identities as dangerous and as a threat to national and international security. Although they are told that such searches are ‘random’, the interviewees see them as a direct attack on their Muslim identity.

The interviewees believe that such surveillance challenges their citizenship as Canadians. Despite having legal citizenship, Canadian Muslims often lack access to substantive citizenship, as evidenced in their difficulties re-entering Canada. Further, they feel their religious freedom is threatened when they face extra surveillance for wearing Muslim clothing. To them, these experiences suggest that Canadian citizenship may not have equal value for all citizens, not only in Canada but internationally. Their sense of citizenship, including their birthright citizenship, is threatened because they lack access to allegiance and nationality, important facets of citizenship. Even more troubling, state efforts also displace Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship because they are often supported and enforced by state agents such as security personnel, not to mention the general public.

Canadian Muslims’ sense of citizenship may be further undermined by processes of racialization. The racialization of Muslim identity is complex. While physical markers such as skin colour may be used to ‘other’ individuals and subject to them extra surveillance, markers such as country of birth may also be used in the racialization of Muslim personhood and consequently in the undermining of Canadian citizenship. While both Muslim men and women face difficulties at airports and borders, the reasons for this may be tied to how their gender identities have been racialized.
The chapter also considers how young Muslims handle the surveillance they face at airports and borders, another unstudied important issue. My findings reveal that while some try to resist or avoid surveillance by refusing to fly, challenging security personnel, becoming politically active and altering their physical appearance, others feel forced to comply with surveillance, even though they believe this undermines their citizenship as Canadians. Canadian Muslims also express being fearful of surveillance in their daily lives, again illustrating the lack of substantive citizenship they feel in Canada.

Overall, my research illustrates that in the post 9/11 era, surveillance practices have been implemented that violate Canadian Muslims’ sense of belonging and security in Canada and treat their Muslim identity as a threat to the nation. How do young Canadian Muslims negotiate their identities as Muslims, as members of different ethnic groups, and as Canadians in such an era? I devote the rest of my thesis to finding out.
Thus far in my thesis, I have shown how young Muslim in the post 9/11 era are victimized by fellow Canadians and through state practices. While I was interviewing young Canadian Muslims, I was particularly interested in whether they had stepped away from their religion in the post 9/11 era as a result of such experiences. One of my first interviewees, Mohammed, a 19-year-old who was born in Canada and who comes from a Bangladeshi background, said to me:

I have seen the opposite effect. Girls were being extra religious and wearing proper traditional clothes after 911. They were being more so religious than before. You would think they would do the opposite because they did not want to be discriminated against, but they became more religious. But I don't know why.

Like Mohammad, I had expected that young Canadian Muslims would distance themselves from their religious background to avoid discrimination post 9/11. I was intrigued to learn that the opposite might be occurring in England. Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom concur with Mohammed’s observations (Kundnani 2002; EL-Halawany 2003; Peek 2003; Gupta 2004), but they do not provide a theoretical explanation. My encounter with Mohammed and the gap in the literature leads me to ask a key question: ‘How can we theorize young Muslims’ assertion of their identity in a post 9/11 world?’

To address the issue, I draw upon and extend Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) theory of reactive ethnicity which posits that when people experience racism, they increase their identification with their ethnic group. Portes and Rumbaut focus on ethnic identity, but I
extend their work by demonstrating that the formation of reactive identities is not limited to ethnic groups. Rather, as evidenced in the reactions of young Muslims in the post 9/11 era, religious minorities can experience a similar phenomenon, something I choose to call ‘reactive identity formation’.

**Muslim Identity Formation**

American and British studies suggest that Muslims in the US and UK react to discrimination in the post 9/11 era by asserting their Muslim identity, becoming more knowledgeable about Islam, building closer ties with the Muslim community, and pursuing advocacy work in an attempt to educate the public (Kundnani 2002; EL-Halawany 2003; Peek 2003; Gupta 2004). These studies are important in their highlighting of Muslims’ bid to strengthen their identity, but they lack a theoretical underpinning. I take an important first step to fill this gap by theorizing the formation of Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era.

As the subject is particularly complex, I turn to a number of identity theories. Scholars such as Nagel (1994), Jenkins (1996), and Waters (1990) note the importance of external conditions in the construction of identities and the fluid nature of identity. I concur, conceptualizing identity as an ongoing social process shaped through self-attribution and societal ascription. Like all other identities, Muslim identities can be produced, reproduced, and transformed in a number of different social settings.

In recent years, academics have conceptualized ‘Muslim’ identity in various ways. Some understand ‘Muslim’ as an ethnic identity. For instance, Oliver Roy (2004) views ‘Muslims’ in contemporary Western Europe as a neo-ethnic group that has largely been socially constructed. The acceptance of the label ‘Muslim’ by individuals who are
not religious fuels his argument. Others see ‘Muslim’ as racial. Kibria (2007) notes that Muslim identity has undergone a process of racialization which is both ascriptive and naturalized. As a result, she feels that Muslims are now a stigmatized racial group – the new ‘blacks’. Alexander (2004) echoes similar sentiments. While Roy and Kibria make interesting arguments, they neglect to take into account that for many Muslims, religious faith still plays a large role in their identity formation as Muslims.

For my part, I understand ‘Muslim’ as a religious minority identity vulnerable to the same social processes of systematic inequality, external labelling, and otherness as other ethnic and racial groups. Like race, class, and ethnicity, religion is a mechanism of social stratification in modern states (Viswanthan 1998). In her work on Muslim Americans, Byng (2008) emphasizes that since 9/11, Muslim religious identities are subject to external social construction and are used to organize social inequalities normally associated with racial minorities. Because this approach to understanding Muslim identity allows for the recognition of both the religious component and the external ascriptive nature of identity, I use it here. While it advances our understanding of religious identity formation, however, it does not give guidance on how to study the impact of discrimination on identity formation among marginalized groups.

**Reactive Ethnicity**

Research in ethnic studies provides insightful frameworks for studying how marginalized groups respond to discrimination. As noted above, when ethnic groups experience discrimination, they are likely to intensify their ethnic identification and their ties to their ethnic group, a phenomenon called ‘reactive ethnicity’. According to Michael Hechter (1975), economic and cultural inequalities among groups lead to a hierarchical cultural
division of labour. Members of peripheral ethnic groups are marginalized culturally and economically by the core dominant group, resulting in ethnic mobilization. Examples proliferate among early European immigrants to the US. For example, Portes and Bach (1985) found that immigrants from peripheral European countries such as Italy and Poland created their own ethnic communities in major US cities to defend themselves against discrimination and to gain economic mobility.

More recently, Portes and Rumbaut (1990; 2001; 2006) have used the theory of ‘reactive ethnicity’ to understand the experiences of second-generation immigrants in the US. The term is used to explain how youth from marginalized ethnic groups can intensify their ethnic identification when they experience or perceive racism. The authors suggest that ‘reactive ethnicity’ enables second-generation youth from ethnic groups to cope with discrimination. They use their social similarity with or dissimilarity from reference groups close to them, often in terms of gender, language, nationality, and ethnicity, to define their social identity. This type of self-definition carries an ‘affective meaning implying a psychological bond with others that tends to serve psychologically protective functions’ (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: p. 151).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) say that, like ethnicity, religion can become reactive among first and second-generation immigrants. But they conceptualize reactive religion differently, arguing that most immigrants maintain or affirm their native religious beliefs as they try to integrate into American society. Portes and Rumbaut believe that religion only becomes ‘reactive’ when immigrants begin disassociating themselves from their native religious traditions to fit into their host country. This happens when immigrants feel that their religion is not fulfilling their needs, and they are exposed to alternative
outcomes, as for example, Japanese and Korean immigrants in the US who have embraced Protestant Christianity (Chen 2008).

In my view, in response to discrimination, religious identity may become reactive in the same manner as ethnic identity. Portes and Rumbaut fail to recognize this because they overlook important aspects of identity formation. First, Portes and Rumbaut ignore that identity is not merely a feature of ethnicity and other important social attributes such as gender, class, and age etc. can impact identity formation. Second, religious identities often intersect with ethnic and racial ones. Third, religious minority identities are prone to the same social processes of discrimination, inequality, and external labeling as ethnic and racial groups.

Taking this insights about identity into account, my research suggests that people may experience ‘reactive identities’ when any one of their dimensions of identity are threatened. Since Portes and Rumbaut’s theory of ‘reactive ethnicity’ can help to explain the experiences of religious minority groups, my research suggests the formation of reactive identities is not be limited to ethnic groups. Thus, a better term to describe the social process by which marginalized individuals assert their identities is ‘reactive identity formation’, a concept developed more fully in the following sections of this chapter.

By focusing exclusively on how discrimination results in ‘reactive ethnicity’, Portes and Rumabut also do not consider the complexity in ‘reactive identity formation’. My research, on the other hand, shows how multiple factors including both societal ascription and individual agency can lead to the formation of reactive identities. First by examining the multifaceted discrimination faced by young well-educated Muslims in
Canada, I discuss how trying to cope with discrimination plays a role in ‘reactive identity formation’, as reactive ethnicity theory would suggest. I then demonstrate how resistance to mainstream ideologies, coupled with increased societal interest in Islam which leads to more self-learning about Islam, also contributes to the ‘reactive identity formation’ among the Muslims in this study. I conclude the chapter by discussing the challenges faced by young Canadian Muslims when they begin to build closer ties to Muslim communities and to each other.

**Impact on Muslim Identity**

Many of my interviewees speculate that individuals can deal with the negative perceptions of the Muslim community in Canada by stepping away from the faith. However, only one participant has chosen such a path: immediately after 9/11, Falak stopped telling people that she is Muslim because she feared for her personal safety. Others do not recall having this kind of reaction. Fifteen interviewees indicate that their Muslim identity was a focal part of their identity before 9/11 and has remained so. Moreover, 34 say they have come to identify themselves more strongly as Muslims and feel a deeper connection to their faith in the post 9/11 era. Overall, 49 out of 50 interviewees maintain a strong Muslim identity or have affirmed their Muslim identity since 9/11. Saud and Zora comment:

Saud: I think that largely 9/11 did change how I saw myself as a Muslim…It has made me more aware of the nature of Islam. It has made me more aware of myself as a Muslim. My general awareness has increased. My involvement with Islam increased.

Zora: I am sure there are Muslims that have decided to abandon their own faith [after 9/11]. However, I believe many Muslims have decided to become more educated about their own faith because they realize this is a time where they have to protect their faith. So in some ways I believe that many Muslims have become more religious.
In short, many young Muslims assert their Muslim identity by becoming more educated and aware of Islam after 9/11 – a finding echoed in studies in the US and UK (Kundnani 2002; EL-Halawany 2003; Peek 2003; Gupta 2004). However, it is not yet clear why this is occurring.

**Reactive Identity Formation as a way to cope with discrimination**

Thirty-one out of the 50 Muslims I interviewed indicate that they have had direct experience of discrimination related to their Muslim identity post 9/11. Moreover, 41 (82 percent) told stories of family members or close friends being victims of discrimination. This high percentage is important; having people close to you face discrimination because of their religious identity can be just as troubling as facing discrimination personally.

The concept of reactive ethnicity is applicable to the young well-educated Muslims in this study, as they clearly feel a heightened sense of discrimination since 9/11. They face hate crimes from strangers in public places, stigmatization of their religious practices, and racialization of their gender identities. They encounter state discrimination at airports and borders, as well as employment discrimination. This multifaceted discrimination has a host of consequences for young Muslims, impacting their sense of safety, their daily routines, and employment prospects, not to mention their sense of belonging to Canada.

How do they deal with this? According to theories of reactive ethnicity, when people experience or perceive discrimination, in order to cope, they are likely to intensify their identification with their ethnic group and build closer ties to their ethnic community.
So too, the Muslims in this study are strengthening their Muslim identity. Asima and Nashida comment:

Asima: I have not met any Muslim that has disassociated with the religion. I have met people that became stronger in the faith. I think Muslims feel that there has been an attack on their religion, and when something like that happens, you need that closeness to feel secure and to maintain your faith and your power. Your faith has to become much stronger.

Nashida: I feel the Muslim community got closer after 9/11. We went to the Mosque more, just to make each other feel more confident that we should not be blamed for this, and that we are not the problem.

As the women’s comments show, to handle post 9/11 discrimination, some Muslims are strengthening their Muslim identity through a reassertion of faith and active participation in the Muslim community, thereby illustrating that like ethnic identity, religious identity can become reactive.

### Reactive Identity Formation as Resistance

The young Muslims in this study often affirm their Muslim identity as an act of resistance to counter the negative images that now surround them. Frustration over the portrayal of Islam as a violent religion is expressed by almost all interviewees, as voiced here by Zora:

I think many Muslims were praying that Muslims were not responsible. It was a double fear and a double sadness for us. We were afraid that terrorists could come in and harm us. However, we were also afraid that because they have been identified as being Muslim, we are going to suffer a backlash because of that. There was sadness that innocent people are dying and a tremendous sorrow that Muslims would do this in the name of Islam. It was really devastating and hard to deal with. It was the exact opposite of what our faith teaches us. All the efforts that our community had been trying to put forth a positive face of Islam – in one moment, that just vaporized. We felt like just how those planes were hijacked – our faith was also hijacked by those people.

Zora’s comments reflect the wide range of emotions Muslims feel about 9/11, a finding supported by other studies (Ahmad 2006; Gillespie 2006). They see a beautiful religion
suddenly (and negatively) re-invented and associated with terrorism. Zora’s feeling that her ‘faith was hijacked’ indicates the deep sense of betrayal and anger many well-educated young Muslims feel towards the perpetrators of 9/11.

However, non-Muslims do not necessarily differentiate between ordinary Muslims and Muslim terrorists, and the negative image of Islam as violent is seized on and perpetuated by the media. Aamir says:

Since 9/11 the media are just focusing on the negatives and the very small group and it gives the perception, indirectly at least, that the whole faith promotes violence and terrorism.

Interviewees feel the media plays a substantial role in portraying Islam as a violent religion by attributing the act of 9/11 to the entire faith of Islam, an impression backed up by a number of studies (Ahmad 2006; Harb & Bessaiso 2006; Korteweg 2008). When asked whether they feel the media contribute to discrimination, all 50 interviewees say ‘yes’.

How do those who have grown up believing in the Muslim faith deal with this sudden turn of events? As noted, they frequently affirm their Muslim identity, making their affirmation an act of resistance. Radi and Aatif say:

Radi: After 9/11, I was more proud to be recognized as a Muslim than before. When I would be with Muslim sisters who would wear the headscarf, I would want to be recognized as a Muslim compared to anything else. I was proud. I wanted people to know that I was not going to be drawn away from the faith. I wanted people to know that this is not Islam. The true Islam is not what happened with 9/11.

Aatif: Most Muslims do want everyone to know that not all Muslims are like that, and it’s just a couple of people with a warped idea in their head giving all Muslims a bad name. Especially after 9/11, I try to be the best Muslim that I could. Both at home and outside, my behaviour with Muslims, or especially with non-Muslims, I try to be on my best behaviour or the best person that I can be.
These two, like other young Muslims in this study, are demonstrating individual agency and attempting to ‘reclaim’ Islam by asserting their Muslim identity. This ‘reclaiming of Islam’ involves becoming more religious and giving higher precedence to Muslim identity than to other aspects of identity. It also involves trying to be a positive example of a Muslim in interactions with other Canadians. Overall, my research brings to light the different ways Muslims have tried to ‘reclaim’ Islam in the post 9/11 era. This is something that has not been extensively studied in the academic literature.

Resistance and ‘reclaiming’ Islam take many forms. Some young Muslim women wear the hijab to assert their identity. Aamir comments:

Actually close family friends, they have a huge textile business in Canada, and their business has gone down at least 30 percent after 9/11. The textile company name has a very Muslim name. The wife goes to all of the meetings, and she wears the hijab. Before 9/11 she didn’t – now she does. A lot of Muslims after 9/11 want to broadcast that they are Muslim – so she goes to these meetings wearing the hijab. If she loses the business – she says it’s fine because she knows now who is being ignorant and who is discriminating against her, and she does not want to do business with them anyways.

Wearing the hijab is so important for this woman that she does so despite potential economic consequences. Two of the female interviewees, Atiya and Zeba, also began wearing the hijab after 9/11. They both emphasize that there are many reasons for their decision, but wanting to represent a ‘positive image of their religion’ in a post 9/11 era is key. The hijab is not imposed on these women, despite popular assumptions. Rather, it becomes a political tool, helping to form an identity of resistance. My findings are similar to Hoodfar’s (1993) who says that while the hijab has been used as a mechanism to control women’s lives, women have also used it to free themselves from patriarchy.

By using the hijab to broadcast their support of Islam and the Muslim community in the post 9/11 era, young women in this study demonstrate individual agency. In
contrast, I do not find any examples of Muslim men making changes to their physical appearance after 9/11, such as growing a beard or wearing traditional Muslim clothing. This difference may be due to the special meaning of the hijab in Western society. Since the hijab is a clear visible indicator that someone is Muslim, by simply wearing it, Muslim women become ambassadors for the religion.

A few interviewees try to ‘reclaim’ Islam by becoming more politically active, another form of resistance. Amber says that the biggest impact of 9/11 is her increased involvement in political issues:

If anything else, it made me more passionate about my causes because of the backlash that took place…I was always very politically active, but I did it even more, you know, so that it is not going to stop, we are not going to back down.

For his part, Rashid says he began to write articles about the mistreatment of Muslims after airport officials at the ‘Washington airport detained and strip-searched a good friend’ for eight hours. Both speak out against the policies and legislation that unfairly target Muslims. For these and other young Muslims, individual agency plays a role in the formation of ‘reactive identities’, something that ‘reactive ethnicity’ theory does not consider.

Many of the interviewees make conscious decisions to affirm their Muslim identity to counteract negative stereotypes perpetuated after 9/11. However, it is important to note that the attribution of identity by society plays an important role in ‘reactive identity formation’. Zeba mentions:

I think to a degree my faith has been defined by others. The way I view myself, the way others view me has been defined by others not by myself because of the political nature of how Islam has become. I think others have determined me Muslim, have labelled me Muslim, so I internalize that experience, and I call myself Muslim. Post-9/11, I saw a dramatic change right away. As soon as I left my high school, I knew right away that I was Muslim. That’s how society defined
me, and then I accepted that. Initially, I was kind of put off by that because, I
mean, that’s not how I identified myself, but as it became more [natural], I
accepted it, and now it’s my identity.

Zeba points to the role of social ascription on how people see and locate themselves in
society, a perception backed up by Espiritu’s (1993) research on Asian pan ethnicity.

Labelle (2004) and Waters (1990) shed light on why this occurs. Labelle notes
that racialized and marginalized groups often utilize those attributed identities as a form
of resistance. Labelle (2004, p.46) asserts:

Negative stereotypes of minority groups, labeling diverse ethnic groups as black,
and of inferior social status, had led to racialized groups, in turn - re-appropriating
this attributed identity, subverting it and using it to define an identity of
resistance.

Waters (1990) argues that African Americans in the US have been socially constructed to
identify themselves as ‘blacks’ and have used this identity as a way of resistance,
although they know their ancestors include many non-blacks. A similar phenomenon is
occurring among the young Muslims in this study. Like Zeba, many feel they are
stereotyped as belonging to a monolithic Muslim community. Like American blacks,
their assertion of identity is an act of resistance.

When the interviewees began asserting this identity of resistance, they were being
encouraged by community leaders and parents to keep a low profile for safety and
security reasons. Right after 9/11, Salman, a 24-year-old man who was born in
Bangladesh and came to Canada a few years ago, says:

My mom was in tears. She would tell me not to go to the mosque, to have a clean-
shaven face, and to keep away from any Muslim groupings. In a way, she was
telling me to compromise my everyday routine or even my being a Muslim. I'm
like, ‘No, I'm not going to compromise my beliefs’.

Atiya, describes her parents’ fearful reaction in the following way.
I thought they were proud of me because I was practicing more and becoming wiser, but they also were more fearful. They were well, ‘Why don’t you just wear it [the hijab] when you go to the Mosque instead of wearing it all of the time?’ They did kind of want to talk me out of it. But I did not. I had made up my mind to wear it.

As Atiya’s comment makes clear, in addition to encountering discrimination from mainstream society, young Muslims face parental pressure to hold back from practicing their religion. Thus, their ongoing resistance indicates the importance they place on reinforcing their Muslim identity in a post 9/11 era.

**Reactive Identity Formation and Learning more about Islam**

Some interviewees say that their assertion of a Muslim identity is both triggered and reinforced by society’s increased interest in Islam and Muslims. Salman notes:

> In a way, it has brought more unity and has brought about more curiosity within our religion. Like, it has made me more say, like, religious. People ask me questions right, left, and centre, so I feel obligated to learn more about my religion, so I know what to say and what not to say, you know.

Salman’s experience is indicative of how the formation of reactive identities is not solely the result of discriminatory acts or individual attempts to resist the negative image of Muslims. Rather, it has links to the increased interest in Muslims and Islam after 9/11. Many interviewees mention that they have become more educated about Islam because they are asked many innocent questions and are expected to know the answers. They also want to learn more about Islam for themselves.

Significantly, some say that this has led to their becoming more religious and affirming their Muslim identity. Aamir says:

> I think that people would naturally want to learn more about their religion after 9/11. When you actually learn more about it, you feel closer to it, and then you can start to understand it better. From then on, you naturally progress into trying to observe Islam more actively and taking an active role in Islam, like wearing the hijab.
The nuances of ‘reactive identity formation’ are reflected in his comments. Some Muslims in this study affirm their Muslim identity not only because they have faced discrimination or are trying to counter the negative portrayal of Muslims, but because they have become more educated about their religion and are now more appreciative of it. Hence, individual choice and learning can play a role in the formation of reactive identities, something not explored by ‘reactive ethnicity’ theorists. For these young Muslims, the post 9/11 era provides an opportunity to think and learn more about Islam, which, in turn, raises their individual sense of Muslim identity. This suggests that one positive outcome of 9/11 is its creation of an opportunity for young Muslims to reassess what it means to be Muslim in a North American context.

In my study, the overall intensification of Muslim identity is occurring across gender lines, although there may be slight variations in the form it takes. Furthermore, there is no evidence of variations between the Muslims born in Canada and those born elsewhere; regardless of country of birth, many indicate that they have intensified their Muslim identity. Nor does age appear to play a role: both younger interviewees, ages 18 to 23, and older interviewees, ages 24 to 30, speak of affirming their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era.

**Challenges faced by young Canadian Muslims**

As noted above, the young Canadian Muslims in this study affirm their Muslim identity for multiple reasons. However, when they begin to create ‘reactive identities’ and grow closer to their Muslim communities, they do not necessarily agree with that community on all issues. Instead, they begin to challenge certain practices of the older generation, some of which are advocated by their peers. Practices that frustrate Canadian Muslims
include segregation in Muslim communities, interpretations of Islam, fear of terrorism, gender discrimination, and how to present Islam in the post 9/11 era.

**Segregation**

Segregation in Muslim communities is a major issue for young Canadian Muslims. Many do not like how older generations divide themselves into different branches of Islam, such as Sunni and Shia Muslims. Even so, on some occasions this segregation is practiced by some young Muslims. For example, while one interviewee feels that Ismaili Muslims often segregate themselves, other Ismaili Muslims feel marginalized by other Muslim communities. Overall, segregation practices by older Muslims and by some of their peers is a major concern for many of the interviewees.

Many of the interviewees do not endorse how some older generations have split themselves into different branches of Islam such as Shia or Sunni Muslims. For example, when asked what Muslim sect they belong to, many interviewees refuse to answer the question; Aneesha and Haleema express the following sentiments:

Aneesha: I like to define myself just as a Muslim, and I don’t think I like to define myself another way. And I think that’s another thing the youth are doing. Like, I’ve always been that type I didn’t like to say I was Sunni, but now I’m seeing a lot of the youth go that route. Because when you start saying you’re Sunni or Shia, or this or that, then you’re just causing yourself to be put into a certain type of group as opposed to a community. Like, if you’re a Muslim, then you’re a Muslim, and that’s it. You can have different perspectives as a Muslim, but you still have to respect the other side, and that’s one problem within the community, I find.

Haleema: A lot of people don’t like differentiating, just because of the Prophet Mohammed. He always taught that the community should be one. And because there’s a lot of sects now, a lot of people just don’t like the idea of, ‘Well, I’m Sunni’ or ‘I’m Shia’.

Sunni Muslims make up the majority (85%) of Muslims around the world, while significant populations of Shia Muslims are found in Iran and Iraq (Nimer 2002). They
share fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith, and it has been argued that the division into Sunni and Shia is due to political reasons, not theological ones (Nimer 2002). This may be one reason why interviewees are so opposed to categorization.

However, on occasion, these practices of segregation are followed by younger generations, and the young Muslims I interviewed find themselves butting heads with their peers. Leela, who is Ismaili, expresses her frustration when she sees fellow Ismailis forming cliques at university:

Leela: You see it everywhere, at Waterloo especially, because there’s so many of them. They [Ismailis] all just come together, and literally they ignore other people, and they don’t try and make friends with other Muslims. And to me that, it’s stupid, they’re doing it for the wrong reason. Like, I don’t know why they can’t make friends with other people just because they’re not Ismaili. You shouldn’t be like that. But it happens a lot. That’s why I don’t associate with a lot of Ismailis at U of T, because it bothers me.

Interesting, while Leela believes that Ismaili Muslims spend too much time in their own cliques, other Ismailis talk about feeling marginalized and shunned by other Muslim communities. Sanya who is also Ismaili Muslim says:

I mean I feel I’m more part of the Ismaili community I guess. Just because I guess over the years, I felt somewhat we are separate from the Muslim community as a whole. Like, I myself would identify as, yes, being part of the Muslim community, but then sort of this sub-sect of it. And when I talk to friends, who are say Sunni Muslim, a lot of them don’t consider Ismailis to be Muslim. I definitely find that upsetting, especially when I try to do align myself with other Muslims. There’s always this kind of like, ‘Oh, you guys aren’t really the same’ kind of thing.

I witnessed some of this inter-sect tension when I was recruiting interviewees. When I told one interviewee, who was trying to find me more potential interviewees, that I had interviewed a few Ismaili Muslims, she said that Ismaili Muslims are not really Muslims and implied that I should not be interviewing them.
But this lack of recognition made Sanya want to participate in the project. She was happy that I had contacted the Ismaili Students Association because she believes they are often left out. Sanya also argues that young Ismailis make efforts to build better relationships with other Muslim student organizations.

I don’t know about the communities as a whole, but I feel like my experience has been that they do things separately. But I know within our community, and we have an Ismaili Students Association here, like, on every campus at every university, and we try to do more things with the Muslim Students Association. Like breaking of the fast at Ramadan, or whatever, like [we] try to do more events because we do want to build bridges, and we don’t want to have this conflict.

In short, segregation within the Muslim community is largely linked to the various branches of Islam. Many of my interviewees deplore these differences and seek to effect change, even though their efforts are not always successful.

**Different Interpretations of Islam**

Another area of contention is related to how Islam should be interpreted. Young Muslims don’t agree with what they see as ‘backward’ interpretations. Others also have issue with how some Muslims that have not been born/raised in Canada practice Islam.

Some interviewees worry that some Muslims may be practicing a ‘backward’ interpretation of Islam. For instance, Salman and Amineh are worried that some Muslims are behind the times:

Salman: What I notice is that a lot of Muslims, um, they get so into it, then they somehow categorize themselves as fundamentalists. They try to live in the past, but as modernists, I don't think that you can do that. You can't live in a society, act religiously... you can't breathe down people's necks and say, ‘Oh you're wrong because this is how it was done, you know, a thousand years ago’.

Amineh: I had a strong education from the Muslim school that I went to. Unfortunately, it was done by the Saudis. I do not mean to pick on the Saudis because there is a lot of good that they have done. But from their curriculum, there is a lot I have learned, but they just focused on all of the wrong things, and they are really backward thinking, and if you put Islam in the hands of the people
that are backward thinking, they are going to twist it and manipulate it to suit their own needs. So I rebelled against it when I was in elementary school. So I guess I rebelled against extremism when I was younger.

Although many interviewees have a strong attachment to their religion, they can be critical of it when they do not like the way it is practiced.

A few young Canadian Muslims question how Muslims who have not been born or raised in Canada interpret Islam. Aneesha says:

There are also those that just happened to come here a year after 9/11, and they have very different views. They feel that Islam is this, this and that, and that’s it. They don’t think Islam can have different perspectives on different issues. And that’s where I think the differences lay between Canadian-born and non-Canadian born. Like a Canadian born will see Islam as being very encompassing, like, it will allow different perspectives. Where others that aren’t Canadian born, they seem to lack that aspect. It gets confusing, because the Canadian born, they already have an open mind; they already know that this is how Christianity works, this is our duties, and they’re surrounded by it. They wanna [sic] learn about Islam on their own terms, so that’s one big thing about being Canadian: to learn on your own terms. But with non-Canadians, they’re taught Islam in a very skewed way. So when they come here, they either stick with their skewed message, or they realize that it’s very biased, and they go ahead, and they decide to figure things out for themselves.

Aneesha’s comments suggest that some young Muslims who have been born or raised in Canada may feel their understanding of Islam is superior to those from other parts of the world. Ironically, although many young Muslims are critical of older generations for not being broad minded and inclusive of others, some young Canadian Muslims question the practises of immigrant Muslims.

*Fear of Terrorism*

Some of the interviewees worry about misguided young Muslims who support terrorism. Amineh and Aamir express these concerns:

Amineh: Some young Muslims go about in the right ways, and some of them in all of the wrong ways. I think when one wants to seek knowledge, there are not a lot of people that can give them good and fair information, a lot of people. And
then you go into the Muslim environment, and you are depending on there a couple of sheikhs that are decent, but there is one that is bad news, he made an anti-Semitic comment – I don’t like him – people like him, they are the producers of the extremists that can eventually lead to [terrorism]. I think that the Muslim community needs to shut them down because they are doing a disservice to everyone. He does not respect women, and his views are all twisted.

Aamir: People in my class – you would think they are medical students, and that they would not be ignorant, but when things happen against the US, such as bombings, you can see that they are happy. I am disgusted by that…They feel that since all of the discrimination that has happened – they feel that they have to fight back. But it’s just going to get worse and worse. People are just going to be fighting and fighting. I am worried about that.

The possibility that due to a lack of proper guidance, some young Canadian Muslims may be misled into supporting terrorism is a pressing concern for most of the interviewees.

**Gender Discrimination**

Gender discrimination in Muslim communities is another issue among the interviewees, especially the women. On the one hand, a few are concerned that on certain occasions some Muslim women may be forced to wear the hijab in order to symbolize women’s purity. On the other hand, some Muslim women worry about having access to important positions in Muslim student associations.

The treatment of women is an important point of concern for young Canadian Muslims, as evidenced by Aneesha’s comments:

In my community, at least, they feel that if you wear the scarf, you’re, like, a pure innocent girl and can do no wrong, and this and that, which isn’t true. The standard is the girl that wears the hijab, and the person that doesn’t is, like, below them, and I think that’s wrong too. Because in Islam, there’s no compulsion in religion, like, you can’t be forced to wear the scarf. You can’t be forced to do anything. And in the Pakistani community, girls will be forced to wear the scarf just to make their parents happy or something. And what’s the point of doing that? When the girl leaves her house, she’s just going to want to take it off. And I think
that’s the main issue that the Pakistani community has. They don’t recognize that if you force your kids to do it, you are pushing them further away from Islam.

Aneesha brings up a controversial issue. Muslim communities have been increasingly portrayed in the media as oppressive to women. This is very upsetting for most of the interviewees, as the prevalence of gender inequality in Muslim communities has been grossly exaggerated (Ahmed 1992; Hoodfar 1993; Khan 1998; Abhu-Lughod 2002; Razack 2004; Haddad 2002; Meeto and Mirza 2007). However, gender inequalities can be found across all cultures and religions and is also present in Muslim communities.

Aneesha is particularly concerned that the hijab may be used to symbolize the purity of Muslim communities, and as a result some Muslims girls may be pressured into wearing it. This use of the hijab falls in line with Hoodfar’s (1993) sentiments about the veil. Hoodfar writes that women have used the veil as a way to free themselves from patriarchy, but in some instances it is used as a mechanism to control Muslim women’s lives. As noted previously, some of my interviewees use the hijab to express their political agency; they seek to become ambassadors of 9/11 and to protect their religion. It is their decision and theirs alone. Unfortunately, there may be a few instances when the hijab is forced on women. This phenomenon of trying to symbolize women’s purity is not unique to Muslim communities, however. Espiritu (2003) argues that immigrant groups often use gender as a vehicle to assert cultural superiority over dominant groups. In her research on Filipino Americans, she shows how some Filipino communities utilize the virtue of their immigrant daughters to turn the negative ascription they experience as immigrants into an affirmation of higher morality (Espiritu 2003). A similar phenomenon may be occurring in a few Muslim communities where the hijab becomes a way to symbolize the purity of Muslim women. This may be intended to symbolize a higher
morality, but it could result in inequalities for Muslim women. How young Canadian Muslim women deal with gender inequalities in a social climate where they are stigmatized for these inequalities is an issue for future research.

Another important issue for young Canadian Muslim women is whether they have access to important positions in Muslim Student Associations (MSA). Amineh says:

Our MSA is very liberal compared to other MSAs. We were the first MSA in BC to elect a women president. Before that you just had a lot of closed minded people, and after that, we had three other women presidents. UBC and UVIC has still not had a women president. UVIC does not even allow women on their board. We have tried to talk to them. People come from abroad, and they come with their own cultural ideas, and they come and try to build an Egypt and a Pakistan here in Canada, and you know what that does not work, and you guys live in a different country, and your views are not the way that they are supposed to be.

Clearly, gender discrimination may exist not only among the older generations, but in organizations led by Muslim youth. Echoing back to my earlier comments on religious divisions, Amineh’s comments allude to the tension between Canadian Muslims and immigrant Muslims. In some instances, young immigrant Muslims may try to reproduce their home country’s gender hierarchy. However, it is also possible that Canadian Muslims may be shifting the blame for the gender inequality that exists in many student organizations to Muslims who are new to Canada.

*How to present Islam in the post 9/11 era*

The last major challenge is how to present Islam and Muslim communities to other Canadians in the post 9/11 era. The interviewees take dichotomous positions on this. While many feel that Muslim communities are not doing enough to integrate themselves into Canadian society, a few feel that some Muslims are making too many changes to appease mainstream society.

An opinion shared by some interviewees is that Muslim communities often do not
do enough to align themselves with the rest of Canadian society. For instance, Bushra and Barkat say:

Bushra: I think we almost put labels on ourselves, that we segregate ourselves from the [Canadian] community, but I didn’t feel the community segregated us, like, they didn’t place us in a different category.

Barkat: I just think Muslims have done a really bad job of actually connecting themselves to Canadian society, so they have isolated themselves. They haven’t necessarily embraced others to come into the community. Others just kind of leave them alone, and do leave them alone. We’ll just stay on our own side, then it’ll be okay.

Another generational divide between older and younger Muslims is how much to integrate into Canadian society. Some young Canadian Muslims may seek better integration than that achieved by their elders. In any event, when one looks at the experiences of Canadian Muslims, it important to consider the ways they are trying to integrate with or segregate from Canadian society, an issue discussed in the concluding chapter.

While some interviewees feel that more needs to be done to integrate into Canadian society, others worry about making too many changes to their religious practises in the post 9/11 era. For instance, Amineh says:

I think Muslims have become more apologetic and start changing things. All I am saying, that after 9/11, a lot of people started looking at religion and being, like, this is not fair to women and that we should change this. So we start changing things, and some changes are needed, but some of the ways people are going about changing things is in the wrong way. But I do not think they can really not pick and choose, and there is methodology of the way things are, too. I think people just want it to seem like a very modern and equal religion, so they are being apologetic, but what are you being apologetic for? Judaism and Christianity have the same thing. Just because it is under the microscope, it does not mean that you have to go out and change everything.

In brief, young Canadian Muslims face complex issues when they begin to build closer ties with their Muslim communities. Some do not like certain practices within their own
communities and want to alter these practices. Others don’t want their communities to make too many changes to their religion just to appease those who have become critical in the post 9/11 era. As a result, when young Canadian Muslims become actively involved in their religion and Muslim communities, they often come into conflict with each other and with older generations.

**Conclusion**

The heightened emphasis on Muslim identity in response to increased and multifaceted discrimination in the post 9/11 era shows the importance of theorizing the formation of Muslim identity. Perhaps surprisingly, given the interest in Muslims and Islam post 9/11, this has not yet been considered. This work represents an attempt to begin to fill the gap in the literature. To this end, I accept and extend the existing work on ‘reactive ethnicity’, applying my term ‘reactive identity formation’ to the social process of affirming identity in response to discrimination. Identity is not merely a feature of ethnicity; other important social attributes such as gender, class, religion, and age all play a role in identity formation (Settles 2006). People may develop reactive identities when any one of these dimensions is challenged. My research shows that religious identity, like ethnic identity, can become reactive when it is challenged.

Many of the young Muslims in this study demonstrate ‘reactive identity formation’, affirming their Muslim identity in a variety of ways. Some reassert their Islamic faith; others participate more in their Muslim communities, educate others about Islam, are ambassadors of Islam, make changes to their physical appearance, or became more politically active. My research reveals three key points. First, the young Muslims in this study affirm their identity in order to cope with the discrimination they face; this
corresponds to the arguments advanced by ‘reactive ethnicity’ theorists. Second, resistance can play an important role in ‘reactive identity formation’, something that ‘reactive ethnicity’ theory does not consider. More specifically, through ‘reactive identity formation’, interviewees can resist the abuse of Islam and reclaim their religion. Third, with the increased societal interest in Islam, interviewees have strengthened their Muslim identity by learning more about the religion and becoming more appreciative of it.

My research shows that multiple factors can lead to the formation of reactive identities. This differs from what ‘reactive ethnicity’ theory suggests. Furthermore, the fact that multiple factors contribute to the ‘reactive identity formation’ of the young Muslims in this study helps to explain why the majority of them experience it and may also explain why many young Muslims in the United States and Britain are noticing a similar phenomenon.

My research also looks into individual agency. It extends previous work on ‘reactive ethnicity’ by documenting that ‘reactive identity formation’ involves interplay between social forces and individual agency. Many of the young Muslims in this study affirm their Muslim identity because it is highlighted by society through acts of discrimination and increased interest in Islam post 9/11. However, personal and political motivations play a part in their decisions as well. Thus, ‘reactive identity formation’ is a complex social process, involving both societal and self-ascription.

Finally, when young Canadian Muslims develop these ‘reactive identities’ and become more involved in their religion and in their communities, they face challenges within their own communities, as they often conflict with each other and with older
generations on important issues, further complicating their experience of ‘reactive identity formation’.
Chapter Five

‘My ethnicity does not mean a whole lot’:

How young Canadian Muslims make sense of their ethnic identities in the post 9/11 era

I don’t even believe in ethnicity as much, I mean I could be Canadian, my parents could be Pakistani, I could marry someone – I’m not married, but I could marry someone Egyptian. What am I? I’m still Muslim, I’m still Canadian. I’ve never visited Pakistan in my life, I have never gone anywhere outside of North America, I don’t even know if I’m Pakistani, you know. (Nashida)

Like Nashida, many young Canadian Muslims in my study speak of a weak attachment towards their ethnic identity. Yet as the previous chapter shows, through ‘reactive identity formation’ many have intensified their religious identity as a way of dealing with the post 9/11 era. In this chapter, I explore what this affirmation of Muslim religious identity means for their ethnic identity. Does the importance they now give to their religious identity coincide with a weak ethnic one? What meanings do they give to ethnic identity? How does ethnicity function for a group of young Canadian Muslims who hold on strongly to their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era?

By examining these questions, I fill an important gap in the existing literature. While previous literature has explored how Muslim religious identity has been impacted in the post 9/11 era (Kundani 2002; El-Halawany 2003; Peek 2003; Gupta 2004), a gap exists in terms of how the post 9/11 era may be framing the ethnic identity of Muslims. I find that most young Canadian Muslims in my study do not maintain a close connection to their ethnic identity in a post 9/11 era. Multiple factors contribute to this lack of attachment, including the higher importance given to their Muslim identity by society, the
precarious nature of ethnicity which makes it difficult to adopt for young Muslims born and raised in Canada, and the push for a revivalist form of Islam among young Canadian Muslims. I conclude the chapter by illustrating how the importance given to Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era and the weakening of ethnic ties are creating a sense of kinship among young Canadian Muslims that crosses traditional ethnic boundaries.

**Ethnic Identity**

I understand the ethnic identities of the interviewees as connected to the national origins of their parents, or for those interviewees not born in Canada, to their country of birth. I use this definition of ethnicity because they see their ethnic identity as connected to their ancestral origin. For example, when I asked the interviewees who were born in Pakistan or whose parents were born in Pakistan what they consider their ethnic identity, they all responded, ‘Pakistani’. Similarly, when I asked those born in Egypt or whose parents were born in Egypt about their ethnic identity, they all replied, ‘Egyptian’.

Academics note that ethnic groups in society often refer to groups sharing languages, practices, or ancestral origins. In the view of many, ethnic identity is fluid, dynamic, and situational (Waters 1990; Barth 1969; Nagel 1994). Nagel (1986) argues that as people go through their daily lives, their ethnicity can change, depending on the social context. Hence, someone who is both Egyptian and Saudi Arabian may identity him/herself as Egyptian in one social context and as Saudi Arabian in another. Waters (1990) and Cornell (1988) say that it possible for people to hold several situational ethnic identities. Cornell mentions that various levels of identity such as sub-tribal, tribal, regional, or pan-Indian are available to Native Americans who often move from one to another depending on the social situation.
Academics emphasize that social and political interests can shape ethnicity. Although individuals may have a set of ethnic identities from which to choose, the set is often determined by social and political forces (Liberson 1985; Nagel 1994; Waters 1990; Waters 1999). Nagel writes that ‘although ethnic identity is both optional and mandatory, individual choices are circumscribed by the ethnic categories available at a particular time and a place’, and ‘in some cases the array of available ethnicities can be quite restricted and constraining’ (1994:154). Liberson (1985) points out that while a wide variety of ancestries are available for ‘white’ people, the same choices are not available for ‘blacks’ in the United States. In a similar vein, Mary Waters (1990) notes that although many African Americans in the US know that their ancestors include many non-blacks, they are constrained to identify themselves as black, without any other options being available to them.

In my analysis, I use these insights to understand how young Canadian Muslims make sense of their ethnic identities in the post 9/11 era. I also investigate whether a kinship has developed among young Canadians Muslims that transcends traditional ethnic boundaries. Previous research in ethnicity literature has shown that when faced with discrimination, historically different ethnic groups have come together to form a collective identity. Padilla (1986) shows how Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans formed a collective Latino identity in Chicago, crossing traditional ethnic boundaries. Although clearly separated in the 1950s and the 1960s, by the 1970s, increasing urban inequality led to visible similarities between the two groups, resulting in the social construction of Latino ethnicity. Although this social construction of Latino ethnicity was fabricated out of a myth of a common origin and based on language similarity, it was
mostly based on the needs of Spanish speaking groups and broader social conditions, which were not ethnic (Padilla 1986).

Furthermore, in her research, Espiritu (1992) shows how culturally distinct Asian groups such as Chinese and Japanese have formed an Asian American collectivity. Because outsiders often categorize them as one ethnicity, Asian Americans find themselves in political and social situations which demand they act on a pan-Asian basis. However, Espiritu notes that although this identity is imposed on them by external forces, Asian Americans use it as a political instrument for their benefit. As Padilla and Espiritu illustrate, different ethnic groups can form a new collective identity to fight discrimination and gain more resources.

**Ethnicity and Religion**

My research explores whether young Canadian Muslims from different ethnic groups have developed a collective religious identity that crosses ethnic boundaries to deal with the post 9/11 era. The interacting relationship between ethnicity and religion has been studied by many academics (Sharot 1973; Driedger 1980; Gans 1994; Rooijackers 1994; Nijsten 1996; Eid 2003, Kurien 2004), and a variety of sociological studies highlight the difficulty involved in separating the two (Duderija 2007; Haddad & Lummis 1987; Kurien 1998 & Numrich 1996).

Scholarly consensus is that among first-generation immigrants, religion can play a central role in ethnic identity formation. Cesari (2004) finds that Muslim immigrants born and raised in Muslim majority societies often develop religious identities that are closely linked to their ethnicity. In other words, their Islamic identity is tied to the dominant cultural and social practices of their countries. For example, among Pakistani
immigrants, the understanding of being Muslim is often closely linked to their ethnic identity as Pakistani. Similarly, Rooijackers (1994) has found that among first-generation Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, Islam plays an important role in maintaining their Turkish ethnic identities.

While first-generation immigrants often follow ethno-religious identities, second-generation immigrants born or raised in the West have different experiences and do not necessarily reproduce the ethno-religious identities of their parents (Cesari 2004). Second-generation Muslims have not been born or raised in Muslim majority societies where a close emphasis is placed on the connection between ethnicity and religion through cultural symbols and practices. Thus, unlike their parents they experience Islam only as a religion, not a dominant social cultural force (Cesari 2004; Duderja 2007). Duderja writes, ‘Islamic identity for many western born Muslims is based upon a conscious choice of religious identity reconstruction and not merely on the basis of reproduction of an inherited aspect, or their ethnic heritage or tradition’ (2007:146).

Furthermore, many young Western Muslims advocate for what has been labelled ‘revivalist Islam’ (Kibria 2008). Revivalist Islam seeks to ‘purify’ Islam from the inherited ethno-cultural elements of an earlier generation’s Islam and advocates a return to core tenets by rejecting cultural interpretations of Islam.

My research shows that this push for revivalist Islam is another reason why some young Canadian Muslims are denouncing their ethnic identity in the post 9/11 era. Further, revivalist Islam is contributing to the development of a religious identity that transcends traditional ethnic boundaries. Roy (2004) has found that in Western Europe, Islam also crosses traditional ethnic boundaries. He sees Muslim identity as a primarily
ethnic identity, and the acceptance of the label ‘Muslim’ by individuals who are not religious provides fuel for his argument. However, my research shows that having a high commitment to ritual observance is important to the crossing of ethnic boundaries. In fact, young Canadian Muslims’ commitment to religious observance and their desire for revivalist Islam help them build ties with Muslims from different ethnic groups. Overall, my research shows that a high level of ritual observance, in conjunction with societal pressure, can help in the formation of a religious identity that crosses traditional national ethnic boundaries.

**Feelings about Ethnic Identity**

The vast majority of the interviewees in this study do not recall having a close connection to their ethnic identity, although a few occasionally use ethnicity as a social tool. The few interviewees with close ties to their ethnic identity were born or raised in Muslim majority countries such as Iran and Pakistan. By and large, however, most give precedence to their Muslim identity over their ethnic one.

The interviewees have various ancestral backgrounds, including India, Pakistan, Fiji, the West Indies, Libya, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jamaica, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. However, many young Muslims in this study express that their ethnic identities are not that important to them. For instance, when I asked Zaahir, a 22-year-old man raised in Canada, what being Pakistani means to him, he replied, ‘Not much’. Sakeena, a 27-year-old Canadian-born woman also says her ethnic identity ‘doesn’t mean a whole lot’. In fact, many of the interviewees do not indicate having close ties to their ethnic identity. This is in sharp contrast to how they articulate what their religious identity means to them, a point which will be discussed later in the chapter.
The interviewees who indicate having some connection to their ethnic identity often associate it with cultural practices such as food, dress, and language rather than identity formation. Bushra and Maria, mention:

Bushra: That [ethnicity] is more of a cultural thing, so being East African, being East Indian is a cultural thing – it’s my language, my dress, it's my food, it's how I interact with other members of the community.

Maria: It’s more, like, cultural – we have a particular food, a particular dress, particular cultural music. It’s not so much as something that defines me, as something that I tend to do for relaxing to have fun and sort of come together with other people who are from my ethnic background.

These women are not using utilizing their ethnic background to provide a sense of identity. Instead, ethnicity is important socially, and they revert to it when it may be beneficial.

Four interviewees feel that their ethnic identity plays a role in how they define themselves. It is not merely a social tool for them but a source of pride and a guide as to how to live their lives. Ayush, a 28-year-old man born and raised in Pakistan, mentions:

Pakistani means someone who is humble, friendly, who welcome their friends, someone who just wants to be happy. If you go to Pakistan, that’s how people from Pakistan are; it doesn’t matter what kind of money they are making. They are happy, and right now, there is so much stuff going on over there, but life over there is still very normal. We try to enjoy life, to have a balanced life, and that’s something I really take pride on.

Similarly, Azhar, a 27-year-old man born and raised in Iran, indicates that being Iranian is the most important aspect of his identity. Furthermore, these interviewees feel that their ethnic and Muslim identities are intertwined. For instance, when asked what being Indian means to him, Umar replies:

It means to me that I am from India, I grew up there, I have family there, my cultural background is Indian, and a lot of the teachings from my Indian background go hand in hand with my Muslim identity.
Umar, Azhar, and Ayush’s experiences may have strong affiliations to their ethnic identity because they were not born and raised in Canada. Umar and Ayush came to Canada when they were 18, and Azhar had only been living in Canada for a year. Their experiences are backed up by academics who argue that Muslims born/raised in Muslim majority societies often develop ethno-religious identities (Cesari 2004; Duderija 2007). As a result, these interviewees may have stronger ties to their ethnicity than their Canadian born or raised counterparts.

However, most young Canadian Muslims in this study prioritize their Muslim identity over their ethnic identity. Maria and Radi say:

Maria: Yes, I think that being Muslim and Canadian is really important to me, so that really takes precedence over where are my ancestors from.

Radi: I see myself as Muslim first, because it is what you believe, and that is the most important thing.

Multiple factors help explain why young Muslims may give higher precedence to their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era. These factors include the highlighting of their Muslim identity, the difficulties in adopting ethnic identity for Canadian born/raised Muslims, and the push for a revivalist form of Islam. Each of these points will be developed in the following sections.

Having their Muslim identity highlighted in the post 9/11 era

Most of the young Canadian Muslims I interviewed do not indicate having a close connection to their ethnic identities; rather, in the post 9/11 era, their Muslim identities are more important to both society and themselves. Overall, both societal ascription and self ascription play a role in how young Canadian Muslims make sense of their ethnic identities (Nagel 1994). Even so, on some occasions, when young Canadian Muslims
want their ethnic identities to be acknowledged, this may not happen. Furthermore, a few interviewees may choose to distance themselves from their ethnic identities because they believe this may allow them to avoid discrimination in the post 9/11 era.

Young Canadian Muslims may prioritize their religious identity because after 9/11 their Muslim identity has been highlighted by society. Zeba says:

No, I think I just grew out of it [Indian identity]. Well, to a degree maybe possibly because I became more Muslim [after 9/11], so I had to give up one to accommodate the other, because I guess that’s the way it works, but yeah, possibly. In terms of my ethnicity and my faith, I identify with my faith completely more than my Indian heritage. Simply because I guess I’m visible Muslim, and society has put it upon me to determine myself that way.

Both societal ascription and self ascription play a role in ethnic identity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many young Canadian Muslims in this study have had their Muslim identity highlighted by society; they have affirmed their Muslim identity to cope with discrimination and reclaim Islam in the post 9/11 era. As a result they give little credence to ethnic identity. These experiences are illustrative of how ethnic identities are socially situated, fluid, and impacted by externally labelling, a sentiment backed by a number of scholars (Cornell 1988; Nagel 1986 & Waters 1990).

Interestingly, the three interviewees who report having close ties to their ethnic identity, Umar, Ayush, and Azhar, are among the minority who do not report affirming their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era. This suggests that ethnicity may function differently for those Muslims who do not intensify their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era than for those who do. But since the vast majority of my interviewees do not belong in this category, I cannot say this definitively. The issue requires more research.

On some occasions, some young Muslims may want their ethnic identities to be recognized, but this may not happen. Haleema, who wears the hijab, (and who is not
‘black’) describes such an experience:

Most people don’t even know [I’m Jamaican]. I’ve had cases where, people would say, ‘Oh no, you can’t be Jamaican’. A lot of times it’s just they say things, and they don’t think that I understand what they’re saying. Like, I remember I was in line for lunch at the cafeteria once with my friends, and this one guy, it was nothing anti-Islamic or anything like that, but he [was] speaking Patwa, which is a Jamaican dialect. And he had no idea that I could understand what he was saying. And a lot of times, these things happen, and they don’t associate the two. But it’s interesting to surprise other Jamaicans, and they’re really surprised they’re just like, ‘But you’re Muslim’. It’s really not a negative thing. They’re more interested in me being Muslim than anything else. I do identify as being Jamaican, but 9/11 might have also acted as a precursor to me going closer to Islam [than my ethnic identity].

When one is Muslim, other aspects of one’s identity may be invisible to society in the post 9/11 era, a phenomenon echoing back to the representation of black identity in the US. Waters (1990) notes, ‘Americans have generally paid a great deal of attention to ethnic differences within the white race, while treating black Americans if they were both a racial and an ethnic group with no intra-racial differences’ (45: 1990). A similar phenomenon may be occurring with Muslim identity. When one is perceived as Muslim, aspects of one’s ethnic identity may be erased, thereby impacting how one views one’s ethnicity.

A few young Canadian Muslims may choose to distance or alter their ethnic identities as a result of the tensions they face in the post 9/11 era. For instance, Ayush mentions:

Because I remember there was a time [immediately after 9/11], I used to say that I was East Indian instead of Pakistani. It doesn’t mean I wasn’t proud of being Pakistani, but at that time so much stuff was happening in the country, and it’s sad, and it’s hard to link yourself with that part of the world.

Ironically, Ayush is one of the few interviewees who say they have a close connection to their ethnic identity. This close connection may lead him to be protective of his ethnic identity. Furthermore, Ayush’s comments suggest that Muslims from certain parts of the
world may be more fearful of facing discrimination than others. Pakistan has been perceived as dangerous in the post 9/11 era. Therefore, Pakistani Muslims may be more afraid of discrimination than Muslims from other ethnic backgrounds; on some occasions, they may feel the need to distance themselves from their Pakistani identity.

While Ayush wants to hide his Pakistani background to avoid discrimination, another interviewee feels that her ethnic background could help prevent her from facing the discrimination directed at Muslims. Rubina comments:

I am very proud of being Egyptian. Actually being Egyptian kind of neutralizes the fact that I am a Muslim. Because when you say you are from Egypt, it neutralizes that you are Muslim. If you know about the history of the country, you know it is different than being Arab.

As Rubina’s comment makes clear, discrimination faced by Muslims after 9/11 may not be equally directed towards all ethnic groups. Muslims from certain parts of the world may try to conceal their ethnic identity in order to avoid discrimination, while others, like Rubina, may assert their ethnic identity to distinguish themselves from those groups that are perceived more negatively. Academics argue that as people go through their daily lives, their ethnicity can change, depending on the social situation (Liberson 1985; Nagel 1994; Waters 1990; Waters 1999). Liberson (1985) notes that after World War II, there was a huge decline in people identifying themselves as German in Canada because of the stigma associated with being German. A similar phenomenon may be occurring among a few of the interviewees in this study.

Overall, I find that both self and societal ascription play a role in how young Canadian Muslims make sense of their ethnic identity. Because they are primarily recognized as Muslim, and their ethnic identity is increasingly invisible in the post 9/11 era, many have come to give more importance to their Muslim identity than their ethnic
identity. Their experiences illustrate the important role of social and political forces in shaping ethnicity, an argument put forward by academics (Liberson 1985; Nagel 1994; Waters 1990; Waters 1999). Individual agency may also play a role in how young Canadian Muslims utilize their ethnic identities. Many have chosen to affirm their Muslim identity and give less importance to their ethnic identity because they are trying to reclaim Islam. Others distance themselves from their ethnic identity because they believe that so doing may protect them in the post 9/11 era. This illustrates how ethnicity can be fluid and situational, a point made above (Liberson 1985; Nagel 1994; Waters 1990; Waters 1999).

**Ethnic identity as difficult to adopt in their lives**

The precarious nature of ethnicity is another reason why many young Canadian Muslims in this study do not have close ties to their ethnic identities. Some feel that ethnic identity does not give them the same tools to bond with others as religious identity does. Others don’t understand what their ethnicity is supposed to mean and, hence, might not know how to adopt it in their lives. This is especially the case when they are born and raised in Canada.

In addition to societal ascription, young Canadian Muslims may be giving more focus to their Muslim identity because it allows them a better way to bond with others than their ethnic identities do. For instance, Haleema says:

> So I find a lot of the times I just identify better with Muslims. Because ethnicity can only take you that far, I find, whereas if you’re in a religion like Islam where so many things are laid out, and you live your life by it, it’s easier to get along with other people. Not necessarily get along, but if you’re going to be hanging out with them 24/7. For example, I have a Muslim friend here, so we can go for the ritual washing before you pray together. It’s just more things we can do together. Or we don’t have to worry about food because we both eat the same food.
Haleema’s comments suggest that since following Islam involves specific rituals and rules such as praying five times a day, it may be easier for young Muslims to associate with other Muslims than with people from similar ethnic backgrounds. This may be particularly true when Muslims feel their practices are not respected.

Others do not understand what their ethnicity is supposed to mean and, hence, might not know how to adopt it in their lives. This is especially the case for those born and raised in Canada. A few of the interviewees note that their Muslim identity gives them a better sense of identity than their ethnic identity. For instance, Amber, whose mother is half German and whose father is half Pakistani, mentions:

My culture has been water[ed] down. I am not Pakistani. I am not German. I think of myself first and foremost as a Muslim, and that means having a set of beliefs about the world and about how things should be, rather than traditional cultural practices that are often associated with the faith.

A Muslim identity may be easier for the interviewees to adopt than an ethnic one, especially those who may be confused about what their ethnic identity actually is. This confusion may arise from having multiple ancestral backgrounds or not having close ties to their parents’ native countries. Many of the young Canadian Muslims in this study were not born/raised in societies where their ethnic culture is the dominant one. As a result, they may not have inherited an understanding of what it means, for example, to be Pakistani. As has been noted, ethnicity is socially situated, historically specific, and dependent on both societal and self ascription (Nagel 1985; Waters 1990; Cornell 1988); the precarious nature of ethnicity may make it difficult for young Canadian Muslims to understand or adopt their parents’ ethnicity. As a result, they may choose to focus on their Muslim identity.
Push for a Revivalist form of Islam

Academics argue that unlike their parents, Western born/raised Muslims experience Islam as a religion, not as a dominant sociocultural force. Consequently, many Western-born Muslims develop a disdain for cultural interpretations of Islam and push for a revivalist form of Islam (Cesari 2004; Duderja 2007). This is occurring among some of my interviewees; they are denouncing their ethnic identity and focusing on applying Islamic thought to all aspects of their lives.

The desire for revivalist Islam may explain the lack of attachment many feel towards their ethnic identity. Revivalist Islam involves a rejection of cultural interpretations of Islam (as it is practiced by older generations) and a return to basic principles (Kibria 2007). Yazeed, who comes from an ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Sudani’ background, says:

One of the unfortunate things that is happening in the community is that it is run by the people from the older generations, though it is starting to be infiltrated by young generations. But is still run from people from older generations, and they come with their own biases and ideas about how people from certain areas of the world behave, and how they expect them to behave to begin with. For example, my mom wants to stick to the culture simply because for my mom’s generation they’re all either ex-slaves or ex-colonials so they have a certain mentality. But we have a different mentality. For them, culture is very important, that they have to stick to it to maintain it. For us, it more like certain parts of our culture are just designed by people, and if I don’t want to stick to it, I shouldn’t have to. And I think for this generation, the teachings of the Quran and of the prophet – those are the things that are more important to them; that’s what they would classify as being a Muslim.

Yazeed’s sentiments echo back to Kibria’s (2008) research on Bangladeshi youth in the US and UK. Kibria finds that many young Muslims have rebelled against Bengali Islam or the style of Islam practiced in Bangladesh, creating a generational divide. The practices of Bengali Islam are seen by the youth as contrary to ‘pure’ Islam, violating the
religion’s core tenets and spirit (254:2008). Kibria notes that the adherence to revivalist Islam is leading Bangladeshi youth to develop a weak attachment to their Bengali identity. Similarly, I believe that among some of my interviewees, this move to a revivalist Islam may explain their weak attachment to their ethnic identity.

The revivalist form of Islam involves ‘an emphasis on the significance of Islamic thought for all aspects of life’ (Kibria 244: 2008). I find this occurring among my interviewees as well. Zaahir and Rubina say:

Zaahir: I guess it [Islam] is just a way of life that I apply to all aspects. I try to apply it to everything I do, pretty much. Like the way I look at it is that there are guidelines for everything, so like coming to school, or when I start working, it tells me what my religious responsibilities are, and how I can fulfill those responsibilities.

Rubina: It [Islam] means a lot to me. It is part of my identity, and it is a large part of who I am. I think being Muslim shapes my personality, shapes my dreams. It also changes a lot of my values, the way I look at things, the way I want to live my live.

Many interviewees apply Islam to all aspects of their lives, something central to revivalist Islam. Islam helps them through difficult times and gives answers to some of life’s difficult questions. Samir says:

Samir: There are a lot of questions that people ask like you know, ‘Where do I come from? Where am I gonna [sic] go? What’s the purpose of life?’ Things like these. I thought Islam was able to answer those questions for me in a satisfactory manner. And that’s what sort of gives me content, because you can’t really get rid of physical suffering, but you can get rid of emotional suffering. You can understand how things work.

Many apply Islamic thought to all aspects of their lives, leaving little time to incorporate ethnicity. When religion is valued over culture, ethnic identity may lose its importance.
Crossing Ethnic Boundaries

Has the priority given to Muslim identity as opposed to ethnic identity created a kinship among Muslim communities in Canada that crosses ethnic boundaries? Since Islam plays such an important role in most of my interviewees’ lives, it is interesting to consider whether it helps bridge ethnic boundaries in the post 9/11 era. While some believe that Islam has always crossed ethnic boundaries, others feel that strict segregation existed among Muslim communities before 9/11. Still others argue that in the post 9/11 era, some ethnic tensions have loosened, and Muslim communities are coming together to form a collective Muslim identity. A desire to protect themselves against discrimination is one incentive for Muslim communities to unite: a collective religious identity can be used to fight discrimination, similar to how collective ethnic identities have operated in the past. The push for a revivalist form of Islam among young adults is another reason for the disappearance of ethnic boundaries. Even so, the blurring of ethnic boundaries does not necessarily mean all ethnic segregation has ended in Muslim communities.

To start, it is important to note that a few interviewees feel that Islam has always brought people together from different ethnic backgrounds. Haleema and Samir say:

Haleema: Oh definitely, and not just with 9/11. And that’s one of the things that I really, really love about Islam, is that it’s always, if you look at the history of Islam, it always has crossed ethnic and cultural boundaries. Like the message of Islam was always, like, there’s no disputing the fact that it was always sent as a universal religion and taught as such. There’s time when you just sit around, and you look at your friends, and you just see so many different hues and skin tones. It’s really cool.

Samir: Yeah, I think the Muslim community, for the most part, does cross ethnic boundaries. I mean the mosque that I grew up going to – there’s people there that are Iranian, there’s Indians, there’s Pakistanis, there’s Iraqis, there’s Egyptians. There’s no ethnic differentiation. I think it existed before as well. I think it got stronger in general in the community coming together. The community was already one, and they got closer after 9/11.
Some interviewees are appreciative that Islam is inclusive of many different ethnic backgrounds and feel this has strengthened since 9/11.

While some do not see ethnic segregation occurring in their communities, others feel that significant divisions have lessened post 9/11. Zeba and Dawoud say:

Zeba: After 9/11, I think because all Muslims were vilified, it allowed Muslims to unite together, regardless of race, religion, because they’re limited, they’re a small population. So you have to rely on the resources you have, and you can’t afford to be picky at this point. Pre-9/11 Muslims were not as united, because you could be picky, because everybody had their ethnic little mosques or masjids and stuff. But now, because the force was so much larger to combat it, they had to unite together.

Dawoud: In the Canadian society, I think Muslims have always organized themselves along ethnic lines. So you have predominantly Arab mosques, predominantly Pakistani mosques, predominantly Turkish, predominantly Bosnian. After 9/11 there was more of an effort between these ethnic mosques to come out with a common vision of Islam and to present a common vision to the Muslim community. And because of that what you started seeing is, whereas before someone who lived in this part of the city where the closest mosque was a Pakistani mosque, but because he was a Turkish guy, he would travel for 25 minutes to go the Turkish mosque, started coming more to what was considered a Pakistani mosque.

In other words, having the common goal of protecting their communities from discrimination and guarding their religion provides an incentive for Muslim communities to work together.

This coming together of different ethnic groups is not unique to Muslim communities. As noted above, Padilla (1989) has studied the construction of a ‘Latino’ ethnicity in the US, and Espiritu (1992) has noted the formation of an Asian American collective. So too, Muslims from different ethnic groups may be forming a collective identity to fight discrimination. However, their collective identity is a religious one, not an ethnic one, something not yet considered in the literature.
Padilla (1986) and Espiritu (1992) argue that societal ascription is important in the creation of Latino and Asian American ethnicities. Similarly, societal ascription plays a role in the fading of ethnic boundaries among young Canadian Muslims. Bushra mentions:

I think that 9-11 kind of... from an outsider’s perspective, grouped all Muslims of different ethnicities into one big clunk, and it made me, almost realize, well we may be different, but there still are a lot of similarities. So it was positive in that sense. It didn't make you discriminate more or less against Muslims from different backgrounds.

Societal ascription can affect how people perceive their attachment to and affiliation with others. In some cases, it may allow people to see similarities between themselves and other groups.

The prevalence of revivalist Islam among Muslim youth also helps to explain the shifting of ethnic boundaries among young Canadian Muslims. Aneesha says:

In MSA, there’s a bit of everyone. Like, there’s Somalis, Ethiopians, Saudis, like, [a] different mixture who are all doing the same thing. Like, we wanna [sic] make Islam accessible to Muslims on campus. And I find that that is the biggest thing that the youth are doing. They’re getting together with a common goal which is to unify Islam, but then adults aren’t doing that as much. So hopefully, within my generation, we’re already making strides. Like, we have this conference every December, you might have heard of it, Reviving the Islamic Spirit. Thousands of Muslims come to it, and it’s run by a very diverse group of people. It’s not all Pakistanis that run it, or all Somalis, or all Trinidadians. Like, it’s a mixture of people. They do it according to your qualifications as opposed to your race. I think that’s finally getting into the heads of the youth, but the adults are still behind. I don’t see that change in the adults. I think Islam crosses ethnic boundaries with the youth, but not with the adults. This is where I get confused, because I don’t like to be within my community, because the way they practice the religion isn’t Islam. They practice pseudo-Islam; it’s, like, Islam and Pakistani culture combined so I don’t think that’s religion at all.

Since many young Canadian Muslims are rejecting cultural interpretations of Islam and moving towards its basic teachings, it is not surprising that they are advocating a
collective Muslim identity that transcends ethnic boundaries. Universities may provide an ideal setting for the blending of ethnic groups.

A generational divide may exist between younger and older Muslims on this issue. Older Muslims may be more reluctant to cross ethnic boundaries because they may still be attached to the cultural practices of their native countries. Young Muslims born and raised in Canada may not feel the same affiliation and, hence, be less accepting of cultural interpretations of Islam. Instead, they opt for revivalist Islam. One result is a student conference called ‘Reviving of the Islamic Spirit’ (mentioned above) that is inclusive of a number of ethnic groups. Revivalist Islam is so important for Aneesha that it affects her participation in the Pakistani community and motivates her to build ties with Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds.

In my research, I found that young Canadian Muslims attempt to build a cohesive identity that transcends traditional ethnic boundaries. Olivier Roy (2004) argues that Islam crosses traditional ethnic boundaries in Western Europe. However, he sees Muslim identity as an ethnic identity and views the acceptance of the label ‘Muslim’ by individuals who are not religious as substantiating his argument. Contrary to Roy’s research, I find that a high commitment to ritual observance is crucial to the crossing of ethnic boundaries. More specifically, young Canadian Muslims’ commitment to religious observance and their push for revivalist Islam allow them to build ties with Muslims from other ethnic groups. A high level of ritual observance in conjunction with societal pressure can result in the formation of a religious identity that crosses traditional ethnic boundaries.
Although ethnic boundaries have faded, they have not been erased; nor have all ethnic tensions been alleviated in Muslim communities. Barkat and Bushra say:

Barkat: I think that for a while, I think that it was strengthened. I think that 9/11 happened so long ago, like, seven years, I think that they kind of fell back to the way they were. But I think after 9/11, I think there was bonding. I think in smaller communities, the kinship is tighter than in larger communities. I think there was for a little while after 9/11, more of a brotherhood and a sisterhood between Muslims. There is quite a bit of racism in the Muslim community, which is funny because we sit here and complain about white Canada not accepting us, so we don’t accept the other people within our culture. Arabs don’t like Indians, Indians think that Arabs are arrogant, and nobody likes Black people.

Bushra: I think there's stuff – ethnic tensions within groups of Muslims, yes I do. Within sects of Muslims, there are definite isolation/segregations, and within those I do see different groups sticking to themselves. I don't see many of them coming together.

These young Muslims worry that once the motivation for coming together fades, the camaraderie may also begin to disappear. They note that racism is not limited to the dominant groups in society; in fact, groups facing discrimination may display racial prejudices towards other ethnic groups. It may be difficult to remove these prejudices, even when efforts are made to bridge the gaps between groups.

Amineh says hatred is directed towards Arabs in Muslim communities:

Quite honestly there are a lot of Muslims that do not like Arabs. They feel that Arabs are the ones that created all of this oppression. We are probably the most hated even amongst Muslims. Not only are we hated from the fellow world, but even other Muslims do not like us because they feel like we are the reason for all of this extremism and 9/11. They feel that we are the ones that started all of this… After 9/11, there are a lot of Muslims that have been like this is all Arabs’ fault kind of thing. ‘They are the ones that are the terrorists and the bombers, and we are the ones that are paying the price for this whole thing’. But the fact of the matter is that we are the ones that are in the Middle East, we are the ones with the oil, you know, and we are the ones that basically after World War One have been oppressed and colonized.

Thus, some Muslim groups, such as Arab Muslims, may feel they face the brunt of discrimination, not only from mainstream society but from other Muslims. Like
mainstream society, Muslim communities may be laying blame for who is responsible for 9/11, pitting one Muslim community against another.

**Conclusion**

Previous literature has explored how the post 9/11 era impacts Muslim identity (Kundani 2002; El-Halawany 2003; Peek 2003; Gupta 2004), but how this era may be framing ethnic identity has not been considered. To this end, I examine how young Canadians make sense of their ethnic identity in the post 9/11 era. I find that most do not have close ties to their ethnicity and give more precedence to their Muslim identity. Multiple factors explain this occurrence. First, young Canadian Muslims find that in the post 9/11 era, their Muslim identities are highlighted by society, not their ethnic ones. Second, individual choice and agency play a role prioritizing Muslim identity. Since many find it difficult to adopt ethnicity as they have been born and raised in Canada, they select religion to provide an identity. Third, a push for revivalist Islam, which involves a rejection of cultural interpretations of Islam and a return to the basic principles of Islam, helps explain the lack of attachment of young Muslims to their ethnic identity.

Since the young Canadian Muslims in this study give more importance to their religious identity than their ethnic one, they advocate for a kinship between young Muslims that crosses traditional ethnic boundaries. To a certain extent, they see this occurring in their communities. However, this does not mean that all ethnic tensions have been eradicated in these communities.

Collective ethnic identities have historically emerged to avoid discrimination or as the result of social ascription. My research shows that collective religious identities can
appear in a similar manner. While other researchers such as Roy (2004) have shown that Islam crosses traditional ethnic boundaries, they conceptualize Islam as functioning like an ethnic identity. My research, on the other hand, shows that it is young Canadian Muslims’ commitment to religious observance, evidenced in their agitation for revivalist Islam, which is vital to the crossing of ethnic boundaries.

Finally, in this chapter I illustrate how ethnicity functions for a group of young Canadian Muslims who have intensified their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era. I cannot speak to the role of ethnicity in the lives of other young Canadians Muslims. Does ethnicity play a similar role for Muslims who do not intensify their Muslim identities in a post 9/11 context? This is a question for future research.
Chapter Six

‘I am Canadian’: Reshaping Canadian Identity in the Post 9/11 Era

You know I’ve embraced everything that people say is Canadian, and yet I’m not accepted as being Canadian, and this is my home, you know? This is what I call home, and yet people don’t accept me here. It’s weird. It’s your home, and people don’t accept you in your own home? It’s weird. (Alisha)

Alisha’s thoughts demonstrate the complexity of being Canadian for young Muslims in the post 9/11 era. While they recognize themselves as Canadian, others may not. How does this impact young Muslims’ identity as Canadians? Do they feel less attachment to their Canadian identity? Or do they hold onto it, regardless of how others perceive them? Has this impacted their thoughts about multiculturalism? Do they still see Canada as multicultural? Since such considerations represent the logical next piece of the puzzle, I devote this chapter to exploring how young Muslims negotiate their identities as Canadians in the post 9/11 era.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that when individuals from racialized ethnic groups experience discrimination, they are likely to experience ‘reactive identity formation’ wherein they affirm their ethnic identities and develop a weakened national identity. As predicted by Portes and Rumbaut, many young Canadian Muslims have affirmed their Muslim identity in the post 9/11 era, as shown in Chapter Four. But is the discrimination young Canadian Muslims face also impacting their Canadian identity? Has having a stronger sense of Muslim identity altered the interviewees’ attachment to Canada, as predicted by reactive ethnicity theory?

Perhaps surprisingly, I find that despite the undermining of their Canadian citizenship which includes not being recognized as Canadians by others, most of my
interviewees retain a strong sense of Canadian identity. Thus, it seems that in the Canadian context, facing discrimination does not necessarily lead to a weakened national identity. Interviewees cite many reasons for their continued attachment to Canada. First, they feel that Canada is more favourable to Muslim communities than other Western countries, including the US and UK and, hence, see Canada in a positive light. Second, they assert their Canadian identity in a bid to resist discrimination; in doing so, they reshape what it means to be Canadian. Third, and following directly from the previous point, young Canadian Muslims’ attachment to their Canadian identity can be understood when one examines their definition of being Canadian. Most highlight Canada’s multicultural tradition, which entails being respectful of other cultures. As a result, they conceptualize the discrimination they face as being anti-Canadian and think quite highly of Canadian multiculturalism.

Since multiculturalism plays an important role in how young Canadian Muslims make sense of their Canadian identity, I situate my analysis in this chapter within the literature of multiculturalism. Although Canada now presents itself as having a multicultural identity, academics frequently note that Canadian identity has historically been based on whiteness (Thobani 2007; Boyko 2000; Anderson 2007; Bannerji 2000). As discussed in the introductory chapter, academics such as Thobani (2007) and Razack (2005) argue that the Canadian state was founded by ejecting Aboriginal people. They add that the Canadian state continued to strengthen its racial status as a homogenous and dominant white majority through its marginalization of early immigrant groups such as the Chinese and Japanese (Thobani 2007; Bannerji 2000).
During the 1960s and the 1970s, the Canadian state made a radical shift and adopted multiculturalism as a state policy, attempting to represent itself as a liberal democratic nation that had moved far beyond its racial beginnings. However, Canadian multiculturalism has met with extensive criticism. Bannerji (2000) notes that the foundation of multiculturalism is problematic because ‘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’ (2000:42). To Bannerji (2000), the ‘we’ of multiculturalism is merely a colonial European slightly reworked into a Canadian identity. This Canadian identity still excludes non-white immigrants and the Aboriginal population (Bannerji 2000).

Multiculturalism has also been scrutinized for conceptualizing ethnic identity as fixed rather than fluid and situational. Bannerji (2000) believes multiculturalism fails to take into account how ethnicity is often politically and socially constructed. There is nothing natural or primordial about the cultural identities that multiculturalism claims to respect, she says. Further, according to her, the officially recognized multicultural ethnicities are often the constructs of colonial, Orientalist, and racist discourses (Bannerji 2000). In a similar vein, Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that multiculturalism defines ethnic communities as homogenous groups who speak with a unified cultural or racial voice – in reality, this is not true. Yuval-Davis also emphasizes that voices of ethnic groups are constructed as distinct from the majority culture; in addition, the more authentic a group is perceived to be, the more recognition it receives. Yuval-Davis (1997) believes this encourages ethnic retention; even more troubling, immigrants organize along ethnic group lines that bear little resemblance to their homeland.
Another criticism is that multiculturalism shifts the focus from social justice and racism to ethnic identity and cultural diversity (Bannerji 2000). Bannerji writes that ‘the concept of diversity simultaneously allows for an emptying out of actual social relations and suggests a concreteness of cultural description, and through this process obscures any understanding of difference as a construction of power’ (2000: 36). Joppke (2004) notes that multiculturalism fails to deal with the socio-economic problems that immigrants face, including unemployment and economic marginalization. Such academics believe that since multiculturalism factors social justice into the recognition of cultural diversity, deeper structural relations of power, such as racism, sexism, or heterosexism are tossed aside (Bannerji 2000; Joppke 2004). As a result, minorities in Canada organize along the lines of ethnic communities, not as communities based on class, gender, and racialization, which would be more powerful. Therefore, Bannerji says, multiculturalism does not benefit non-white immigrants because it encourages minorities to focus on diversity issues and not on more important issues such as racism. Conversely, Benhabib (2003) believes that multiculturalism should be replaced with policies and programs that encourage group solidarity across colour, ethnic, and racial lines.

Academics (Razack 2005; Thobani 2007) argue that the mistreatment of Muslim communities post 9/11 reveals Canada’s foundation as a racial state, something which has been hidden by multiculturalism. Thobani (2007) notes the emergence of public demands for increased restrictions on immigration and citizenship post 9/11, thus reshaping the meaning of Canadian nationality and citizenship. Many academics declare that in the post 9/11 era, Canadian Muslims have been cast outside the realm of Canadian
citizenship, thereby highlighting the problems of Canadian multiculturalism (Razack 2005; Thobani 2007; Joppke 2004).

Clearly, then, multiculturalism has come under fire for a number of different reasons. An issue, however, often overlooked in academic literature is how Canadians, especially minority groups, view multiculturalism and how they experience it in their daily lives. Do they see multiculturalism as problematic, or do they disagree with the academic experts? What are their lived experiences of multiculturalism? In fact, my interviewees experience multiculturalism quite differently than what academics might predict. Most think quite highly of multiculturalism and feel it has benefitted them and their communities, suggesting it may be time to reframe the academic discourse on multiculturalism.

Not recognized as Canadian by others

As noted in previous chapters, many interviewees believe they are not recognized as Canadian, and that their citizenship, including their birthright citizenship, is undermined by others in the post 9/11 era. Many believe the perception that Canadian identity is based on whiteness is partially to blame for this. They also feel the notion that their Muslim identity somehow interferes with their ability to be Canadian is partly responsible for the lack of recognition given to them as Canadians.

Peter Neyer (2006) argues that since 9/11, the birthright citizenship of Muslim individuals born in the US has been perceived as accidental and is used to undermine their rights of birthright citizenship. Many of my interviewees feel that a similar phenomenon is occurring in Canada. Maria and Barkat mention:

Maria: When people look at me, nobody assumes that I was born in Kitchener. Even though I don’t have an accent, it doesn’t matter. Even my sisters, my
friends, nobody assumes that we are born here. Even if they assume we are born here – we are accidentally Canadian-born. People just assume that you were not born here.

Barkat: I’m a hyphenated Canadian, but I’m still Canadian. I am hyphenated by other people because I was not born here and because I am a Pakistani. My sister was born here, but they still see her as a hyphenated Canadian because she’s not white. I think it’s very difficult for non-whites to be considered Canadian.

Maria’s sentiments illustrate the extent to which some young Canadian Muslims perceive themselves as outsiders. While some feel they are not recognized at all as Canadians, others feel they are thought of as partial Canadians because of their ethnic identity. Because Canadian identity has historically been based on whiteness (Thobani 2007; Boyko 2007), being born in Canada may have a different meaning for members of minority groups, such as Muslim communities, than for white members of the population.

However, the criterion of ‘whiteness’ is used to exclude many racialized groups and is not exclusive to Muslim communities. What especially makes young Canadian Muslims feel excluded from Canadian nationality is the perceived tension in society about being both Canadian and Muslim. Some interviewees feel that others assume being Muslim interferes with their ability to be Canadian, and Zeba notes:

They ask me, ‘So do you feel you’re Muslim or do you feel you’re more Canadian?’ I’ve had people ask me like professors and stuff ask me, ‘Am I more Canadian or Muslim?’ And they think you can’t be both, that somehow you have to pick one. And I think that’s ridiculous to think that, especially in a multicultural society to be asking something like that. I don’t think there is a tension between the two. I think outsiders feel there’s a tension, but I don’t personally feel that there is a tension.

Said (1981) contends that through Orientalist thinking, historically Islam has been perceived by the West as inherently anti-modern, traditional, inferior, backwards, and anti-Western. This conceptualization may help to explain the perception that one can’t be Canadian and Muslim at the same time. However, like Zeba, most of the interviewees do
not feel it is difficult to be both Canadian and Muslim and do not believe they have to choose between the two.

**Feelings about Canadian Identity**

How does the lack of recognition as Canadian impact young Muslims’ sense of being Canadian? Although a minority of interviewees, 13 out of 50 (26 percent) recall feeling less attachment to their Canadian identity in the post 9/11 era, the vast majority do not. Twenty-seven (54 percent) feel their Canadian identity continues to be strong, while ten (20 percent) have developed even a better sense of being Canadian. Overall, the vast majority (37/50) do not report a weakened sense of national identity, in sharp contrast to the predictions of Portes and Rumbaut (2001) in their theory of reactive ethnicity.

A few interviewees mention less attachment to Canada in the post 9/11 era. For instance, Amber and Yazeed say the following:

Amber: It [9/11] made me realize where I would fit into the society, and that I would always be an outsider. I would never be fully Canadian. My faith would always distinguish me; my political beliefs will always make me disagree with the government, so yeah, it made me re-evaluate my identity. It made me feel less at home.

Yazeed: You know what, maybe it did. Because it made everyone stop and think about it, and it made me set my priorities. Am I a Muslim person, or an I Canadian person? And it strengthened [more] towards a Muslim than as a Canadian.

External forces can play an important role in how Muslim Canadians view their Canadian identity in the post 9/11 era. Thus, a few interviewees internalize the meanings imposed on them by society and no longer have a strong sense of attachment to Canada.

Although individuals from similar backgrounds can have varying responses to marginalization, the vast majority of interviewees feels strongly connected to their Canadian identity post 9/11. For instance, when I asked Aalia, a 21-year-old woman, if
the post 9/11 era has changed how she sees herself as Canadian, she responds, ‘Not at all’. And Aneesha says the following:

The aftermath of 9/11 did not change how I saw myself as a Canadian. I think it changed how I saw myself as a Muslim [by affirming my Muslim identity], but not as Canadian. I’ve always seen myself as a Canadian. Like, I’ve been to the Canadian Public School System since I was in kindergarten…Like, I don’t like to keep myself within a certain area. I like to help out in different ways. I’m Canadian – that didn’t really change after 9/11, but it changed my Muslim views.

In short, not getting recognition as Canadian and facing discrimination does not necessarily result in a weakened national identity. My findings stand in sharp contrast to those of Portes and Rumbaut (2001) who argue that when youth experience discrimination and have a ‘reactive identity formation’, their national identity is weakened. In their study, second-generation American immigrants who have been victims of discrimination are less likely to see themselves as American as opposed to second-generation youth who have not (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The young Canadian Muslims in this study do not seem to be experiencing a similar phenomenon. As Aneesha’s comments indicate, although my interviewees have developed a stronger Muslim identity, as shown in Chapter Four, this does not mean they no longer see themselves as Canadians or that their loyalty to Canada has diminished. Quite the reverse, in fact: my research shows that ‘reactive identity formation’ does not necessarily result in a weakened national identity.

Furthermore, ten (20 percent) of the interviewees indicate they have developed a stronger Canadian identity in the post 9/11 era. Dawoud and Asima comment:

Dawoud: I think it has brought me closer to Canada. I developed I think a real appreciation for Canada in the way Canada responded to what happened. The Canadian decision not to directly take part in the war, first, on Afghanistan, then on Iraq, and a much more measured approach, especially within the Liberal government. I would say that was something that impressed me quite a bit and
brought me closer to Canada. I started to think at that time – I didn’t realize it at the time, but if I look back now, it was around that time that I started seeing Canada as my home.

Asima: I think I became the happiest person in the world to be a Canadian. I mean we did not enter the war. We did not support America. We are a country of peace, and to be associated with a country like that it is amazing. The kind of treatment you get by having Canadian citizenship is amazing. Just the whole thing Canada stands for I was proud of. I was extremely proud to be Canadian and was proud of the way we handled the whole situation.

Political and international policies can play a powerful role in the way some Muslims make sense of their Canadian identity. Despite discrimination, a few have a stronger sense of being Canadian because they are happy with the foreign policies adopted by the Canadian government. Canada’s global image as a peacekeeping nation may encourage young Canadian Muslims to retain their Canadian identity in a climate where they face discrimination on a number of fronts.

Overall, the vast majority of the interviewees indicate that they still strongly identify as Canadian in the post 9/11 era. For most, not being recognized as Canadian and the discrimination they face has not weakened their perception of being Canadian, and a few have even strengthened their Canadian identity. This is an interesting phenomenon, considering many feel their Canadian citizenship is undermined. However, there are many possible explanations. As noted previously, the interviewees feel that Canada is more respectful of Muslim communities and is better at providing its citizens with social benefits than other Western nations. They also retain their Muslim identity in a bid to reshape what it means to be Canadian. Finally, they define being Canadian as being multicultural; hence, for them, discrimination is anti-Canadian.
Comparing Canada to other Countries

The interviewees compare Canada to other countries and feel it is comparatively more tolerant of Muslim communities. Canada’s global image as an egalitarian society plays a role, and they are appreciative of the social rights and benefits provided in Canada that affect their quality of life.

The perception that Canada is more tolerant of Muslim communities than other parts of the Western world is expressed by many interviewees. Abbas, a 20-year-old man who was born in Dubai and immigrated to Canada when he was 11, and Fareeda mention:

Abbas: I see myself as a Muslim Canadian first. I don’t really think it changed how I saw myself as a Canadian because out of three major countries, the US and England, I think Canada has been the least anti-Muslim country. So I don’t think it changed how I see myself as a Canadian.

Fareeda: I think in Canada, they view Islam better than they do in other places. Like Denmark for example. Here it is such a large Islamic community here, and the Muslim community [is] actually quite active, I’ve heard, in Toronto and in Calgary and in Ottawa. So I don’t think they view Islam as this barbaric, terrorist movement. I think it is better here than it is in, for example, in the US.

The hostility directed towards Muslims globally in the post 9/11 era leads Muslims to cling to the country they perceive as being the least anti-Muslim. Although they are not necessarily happy with how Canadian Muslims have been treated in Canada, they feel the alternatives are worse.

The interviewees are especially appreciative of the rights and privileges that come with being Canadian. These are not available elsewhere. Bushra and Yaman say:

Bushra: Well, when you go abroad, first of all, Canadians are seen in a very positive light. Canadians are not seen as being confrontational; they are not seen as putting one group against another. So I think with an international perspective, being Canadian has its advantages. And also I think compared to living in other parts of the world, we have freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and different things that I guess I take for granted that other people can’t. And also gender equality.
Yaman: I like the opportunities that we have in terms of education, and there are a lot of career opportunities for growth. I like health care and education in Canada. There are so many positives that you can mention. I guess another one is opportunity. One thing I really recognize, and for what I am really thankful, is that I think I would not be the same person if I didn’t grow up in Canada.

Social benefits and social rights such as having access to health care, education and freedom of speech can play an important role in shaping Canadian identity. In this particular case, these rights and benefits may help mitigate their formation of a negative perception of Canada, even after facing discrimination in the post 9/11 era.

**Redefining Canadian Identity**

Young Canadian Muslims guard their Canadian identity in the post 9/11 era as a way to redefine what it means to be Canadian. They challenge traditional notions that one has to be white to be Canadian, and in their interactions with others, they directly oppose the assertion that they are not Canadian.

The attempt to reshape what Canadian identity is supposed to look like and what it means to be Canadian is expressed by Zeba when asked how she feels when she faces discrimination:

I don’t like it. I mean I am Canadian. Like, I’m Canadian. I’m born here and raised here. Just because I’m not a certain skin colour does not necessarily mean I’m not Canadian. Yeah, it’s very upsetting. I’m probably a lot more Canadian than other supposed Canadians are. And I think in that I’m more a part of Canadian society. I take an active role in Canadian society. I participate a lot, while other people don’t. Like, I become all rigid and tight inside. I’m member of society as anybody else – I’ve never been treated in such a fashion. So it’s very upsetting, very emotional – tears and crying, of course. Just because they look like they’re Canadian, they look like a stereotypical Canadian, and they look white does not mean they are Canadian.

It is important for young Canadian Muslims to be recognized as Canadian, and it can be quite traumatic for them when they are not. As a result, they hold onto to their Canadian
identity and challenge the traditional notion that one has to be white to be Canadian.

This resistance is seen when the interviewees directly challenge the assertion that they do not in belong in Canada, as Amineh conveys:

I had this one [white] women physically bump into me and elbow me at a mall in Vancouver, and she kept on looking back at me and giving me a dirty look, and then she came back to me and said in a different accent, ‘You are lucky to be here. You should go back to your country’, you know, and I was like, ‘Who are you to give me a dirty look you and say you should not be here?’ She even had an accent, and I was, like, ‘I was born here, and I have probably been here longer than you have lady’, and then she just walked away.

Canadian Muslims face perplexing issues. It is frustrating when their birthright citizenship is undermined because they are not white and to see others being accorded it because they are white. However, interviewees like Amineh refuse to have their Canadian identity taken away and challenge the notion that they are not Canadian and do not belong in Canada.

This is also demonstrated in the interviewees’ reaction when asked, ‘Where are you from?’ – a question that is bothersome to them because it implies they are not from Canada. Fed up with being asked this question, Sakeena says:

I think now my favourite question is being asked, ‘Where are you from?’ I’ll answer, and I’ll immediately say, ‘Where are you from?’ Because the reality of it is that everybody’s an immigrant.

Overall, the interviewees challenge the idea that they do not belong in Canada. By turning such questions back onto those asking them, young Canadian Muslims question the entitlement of white Canadians.

Some interviewees feel that by affirming their identity as Canadian, they can get others to see they are Canadian. Barkat says:

[After 9/11] we recognized that we’re Canadian, and we are not going anywhere else. We’re not going back to South Africa, or India, or Saudi, or whatever. This
is where we’re going to live, and this is where we are going to die. So if we’re here for the long run, then we need to be, ‘Yah Canada!’ And being Canadian was something that we thought about, and that we need to make sure that we tell the rest of Canada: ‘We’re Canadian, so don’t necessarily treat us differently’…So yeah, I think we just realize that this is home, and so we need to embrace it, and make it so others will embrace us as well.

Many young Canadian Muslims invest time and effort proving they are Canadian and getting others to recognize them as Canadian. This effort is reflected in Dawoud’s sentiments:

We had moved in the neighbourhood that we were in, about eight years before that. We still did not know our neighbourhoods very well. After 9/11, some of the things we started doing was the following summer, we started doing barbeques and inviting our neighbourhoods to join us to show that, yes, we are Muslim, we’re visible Muslim, but we’re not horrible people they should be scared of. Before 9/11, my interactions for the most part outside the university environment were with Muslims. I made a very concentrated effort to make sure that I’m involved in my Canadian society…And I often find myself telling others who are very active in the community to look beyond just the Muslim community and get active in the community. I think that has really resulted from how I viewed 9/11.

In the post 9/11 era, Muslim communities are perceived as a threat to Western nations.

To be recognized as respectful and loyal Canadian citizens, Dawoud and his family feel compelled to do outreach work. Holding Canadian citizenship is not enough for young Muslims to be recognized as Canadian, and they invest time and effort in proving their ‘Canadianess’ to others.

**Defining Canadian identity through multiculturalism**

As noted previously, many young Canadian Muslims define Canadian identity as being multicultural, a notion which includes respecting and promoting diversity. Hence, they perceive the discrimination directed towards them as anti-Canadian. The interviewees’ experience of multiculturalism is quite different from the multiculturalism portrayed in academic literature. They are appreciative that multiculturalism permits different festivals
and ethnic cuisine. Many feel that by promoting cultural awareness and diversity, multiculturalism directly benefits Muslim communities and other minority groups. While some interviewees have concerns about multiculturalism in Canada, the vast majority have a high regard for it. A number of interviewees see Canadian identity as synonymous with a multicultural identity. For instance, when asked what being Canadian means, Umar and Sanya reply:

Umar: It’s very simple. What it means to me is to identify yourself belonging to a mosaic of cultures, societies, backgrounds, religions, being somebody who is tolerant open to live in a multicultural society – so that to me is being Canadian.

Sanya: Even though you’re part of a visible minority group, you’re still Canadian. You’re still embraced into the Canadian culture. So you feel like everybody can be Canadian. I feel like it’s sort of very welcoming, and that we try to respect and appreciate all cultures.

The interviewees clearly associate Canadian identity with multiculturalism. They think being Canadian means being a part of a society that is inclusive of many cultures and groups, a sentiment officially advocated by Canadian state policy since the 1960s. Thus, as noted, relying on multiculturalism, young Canadian Muslims conceptualize the discrimination they face as anti-Canadian. Therefore, multiculturalism provides a way to hold onto their Canadian identity even though their citizenship is challenged.

The high value the interviewees put on multiculturalism is expressed by Sanya:

I’m very happy to be Canadian. I think it’s really a great society, and that it’s multicultural; a lot of people from different backgrounds live here and are tolerant of each other. I know its cliché, but I’m proud to be Canadian because I just think that, you know, this country is more culturally tolerant than any other country in the world.
Young Canadian do not equate Canadian identity with whiteness, thus going against the academics cited previously (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007). For them, multiculturalism is a crucial component of Canadian identity, and it is quite important for them.

The role multiculturalism plays in their lives runs counter to the arguments advanced in academic literature. As noted previously, scholars argue that multiculturalism represents an essentialized version of colonial Europe, conceptualizes ethnic identities through a colonial lens, and is homogenous. It has also been criticized for focusing exclusively on cultural diversity and shifting the attention away from issues of racism and social justice (Bannerji 2000; Benhabib 2003; Yuval-Davis 1997; Joppke 2004). The interviewees in my study, however, see multiculturalism quite differently. Haleema and Jaleema, a 25-year-old, Muslim woman born in Canada to a Pakistani immigrant family, mention:

Haleema: Multiculturalism is a number of people coming from different backgrounds and coming together, which I think is really cool. Like I said before, one of the ways to break down barriers is to talk to people who are different from you. It’s a really, really good way to understand people. So I think it’s really great, and the more the government promotes it, I think it would be the better.

Jaleema: I think it helps to reduce discrimination, because the awareness people get on different people and cultures the more knowledgeable they get. So I think it’s clarifying any sort of preconceived notion they might have had. So I think it’s been really helpful.

While academics argue multiculturalism diverts attention away from racism, the interviewees believe that multiculturalism helps reduce racism by promoting cultural diversity and tolerance. Furthermore, Umar mentions:

Multiculturalism encourages dialogue across cultures and ethnicities so it helps to deal with racial issues.
Academics note that multiculturalism skims over racism by shifting attention to trivial issues such as cultural festivals and foods (Bannerji 2000). However, the interviewees are appreciative of these things. Ayush and Samir say:

Ayush: I think Canada is a very multicultural society; they welcome people from so many different backgrounds. We have so many different festivals here in downtown. Multiculturalism means that when I walk down the street, I just don’t see one ethnic kind of people. For example, I went for the first time, I think it was the Masala Mehendi festival, and I was surprised that I saw people from different backgrounds participate in such a beautiful festival.

Samir: I think it’s one of the strongest benefits of being Canadian is the fact that we’re multicultural. In Toronto, you can get any cuisine; like, you can go to Gerrard and eat Indian food, you can go to Chinatown and eat Chinese food, like you can eat Thai food. If you go to Yonge and Sheppard, you can eat Persian food. You can get any food you want. You can get any culture you want, so I think it’s definitely good.

For minority groups, the ability to celebrate their festivals and the inclusion of ethnic cuisine seems to play an important role in their sense of acceptance. Therefore, these practices may not be as trivial as conceptualized in the academic literature on multiculturalism.

Moreover, many of the young Canadian Muslims in this study feel that multiculturalism has directly benefited Muslim communities in Canada. Yaman and Jaleema say:

Yaman: I think multiculturalism has helped a lot of communities in Canada, Muslim communities and others. I think it has helped me because without Toronto pushing for that in a lot different areas, I think it is possible that I would have been discriminated against more so. Yes, I think it has helped a lot.

Jaleema: I think because of multiculturalism, Muslims have been able to live here and be pretty open and pretty comfortable with the way they live, so I think it has made it easier to live in Canada.

Some interviewees believe that more discrimination may have been directed to Muslim communities if not for multiculturalism. This may help explain why, as noted above, so
many feel Muslims are treated better in Canada than other Western countries such as the
US and UK. But exactly how do they think multiculturalism helps Muslim communities?

For one thing, they feel that multiculturalism encourages Canadians to be more
open minded, knowledgeable, and accepting of different groups, including Muslim
communities. For instance, Fahad says:

I think if you live in a multicultural society like Toronto, you’re much more
likely to look at Muslims in a better way than if you live in a less multicultural
society because people are more knowledgeable or know more about who
Muslims are. We have so many different cultures here, and people are always
asking about culture and religion.

The interviewees think that education is an important way to reduce racism, and they feel
multiculturalism encourages this.

Others feel multiculturalism helps to ensure that minorities are not overpowered
by majority groups. Azhar notes:

Racism in Canada happens when you are a minority in front of a very powerful
majority, and they can exercise power on you, but when you have
multiculturalism, this power cannot be accumulated in the hands of one or two.
And there are less opportunities for the dominant groups to exercise power or
express their behaviour.

Some interviewees feel that multiculturalism deals effectively with power issues that
stem from racism, again running counter to the arguments of academics.

One interviewee even believes that multiculturalism has allowed him to question
the stereotypes that he himself has about other groups. Umar conveys:

Multiculturalism has helped the Muslim community. The Muslim community in
Canada is very multicultural. There are very different Muslims who come from
different countries, and they all live together in the Canadian society, so we speak
hundreds of languages and come from different ethnicities, so the Muslim
community is multicultural in itself. For me, I learned a lot. It cleared a lot of
stereotypes I had about different colours, religions, ethnicities, and it helped me
get my faith, and it has allowed me to live in a globalized world.
In other words, multiculturalism may allow more cohesion between groups, as it helps individuals from minority groups shatter their own stereotypes.

While the vast majority of the interviewees think quite positively about multiculturalism in Canada, a few have concerns. Aneesha argues:

I think in Toronto, it’s very multicultural, but I find that the small towns aren’t. The only reason I say this is because I am from one, and there isn’t very much culture – the diversity is lacking…So I think that Canada can do a lot more than they have with multiculturalism.

Others express concern about how effectively multiculturalism handles racism. Salim notes:

I think it just skims over racism. It pretends that everybody’s okay with your tolerating a person’s viewpoint but that does not necessarily mean that you don’t still have those racist attitudes, that there’s not systematic racism within the system. Yes, there is an increase of the visible minority in the workplace, but nonetheless, there’s a still a lack of visible minorities in big businesses. There’s a lack of visible minorities in higher levels of power, and so the visible minorities are at the lower level, and so it’s not really implementing multiculturalism as it should be. It should be a more thorough top down approach, not necessarily closer [to] the bottom-up, I guess.

Salim shares the sentiments of academics (Bannerji 2000; Joppke 2004) who argue that multiculturalism may not be enough to deal with issues of systematic racism which often result in economic inequalities for racialized groups.

On a similar note, Zeba feels that people practice multiculturalism on a superficial level. She mentions:

There’s the idea that because you’re in a multicultural society, you’re accepting [of] everyone else’s religion or faith or ethnicity, whatever the case [may] be. But a lot of times in practice that is not necessarily true. You can tolerate it, but as long as it’s not in your own backyard. So the thing is, it’s okay for you to be multicultural in certain areas of the city, but you leave that at the city, and then in your home, you won’t accept it. And I think it’s changing now, but I think a lot of times people will only take on different cultures on a superficial level and not accept the other levels of those cultures and the needs of these cultures and different practices.
A few interviewees feel that despite the existence of multiculturalism, there a general fear and mistrust of other cultures in Canada. While Canadians may be tolerant of cultural diversity, it does not necessarily mean they have fully accepted it.

Moreover, Sakeena is worried about how multiculturalism categorizes individuals. She elaborates:

I think multiculturalism encourages people to get to know one another; you know we have different backgrounds, and we’re unique, and all that type of thing. But at the same time, I also think that it can pigeonhole people into certain categories, unless they really do understand. So for instance, people that are Jewish, but there are different ways of being Jewish. They’re all grouped together, I don’t know if that’s a good thing.

Sakeena’s concerns are similar to those expressed by Yuval-Davis (1997) and Bannerji (2000). Like these academics, Sakeena feels that multiculturalism may not allow the heterogeneity of cultural expression to be acknowledged.

In short, while a few interviewees have the same concerns as academics about multiculturalism, the vast majority think quite highly of multiculturalism and believe it has been beneficial for Muslim communities. But a huge contradiction exists between my interviewees’ positive assessment of multiculturalism and the marginalization they recall facing in the post 9/11 era. Why do they continue to believe in multiculturalism despite facing discrimination in multiple aspects of their lives? How can this discrepancy between the interviewees’ actual experiences of discrimination and their faith in Canadian multiculturalism be explained?

My interviewees see multiculturalism in a positive light, despite living in an era where their rights are increasingly infringed upon, because it gives them a sense of entitlement to the rights and privileges in Canada. This language of rights and
entitlements provided by multiculturalism allows them to retain their sense of being Canadian in the post 9/11 era and to speak out against the discrimination they face. My interviewees may not always have access to these rights, as my dissertation clearly demonstrates. However, they do have access to a language of rights and entitlements in Canada, which is often not available in other nations. Hence they continue to value multiculturalism despite facing discrimination.

Overall, my research suggests that the academic discourse of multiculturalism needs to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how minority groups perceive and experience multiculturalism, including examining how some racialized may use some attributes of multiculturalism to their benefit. By doing so, we may be able to strengthen the positive attributes of multiculturalism and overcome its shortcomings.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore how young Canadian Muslims negotiate their identity as Canadians in the post 9/11 era. In brief, irrespective of not being recognized as Canadian by others, the vast majority of my interviewees retain their Canadian identity, and a few have even strengthened it in the post 9/11 era. My research suggests that facing discrimination does not necessarily result in a weakened national identity, in contrast to what Portes and Rambaut’s work on reactive ethnicity suggests.

While young Canadian Muslims affirm their Muslim identity in reaction to discrimination, this has not meant the loss of attachment to Canada. Multiple reasons help to explain this occurrence. First, many young Canadian Muslims compare Canada to other Western nations such as the US and UK and feel that Muslim communities are
treated better in Canada than elsewhere. Canadian policies that do not support US endeavours are seen in a positive light by the interviewees. They also value the social benefits that come with being Canadian, illustrating the influence social benefits and rights can have on identity.

Second, many young Canadian Muslims hold on to their Canadian identity as a way to resist discrimination. Reshaping what Canadian identity can look like and what it means to be Canadian, they challenge the notion that you have to be white to be Canadian. Some hope that declaring themselves Canadian will lead to an acceptance of their Canadian identity by others. They invest time and effort to prove their Canadianess to others.

Third, if we wish to understand why young Canadian Muslims hold onto their Canadian identity, it is important to understand how they define being Canadian. Many conceptualize being Canadian as being multicultural; this includes respecting cultural diversity and being respectful of others. The interviewees understand the discrimination they face as an anti-Canadian sentiment, since such acts do not correspond with multiculturalism – a core Canadian value, in their view.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the academic literature on multiculturalism and the discrimination directed against Muslims, I find that multiculturalism plays an important role in how young Canadian Muslims make sense of their identity as Canadians. Most have a different view of multiculturalism than academics. While multiculturalism is criticized extensively by academics for failing to provide social justice for minorities, my interviewees see it in a positive light, possibly because it provides a language of rights and entitlements in an increasing hostile environment. Hence, my research suggests that
while there may be some limitations to multiculturalism, as acknowledged by a few of my interviewees, eliminating it completely, as has been suggested by academics, may not be the best approach. Instead, by moving the discourse of multiculturalism to the lived reality of multiculturalism in the present day, we may be able to discover how to improve multiculturalism so it provides not only a language of rights but also a means to protect these rights.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

I began this thesis by describing how instances of racism by strangers in my early childhood made me question my Canadian identity. In my research, I have found that about 20 years later, individual Canadians continue to play an important role in giving meaning to Canadian citizenship. Through face-to-face interactions with individual Canadians and state agents, young Canadian Muslims are treated as potential threats to Canada, not as loyal citizens. While they hold legal citizenship in Canada, they feel their substantive citizenship is increasingly being undermined in the post 9/11 era. These are troubling findings – but not necessarily surprising ones.

My dissertation is the first empirically based study to closely examine how the post 9/11 era is shaping the lives of young Canadian Muslims. While previous studies had documented Canadian Muslims facing discrimination prior to 9/11, their experiences in the post 9/11 era has been left unexplored. To this end, my thesis explores a number of issues that are important to the Muslim experience post 9/11, beginning with Chapter Two which reveals how the post 9/11 era frames Canadian Muslims’ daily lives. It shows that the meanings imposed on young Canadian Muslims in the post 9/11 era have serious consequences for them. The perception that Muslims are a threat to the nation has resulted in Canada becoming a dangerous place for them. For young Canadian Muslims, these imposed meanings have meant a loss of safety and security, verbal and physical
harassment in public space, employment discrimination, stigmatization of their religion, and racialization of their gender identity.

The racialization of their gender identity is particularly complex: Muslim men are imagined as violent and aggressive, and Muslim women are perceived as submissive and oppressed. This has severe consequences for how they are treated – and how they respond. Ironically, the idea that Muslim women are oppressed by their own communities makes them more vulnerable to discrimination from the outside. Clearly, dominant societal perceptions have a serious effect on Muslim individuals’ lives.

Chapter Three shows that these dominant conceptions have led to increased surveillance, both nationally and internationally, at airports and borders, and in their daily lives. While previous literature has acknowledged that security measures implemented in North America specifically target Muslims, how they directly experience this surveillance has not been studied, making my findings essential reading for both policy-makers and academics. Young Canadian Muslims recall their Muslim identities being targeted through intrusive questioning and invasive searches at airports and borders. They report experiences of racialization and gendered surveillance. They believe such surveillance challenges their citizenship as Canadians. Despite their status as citizens, Canadian Muslims feel state surveillance practices preclude their equal access to substantive citizenship.

The meanings attached to young Canadian Muslims also impact their peace of mind while living in Canada in the post 9/11 era. A major component of white privilege is that when you are treated poorly, you do not have to consider whether you are treated in this manner because of your race. As Chapters Two and Three illustrate, in the post
9/11 era, young Canadian Muslims do not have this privilege. For example, when they have negative experiences looking for work, they are left wondering whether this is connected to their Muslim identity or another reason. Furthermore, the emotional experience of standard searches at airports and borders is different for Muslims than for others. Due to this lack of peace of mind, many young Canadian Muslims feel compelled to conceal their Muslim identity when looking for work and when travelling, resulting in conflicting feelings.

Another key focus of my thesis has been how young Canadian Muslims contest dominant conceptions by constructing alternative meanings. To dispel negative stereotypes about Muslim communities, many try to be on their best behaviour, which sometimes involves concealing their real emotions. The interviewees invest energy challenging stereotypical conceptions of their gender identity. By doing the opposite of what is expected of them by society, they attempt to construct alternative meanings about what it means to be Muslim women and men. Overall, in trying to resist the labels that society impose, young Canadian Muslims work hard emotionally. Although this shows the individual agency and resistance of the interviewees, it illustrates that in the post 9/11 era, they have the extra burden of contesting imposed societal meanings.

The dominant conceptions imposed on young Canadian Muslims also affect how they make sense of their Muslim identities, as illustrated by Chapter Four. In this chapter, I theorize Muslim identity formation in the post 9/11 era, another surprising gap in the academic literature. As a way to deal with the multifaceted discrimination they encounter, many young Canadian Muslims affirm their Muslim identity through what I call ‘reactive identity formation’. A desire to resist abuse and reclaim their religion is another aspect of
my interviewees’ decision to affirm their Muslim identity. Finally, because they have learned more about Islam in the post 9/11 era (satisfying their own curiosity and answering questions from others), they have become more appreciative of it. Overall, while personal and political decisions play a part in their decisions, many affirm their Muslim identity because it is highlighted by society and because it allows them to cope with discrimination.

By exploring how the post 9/11 era is framing the ethnic identity of Muslims, Chapter Five fills yet another gap in the literature. It shows that many interviewees no longer recall close ties to their ethnic identity. The difficulties involved in adopting an ethnic identity for those born/raised in Canada and the move towards a revivalist form of Islam among young Canadian Muslims plays a role in this occurrence. However, the higher importance placed on Muslim identity by society in the post 9/11 era is one of the main reasons why many young Muslims in this study recall a weak attachment to their ethnic identity, once again demonstrating the powerful role dominant conceptions play in the lives of young Canadian Muslims.

Finally, while young Canadian Muslims face the implication that they are not really Canadian, Chapter Six reveals that most work hard to retain their Canadian identity, reshaping what it means to be Canadian in the process. Canadian Muslims are often perceived as disloyal citizens because of their Muslim identity. In fact, my research suggests that being Canadian is so important for most of the interviewees that they retain their attachment to Canada even though they increasingly are not treated as full citizens in their interactions with fellow Canadians and the state. Hence, my research illustrates that there are different ways to be Canadian than what is typically understood. Individual
Canadians can retain close ties to their ethnic and religious identity and still have a strong loyalty to Canada. A Muslim woman wearing the hijab can be just as Canadian as a middle-aged white Protestant. The national discourse of Canadian identity needs to be revised to take this into account.

Recommendations

Throughout my research, I have shown how the dominant conceptions imposed on young Canadian Muslims have serious consequences on their lives. In order to dismantle these conceptions, it is vital to educate mainstream Canadian society about Muslim communities. It is important to show that rather than homogenous entities, Muslim communities are as diverse as the rest of the Canadian population. Canadians also need to know that many Muslims are peaceful individuals who do not support terrorism and have a strong attachment to Canada. The conception that Muslim women are weak and submissive especially needs to be challenged, as it makes Muslim women more vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse.

While increased education is perhaps the most effective way to reduce discrimination, more direct measures are needed to protect the safety of Muslim communities. First, the police and other institutions such as universities need to take instances of discrimination more seriously and develop effective protocols to deal with such instances. Second, more needs to be done to make public places, especially public transportation, safer for Muslims. Perhaps enacting a zero tolerance policy for harassment or making transportation workers, such as subway and bus drivers, more knowledgeable about how to handle encounters of discrimination will make public transportation less dangerous for Muslims.
Canada’s anti-terrorism Bill C36 has been criticized for allowing the profiling of Muslims by security officials and the RCMP. In my research, I have shown how state surveillance practices impact young Canadian Muslim’s sense of citizenship in Canada. Therefore, my research demonstrates the importance of questioning state surveillance policies that target certain groups without just cause and shows the need to push for more transparency in state surveillance practices. Since such practices often occur on the ground and are frequently the result of discretionary decision-making, it is difficult to determine the extent to which it occurs. Hence, I suggest creating mechanisms that hold security officials more accountable for their treatment of passengers at security check points. Furthermore, individuals need an avenue where they can report instances of harassment at airports and borders. Many young Muslims feel compelled to comply with surveillance practices that they believe violate their rights. If they can report such instances, the affected individuals may be empowered to report such unfair treatment.

Future Research

While I have tried to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences of young Canadian Muslims in the post 9/11 era, a number of important issues are left for future research. First, this study does not speak to the experiences of young Canadian Muslims from lower-class backgrounds. Since the focus of this study is on young well-educated Muslims, the sample consists primarily of individuals from middle-class backgrounds. As a result, it does not address how social class could impact young Canadian Muslims’ experience of the post 9/11 era. It is highly plausible that Muslims working in lower-class jobs, such as gas station attendants or taxi drivers, may face more harassment than a doctor or lawyer due to the lack of power associated with their
occupations. Hence, how social class may protect some Muslims or make others more vulnerable to discrimination is an important issue for future research.

Second, more research is urgently needed on Muslims’ experiences of workplace discrimination. Most of the interviewees in this study are students or new to the workforce. Yet they recall facing numerous problems in their limited time working. This suggests that discrimination against Muslims in the workplace may be endemic.

Third, research is needed on how the post 9/11 era may be framing the experiences of older Muslims. The interviewees in my study are at an important stage of identity formation and thus may be more susceptible to changes in their identity in the post 9/11 era. It will be interesting to learn how older Muslims have experienced this era. Do they have similar experiences of discrimination in their daily lives? What kind of surveillance do they experience? What role does ethnicity play in their lives? Have they affirmed their Muslim identity, and do they retain a strong affiliation to Canada? These are all important questions for future research.

Fifth, more research needs to be conducted on how young Muslim women handle stereotypical conceptions of their gender identity. While my research shows that Canadian Muslim women make great efforts to shatter the myths associated with being Muslim women, what remains unanswered is how this dominant conception of Muslim women as oppressed impacts their attempts to achieve gender equality. Previous research has shown that when minority communities are under pressure and face discrimination from dominant groups, they are more likely to experience heightened patriarchy, resulting in damaging effects on women and children (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Akpinar 2003). Since Muslim communities in Canada have been under scrutiny and
increasingly stressed in the post 9/11 era, as my dissertation research demonstrates,
Muslim women may be encountering increased gender inequality. Hence, it is imperative
that future research explore how young Canadian Muslim women devise ways of
resisting and challenging patriarchy both in their own communities and in the wider
society at a time where they are stigmatized and racialized for belonging to communities
perceived oppressive to women.

Finally, more research needs to be conducted on how other racialized minority
groups, including members from the first and second generation, perceive and experience
multiculturalism. While multiculturalism has been extensively criticized by academics,
my research suggests that the lived experience of multiculturalism may differ from its
portrayal in academic literature. By exploring how other racialized minorities experience
multiculturalism, we may discover its positive attributes and learn how to overcome its
shortcomings, thus allowing the discourse of multiculturalism to better reflect the
experiences of Canadians in the present day.
Appendix A: Description of the Interviewees

1. Aaeesha: A 24-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of five and comes from a Pakistani background.

2. Aalia: A hijab-wearing, 21-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of 13 from Egypt.

3. Aamir: A 23-year-old man who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian-East African background.

4. Aatifa: A hijab-wearing, 24-year-old woman who was born in Saudia Arabia and immigrated to Canada at the age of 13.

5. Abbas: A 20-year-old man who immigrated to Canada at the age of 11 from Dubai.

6. Abdual: A 31-year-old man who came to Canada a year ago as an international student from Egypt.


8. Alisha: A hijab-wearing, 26-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of 20 from Pakistan.

9. Amber: A 24-year-old woman born in Canada to a Pakistani father and a German mother.


11. Aneesha: A hijab-wearing, 20-year-old woman that was born in Pakistan and came to Canada as a young child.

12. Asima: A 23-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian-East African background.
13. Atiya: A hijab-wearing, 31-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian-Fijian background.


15. Azhar: A 27-year-old man who came to Canada one year ago from Iran.

16. Baher: A 20-year-old man who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian background.

17. Barkat: A 30-year-old man who came to Canada as a young child from South Africa.

18. Bushra: An 18-year-old Muslim woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian and East African background.

19. Dawoud: A 25-year-old who was born in Saudia Arabia and came to Canada as a young child.


21. Falak: A 21-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada five years ago and comes from an Indian-East African background.

22. Farah: A 20-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian and East African background.

23. Fareeda: A 19-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of ten from Saudia Arabia.

24. Fardeen: A 26-year-old man who immigrated to Canada three years ago from Egypt.

25. Haleema: A hijab-wearing, 19-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada at the age of eight from Jamaica.

26. Jaleema: A 25-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from a Pakistani background.
27. Kareena: A hijab-wearing 21-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from a Bangladeshi background.

28. Leela: A 20-year-old Muslim woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian-East African background.

29. Mohammed: A 19-year-old man who was born in Canada and comes from a Bangladeshi background.

30. Maria: A hijab-wearing, 24-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from a Tanzanian background.

31. Mumtaz: A 22-year-old woman who was born in Saudia Arabia and came to Canada when she was ten.

32. Nashida: A hijab-wearing, 23-year-old woman who was born in Canada to a Pakistani background.

33. Radi: A 25-year-old man who was born in Canada to a Pakistani family.

34. Ragheb: A 26-year-old man who was born in Egypt and came to Canada when he was a young child.

35. Rashid: A 22-year-old man who came to Canada at the age of 14 and comes from an Indian background.

36. Rubina: A hijab-wearing, 26-year-old woman who came to Canada as a young child from Egypt.

37. Sakeena: A 27-year-old woman who was born in Canada to a Pakistani immigrant family.

38. Salim: A 19-year-old man who came to Canada a year ago from Egypt.

39. Salman: A 24-year-old man who came to a Canada a few years ago from Bangladesh.

40. Samir: A 23-year-old woman who came to Canada as a young child from India.
41. Sanya: A 25-year-old woman born in Canada to an Indian-East African family.

42. Saud: A 22-year-old man born in Canada to a Pakistani family.

43. Umar: A 22-year-old man who was born in India and came to Canada four years ago.

44. Yaman: A 25-year-old man who was born in Canada and come from an Indian background.

45. Yazeed: A 21-year-old man who was born in the Sudan and came to Canada when he was 12 years old.

46. Zaahir: A 22-year-old man who came to Canada when he was four from Saudia Arabia.

47. Zamil: A 29-year-old man who has been living in Canada for one year and comes from a West Indies background.

48. Zeba: A hijab-wearing, 22-year-old woman who was born in Canada and comes from an Indian background.

49. Zeshaan: A 19-year-old man who came to Canada one year ago from Pakistan.

50. Zora: A 22-year-old woman who was born in Bangladesh and came to Canada when she was eight.
Appendix B

Interview Guide

This interview guide was used to help direct the interviews. However, not all of the interviews followed this format. The interviewees were allowed to elaborate wherever they saw fit and follow up questions were asked based on their responses.

Demographic/Background Questions:
1. Where were you born?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been living in Canada?
4. Do you have Canadian Citizenship?
5. How long has your family been living in Canada?
6. How was it like growing up in Canada as a Muslim?
7. What is your educational background? If in school what year and program
8. Where do you work?
9. What Islamic sect do you belong to?
10. What is your ethnicity?
11. Do you see yourself as belonging to a national ethnic community such as the Indian, Bangladeshi or Egyptian community?
12. What would you say is your socio-economic background?

Questions about Religion:
13. What does being Muslim mean to you?
14. What does Islam mean to you?
15. What role does religion play in your life?
   a. What kind of religious traditions or customs do you follow?
   b. How religious is your family?
   c. What role does religion play in your life?
   d. Has religion affected your decision to pursue higher education?
16. Do you feel that you are part of the Muslim community in your city or at your university?
17. Are you actively/formally apart of any Muslim organization?

Questions about 9/11:
18. Where were you when 9/11 happened?
19. What was your first reaction to 9/11?
20. What were your families’ and friends’ reaction to 9/11?
21. How did you feel when you found out that it was suspected that Osama Bin Laden was behind the attacks?
22. Where you or your parents afraid for your security at all?
23. Do you alter your behaviour at all or your parents ask you to alter your behaviour after 9/11?
24. Do you make any changes to appearance or your daily routine to ensure your safety?
25. How did you feel when Islam was projected as being a violent religion?

Muslims Experiences of Living in Canada both pre- and post- 9/11

26. What are your experiences of racism in Canada?
27. Do you feel as though people label you?
28. Did you experience any discrimination living in Canada prior to 9/11? If so can you tell me what happened?
29. Have you experienced any cases of discrimination post 9/11 that you felt was attributed to you being a Muslim?
30. Has anyone else that you know experienced discrimination post 9/11 that you know of? If so tell me what happened?
31. Do you think that there is a difference between the discrimination Muslims experience now, compared to before 9/11?
32. Do you know if Muslims have experienced economic consequences post 9/11?
33. Do you think the way one physically looks influences whether they are discriminated against? If so, how exactly?
34. Do you think the ethnic group you belong to impacts on how you are treated? Do you think that Indian Muslims are treated differently than Arab Muslims?
35. How do you feel your ethnicity, gender and physical appearance affected how you were treated post 9/11?
36. Do you feel that some ethnic groups experience more discrimination post 9/11 than others? If so, why do you think this happens?
37. Do you think there are differences between how Canadian born Muslims are treated compared to Muslims who were born in different countries?
38. What image do you think mainstream Canadian society has of Muslim women?
39. What image do you think that mainstream Canadian society has of Muslim men?
   a. Do you think there are differences between the way Muslim men and Muslim women are treated by mainstream Canadian society?
   b. Do you think that Muslim women that wear the Hijab are treated differently?
40. For women that wear the hijab – What image do you think mainstream Canadian society has of Muslim women that wear the Hijab?
   a. Do you think you are treated differently by Canadian society because you wear the Hijab?
   b. How are the differences between how you are treated by Canadian men opposed to Canadian women?
   c. How have you tried to deal with the negative stereotypes that exist about women that wear the hijab?
   d. Do these negative stereotypes make your life more difficult?
41. Overall, how do you think other Canadians view the Muslim community?
42. Do you feel that September 11th and the War on Terrorism has affected the way non-Muslims view Muslims? If so how exactly?

43. How did you feel about the Media’s coverage of 9/11 and about their representation of the Muslim community?
   a. Do you think there are differences between the way Muslim men and women have been portrayed in the media?
   b. Do you feel that the media has contributed to the discrimination that Muslims face post 9/11? If so how exactly?

**Muslims’ Security Experiences**

44. How do you feel about the new security measures and legislation since 9/11?

45. Do you think the Canadian anti-terrorism bill specifically targets Muslims?

46. Do you fear potential targeting of Muslim communities? How? Why?

47. Do you feel this targeting to be understandable or unjustified?

48. Do you think Muslims or individuals who look Muslim face more stringent screening or questioning at airports or border crossings? If yes, do you think this is justified and how does this make you feel?

49. Do you feel there are differences between Muslims that have been here and those that were born in different countries regarding their opinions on security measures?

50. Have you ever gone through airport crossings or the American border after 9/11? If so, what has been your experience in going through airports and border crossings?

51. Have you ever felt scared or anxious about going through border crossings or the airport?

52. Have you ever felt the urge to alter your behaviour or your appearance before going through the airport or the border?

53. How has the possibility that Muslims may be more stringently searched at airports or borders crossings affected your personal security?

54. Have you heard of any other cases about Muslims facing difficulty at border crossings and at airports?

55. Do you think that there are differences between male experiences and female experiences at airports or borders? If so in which way? Do you think Muslim men are screened more than Muslim women?
   • If so why do you think this gender difference exists?
   • For women that wear the Hijab --- do you think that you are treated differently at airports and borders because you wear the Hijab?

56. How do you think the way one looks impacts on whether they are extra searched or screened at airports and borders?
   • How do you think Arab and/or South Asian experiences are different from that of other Muslims?
   • What physical markers such as age, skin color, name, and appearance do you think are used to screen people at airports and borders?
• How do you feel your ethnicity, gender and physical appearance affects how you are treated at airports and borders post 9/11?
• Do you feel some ethnic groups are screened more at airports and borders than others?

57. Do you think there are differences between the way Muslims born in Canada are treated at airports and borders opposed to those that are born in different countries?
58. Have you had any other experiences of surveillance not related to airports and borders?

Muslim Identity

59. What does identity mean to you?
60. How do you identify yourself? How would you respond to the question, ‘What are you?’
61. Do you feel that any aspect of your identity takes precedence in how you identify yourself?
62. What does being Muslim mean to you?
63. Has the aftermath of 9/11 changed the way that you see yourself as a Muslim?
64. In which ways have you or other Muslims tried to deal with the prospect of being a target for racial profiling and the negative stereotypes that exist about Muslims in Canada?
65. Did you build closer ties to the Muslim community after 9/11?
66. Did you pursue advocacy work related to Islam after 9/11?
67. Did you try to become better educated about Islam after 9/11?
68. Do you know of girls started wearing the Hijab after 9/11? Have you seen anything like that?

Ethnic Identity

69. What does your ethnicity mean to you? i.e. What does being Indian, Bangladeshi etc mean to you?
70. Do you think that your ethnic identity has been impacted at all by 9/11’s outcomes?
71. Do you think Islam pushed ethnic boundaries before 9/11?
72. Do you feel that a close kinship developed among young Muslims that pushed ethnic boundaries post 9/11?

Canadian Identity

73. What do you think it means to be a Canadian?
74. What does being a Canadian mean to you?
75. Do you feel you are recognized as being a Canadian by others?
76. Do you ever feel like an outsider in Canada because you are a Muslim?
77. Do you think it is difficult to be both Canadian and Muslim?
78. Has the aftermath of 9/11 changed the way that you see yourself as a Canadian? If so in which way?
79. Are you more distrustful of the Canadian police or other Canadian institutions after 9/11?
80. What are some of the positive things about being a Canadian?
81. What are some of the things that you like about living in Canada?
82. What positive experiences have you had living in Canada after 9/11?
83. What do you think of Multiculturalism in Canada?
84. What do you know about Canadian Multiculturalism?
85. Can you give me an example of Multiculturalism in Canada? i.e. religious based schools? Hiring policies?
86. What does Multiculturalism mean to you?
87. Do you think multiculturalism is working?
88. How do you think multiculturalism is used in Canada?
89. Do you think Multiculturalism is an effective way to handle racism?
90. How do you think Multiculturalism has affected the way Muslims are treated in Canada?
91. Has Multiculturalism helped you?

Is there anything else that you will like to discuss?
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End Notes

i 52,590 Muslims resided in Vancouver, 254,110 Muslims resided in Toronto, and 100,185 Muslims resided in Montreal.

ii Said conveys that simply stated Orientalism, as a discourse allowed European culture to control the East politically, socially, militarily, ideologically and scientifically. According to Said the basis of Orientalist thought is an imaginative but drastically polarized geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger ‘different’ one called the Orient, the other (‘our’) world called the Occident or the West (1981:4).

iii Ong (2004) provides an example of this by describing how citizenship can evolve over time: while early Chinese immigrants to the US were subject to the process of Negroization, in the current age of globalized capitalism, they hold important economic and intellectual capital; now they have attained the status of ideal American citizens.

iv Ismaili is a branch of Shia Muslim. Shia Islam is the second largest denomination of Islam, after Sunni Islam.

v These are summer work terms arranged by universities for students.

vi Section 4.7 of the Aeronautics Act authorizes screening officers to search persons and their belongings both before boarding aircraft and on board with aircraft. This act does not specify conditions under which searches can be conducted, other than to say that a search must be authorized. A search is considered authorized if it is carried out by a screening officer during the screening of persons and goods (Choudhry & Roach 2002).

vii This does not mean that the interviewees and their family/friends had experienced only eighty-one incidents at airports and borders. In the interviews, interviewees would often remark that they had experienced many problems at airports and borders, and then would describe a few incidents to me. Although in total the interviewees described in total eighty-one incidents; in reality they had experienced even more problems.

viii For instance, Ali a nineteen year-old man mentioned that his uncle is now in jail in the United States because of 9/11. He says his uncle was arrested on suspicion of financing Al-Qaeda. Ali says they closed down his business, they lost their house. His uncle is now in jail for two years, although Ali says he has no
links what so ever with Al-Queda. He says his uncle got convicted without a trial because of the Patriot Act. Other incidents in the States are described by Salman, a twenty-four year-old man. He discussed how his apartment was searched and he was extensively questioned by the INS right after 9/11 because he was an International student. He recalled that this also happened to a lot of his friends who also were International Students. He also conveyed that one of his friends who were from Saudi Arabia was detained and sent to a detention centre far away in some desert. His family had to pay $30,000 dollars to get him out and he was later deported back to Saudi Arabia. Salman believes that this happened to his friend because he was a part-time student and that now his friend refuses to come back to North America, even Canada.

Padilla points out that the similarity of language between Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans is a key issue. She says it is often questioned why Spanish speaking groups do not align themselves with black Americans in order to form a working class movement since they face similar problems in society. According to her the reason why a collective Latino ethnicity is possible and why it doesn’t encompass black Americans is because in order for a new ethnic identity to be constructed there has to be certain recognizable cultural markers and symbols that can bind the individuals together. One cultural maker that has contributed to Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican being able to come together is the Spanish language that they both speak.

While Kibria refers to this phenomenon as Revivalist Islam, other scholars use the term ‘Global Islam’ to describe this move towards following the basic principles of Islam and the rejection of cultural interpretations of Islam. Some scholars are reluctant to use term Revivalist Islam because they feel it may have connotations related to fundamentalism in Islam. However, since Kibria does not use this term in this manner, I still use it.

While India may not necessarily be a Muslim majority society, Islam is one of the major religions followed in the country.