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The Many Faces of Muslim Women in Canada: A Re-constructed Image in CBC's *Little Mosque on the Prairie*

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The Many Faces of Muslim Women in Canada:

A Re-Constructed Image in CBC's *Little Mosque on the Prairie*

Sarah Khan

Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
M.A. in Communication

Department of Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Ottawa

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-59470-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-59470-4

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the collective work of many different forces coming together at the right moment to encourage and inspire me.

I am grateful to God for guiding me, protecting me, and loving me.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Mahmoud Eid, for recognizing my potential, for helping me recognize my own ideas, for teaching me the dynamics of academia, and for offering me chocolates every time I went into his office.

I am grateful to Maya for being a Muslim woman I can write about, for helping me make sense of my ramblings every night, and for offering a different perspective to my own.

I am grateful to the beautiful city of Ottawa for inspiring creativity, hard work, and patience.

Most importantly, I am grateful to Slan for pushing me to be the best I can be, for inspiring me to step out of my boundaries, for being my mentor in so many ways, and for sharing this ride with me.

Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of Muslim women in Canadian media, specifically in CBC's *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (*LMOTP*) which represents women in non-Orientalist, realistic portrayals. This thesis traces Luhmann's (1987) theory on representation of society, Millar's (1793) observations about women in society and Hall's (1997) "Other"; and combines them with Said's (1978) Orientalism, Kristeva's (1991) theories on foreigners and Bhabha's (1994) Third Space to study the representation of Muslim women in *LMOTP*. A qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the first eight episodes investigates how the image of the Muslim woman has been (re)constructed on CBC. This thesis finds that Muslim women in *LMOTP* are not oppressed or stereotyped; they participate in Canadian culture and the workplace; and they are not considered outsiders. These characters portray Muslim women in Canada who exist in Third Spaces which allow Canadian and Islamic practices to merge resulting in uniquely Canadian artifacts like *LMOTP*.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Amaar: I think people would find it surprising that there's such a thing as a Muslim feminist.
> Rayyan: They see the headscarf and they see oppression.
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 3*

Context

The above conversation between an *imam*[1] and a devout Muslim feminist points out the fundamental problem facing Muslim women in Western societies: stereotypes. Muslim women in the West are often seen through filters of inaccurate stereotypes and limited knowledge even though they are active members of society who deserve equal representation. The earliest census record of Muslims in Canada indicates that there were thirteen Muslims in Canada in 1871, including five women (Hamdani, 2007). Despite this, their representation entered mainstream Canadian media and literature as recently as the last two decades. The late entrance of Muslims into media and literature is damaging to their image because Canadian society gains most of its information about cultures from the media (Said, 1997). Representation of Muslims in Canadian media is one of the primary ways to define Muslims to the Canadian society, and without adequate representation in the media, Muslims remain undefined and misunderstood. Unfortunately, when Muslims are represented in the media, their representations can contain stereotypes and Orientalist images, which do not always accurately represent the Muslim demographic in Canada. In fact, these images usually damage the image of Islam in Canada, and negatively impact Muslims in the country.

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[1] *Imam*: Islamic leader of prayers, and of the mosque.

Muslims in the West and in Canada specifically, complain of being underrepresented and misunderstood. Their portrayal in the media misrepresents their lifestyle, beliefs, and practices and confuses the public about Muslims and Islam. Due to stereotypical representations of Muslims, Western eyes tend to see Muslims as barbaric, uncivilized, uneducated terrorists who do not possess any morals or sense of responsibility. Islam has become a mysterious and dangerous religion to the Western audience which continues to gain most of its information about Islam from the media. The events of September 11, 2001 served to intensify negative portrayals of Muslims in Western media causing much damage to the reputation of Muslims and Islam.

Muslim Women in Canadian Media

The phrase "Muslim woman" is a combination of two traits, religion and gender, each of which holds several different meanings. Like all individuals, Muslim women are all different and unique, each possessing different contextual histories, skills, and personalities. This thesis takes into account the fact that there is no one homogenous group called "Muslim women" and that there is no one way to define the Muslim woman. The definition of Muslim women becomes even more complex when the filter of race or culture is attached to her being, especially in a multi-cultural society like Canada. For the purpose of this study, the Muslim woman in Canada will include any female in Canada who claims her religion to be Islam. Factors like her legal status in Canada or her faith and religious practice do not change her position. She is a diverse plethora of other identities, only one of which is the "Muslim woman in Canada".

Muslim women suffer from negative portrayals in the media and in society. Despite being one of the most educated demographic in Canada, they are also among the lowest paid and most unemployed population (Hamdani, 2007). Other instances where Muslim women in Canada have experienced mistreatment include refusal to participate in a soccer tournament in *hijab*, insistence on taking off the *hijab* at work, a lower pay scale at work, name calling, and being denied positions in the media. Though these instances are not a direct cause of unfair representation of Muslim women in the media, they are related to the fact that Muslim women in Canada are misunderstood. Since September 11, 2001, however, Muslim women have actively taken measures to correct their inaccurate portrayal in the media by participating in the production of media and insisting on fair representation though conferences and councils like the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

Katherine Bullock and Gul Jafri (2000) point out that coverage of Muslims in Western media has improved over the last twenty years. However, this coverage still contains Orientalist stereotypes, which is evident in the portrayal of Muslim men as barbaric and uncivilized *jihadis*; and the portrayal of Muslim women as oppressed, exoticized and heavily veiled outsiders in Western lands. Such portrayals, as this thesis will discuss, are not necessarily true and damage the image of Muslims in Western media. When examining such representations of Muslims, questions of Muslim identity, feminism, Orientalism, nationalism, representation, the *hijab*, and Islamic teachings demand consideration.

Little Mosque on the Prairie

Even though coverage of Muslims has been improving, the events of September 11, 2001 caused representations of Muslims and Islam to revert back to negative stereotypes. Canadian media exhibit attempts at correcting this misrepresentation by including Muslims in the production process and by producing shows like *LMOTP* which provide a satirical commentary on Muslim stereotypes. *LMOTP* is a Canadian production, which has been airing on CBC Television and reaching airwaves in other countries including Dubai, Gaza, Israel, Finland and parts of Africa since 2007. The producer, Zarqa Nawaz, is a Canadian Muslim woman, whose views come forward in an interview with the Globe and Mail (Dube, 2007): "I don't believe there has to be a contradiction between Muslim beliefs and Western pluralism. The fact that I can be comfortable with my Canadian identity along with my Islamic identity proves to me that it's working".

Since its pilot episode on January 9, 2007, *LMOTP* has drawn millions of viewers around the world. It takes place in a small, fictitious town in Canada called Mercy. The town has two restaurants, the more popular one owned and operated by Fatima. The single church in the town is shared with the mosque, and Yasir Hamoudi's office[2], causing much tension between the Muslim and Christian populations. The mosque's Canadian-born *imam*, Amaar, tries to unite the Muslim community while they argue over everyday issues. The four main Muslim women in the show: Sarah, Fatima, Rayyan and Layla are shown as Muslim feminists of different types. They are strong, educated women who participate in Mercy life, sports, social events, politics, the workplace and

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[2] Yasir Hamoudi is Mercy's local contractor, who tends to put business before religion and family. He rents office space in the mosque/church in exchange for free upkeep of the building.

Islamic discussions with the men of Mercy. Aliaa Dakroury (2008: 43) explains that some Muslims feel that *LMOTP* is "a large step in the right direction towards representing multiculturalism and the right for 'other' cultures to see themselves accurately portrayed in prime time". Others, meanwhile, feel that this show misrepresents Islam. These Muslims, as Dakroury explains, hold a wide range of possible religious positions: reformist, traditional, moderate, conservative and non-practitioners (Ibid). In general, this show attempts to show Muslims as everyday Canadians with problems and lifestyles that are shared across Canada. Stereotypes about Muslims are refuted and criticized in this satirical comedy show by maintaining a balance between extremist logic and everyday Canadian values.

Overview of Thesis

Even though Western media, especially Hollywood[3], have contained Orientalist images of barbaric Muslim men and oppressed Muslim women for decades, Canadian media have refrained from representing Muslims, especially Muslim women, in the mainstream. *LMOTP* is one of the first instances where Muslim women were represented in important roles in mainstream Canadian media. Partly due to Zarqa Nawaz's feminist demeanor, this show represents Muslim women in an especially positive light. This thesis analyzes the nature of this representation and presents findings on the relation between onscreen Muslim characters and Muslim women in Canadian society. Furthermore, this thesis attempts to outline how the representations of Muslim women in this show are different

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[3] Examples of such media include the animated television series *American Dad!*, and films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *East is East* (1999).

from other representations of Muslim women. Even though racist stereotypes do exist in Canada, Canadian legislation and the media are attempting to portray an idealistic form of multiculturalism. Due to these measures, representations of Muslims on CBC have experienced positive change.

The findings of this study extend to Muslim women in Canadian society. The conclusions indicate that Muslim women have been inaccurately represented and underrepresented in the media though their representations are improving in Canadian media. By critiquing stereotypes and Orientalist imagery of Muslim women, Zarqa Nawaz draws attention to media representations and in turn, helps Muslim women in Canadian society by setting an example of positive representation. It is important to note that there are at least three things Muslim women in Canada struggle with: racism, how to adapt their culture to the dominant culture, and how to resist patriarchy within both their own community and the wider Canadian society. Other conflicts relating to their career, education, social activities, rights and duties also put pressure on Muslim women in the West. The four main characters in *LMOTP* face such conflicts, and act as positive role models for Muslim women in Canadian society.

The Literature Review outlines the debates surrounding representations of Muslim women, and how *LMOTP* differs in its representations from other Western media. The qualitative analysis in this thesis examines how each Muslim woman in the show embodies Muslim women in Canada. The quantitative analysis looks at the amount of screen time allocated to different characters, and the treatment of different issues and themes. Together, these analyses help explain how Muslim women balance cultures

which often oppose each other, and live a Canadian lifestyle without denying Islamic principals.

A content analysis of the first season of *LMOTP* reveals details about the representation of the four main Muslim women in the show. This thesis attempts to answer how representations of Muslim women differ from representations of Muslim men, and non-Muslim women; and how representations of Muslim women have changed in Canadian media. The role Muslim women play in Canadian society, and media, as well as the stereotypes attached to these roles are all analyzed in this thesis to form conclusions about the treatment of Muslim women in Canadian media, and how their representations relate to Muslim women in Canadian society.

Chapter Breakdown

This thesis begins with the Literature Review, forms a methodology based on variables and concepts extracted from the Literature Review, conducts a content analysis on the sample and presents the findings and discussion of the content analysis. Chapter 2 presents the Literature Review and covers themes and sub-themes related to representations of Muslim women in Canada. This review of literature discusses three integral works: Niklas Luhmann's *The Representation of Society Within Society* (1987), John Millar's *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1793) and Stuart Hall's theories about representation, identification and the Other. These epistemological roots form the foundation of the frameworks inspired by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Julia Kristeva. Homi Bhabha's Third Spaces are hybrid spaces which combine the meanings of two or more cultures to produce meanings which have been translated, appropriated and

rehistoricized. For Muslim women in Canada, these Third Spaces are coping mechanisms which are the result of conflicting cultural and religious forces. Karim H. Karim (2003) explains that for Muslims in Canada who stand at the cross-roads between culture, nationality and religion, the Third Space is the "zone of intense, cutting-edge creativity born out of the existential angst of the immigrant who is neither here nor there" (Karim, 2003: 5). Edward Said's concept of Orientalism explains stereotypical representations of Muslims in Western media. These negative stereotypes help the West define itself in a positive light, in opposition to the Other. Some negative stereotypes of Muslims include uncivilized tribesmen, barbaric terrorists, oppressed women in *hijab*, and a general irrationality. Julia Kristeva's writings on foreignness form the third part of the framework used in this study. She explains that we all have some aspect of strangeness or foreignness within us. When we acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, we become conscious of the lack of difference between ourselves and others. Thus, to accept foreigners in a multicultural society like Canada, one has to recognize that everybody is a foreigner on some level, and that there is no difference between us and them.

Chapter 2 goes on to discuss the position of women in society, and the status and duties allocated to them. It also explores the position of women in Islam as counterparts to men, and the rights granted to them. This discussion is followed by an overview of the *hijab*, or the veil; its definitions, variations and representations. The Literature Review concludes that Muslim women are assumed to be a homogenous mass, united by their religion, sharing the same values and experiences and facing the same challenges.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology explains the reasoning behind choosing content analysis as the research design. The two part content analysis contains

both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The review of literature coupled with a visual analysis helped draw themes and variables to be examined through qualitative observation and quantitative testing. This methodology examines the quality of the image of the Muslim woman on CBC, and the dynamics and debates surrounding it. Chapter 3 also introduces the central research question that is examined in this thesis: How has the image of the Muslim woman been (re)constructed on CBC television? Further in this chapter, the non-random purposive sampling strategy is justified for this thesis followed by an outline of the concepts, constructs, operational definitions and variables used in this thesis. These were drawn from an initial visual analysis of the sampled data and the Literature review, and form the basis for the qualitative and quantitative analysis. Chapter 3, therefore, outlines the methodologies used in this study, as well as justification and explanation of the content analysis.

Chapter 4 titled Analysis and Results discusses the results of the content analysis. This chapter contains the graphs generated, as well as any statistical analysis that came forth in the content analysis. Chapter 4 is divided into sections related to the theme of the scene, the four women in the show, the role played by each woman and the locale where each scene took place. The results presented in this chapter are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion links the findings of the Literature Review, qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis and presents conclusions for this study. The first section of this chapter gives a qualitative description of each of the four characters analyzed. This is followed by a discussion about the screen time allocated to each woman, the role played by each woman and the quality of the representation of each Muslim woman. Like Chapter 4, Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion is also subdivided

into theme, women, role, locale and *hijab*. Together, both these chapters present the results, findings and conclusions of this thesis.

The last chapter in this thesis is the Conclusion. This chapter provides a summary of the important findings with respect to the Literature Review, methodology, and data. This chapter also discusses the shortcomings of this thesis, the limitations and the possibility of future studies which stem from this thesis.

As the Literature Review indicates, inaccurate representations of Muslim women in Canadian media are widespread. However, attempts are being made by the government, media organizations, Muslim communities and Muslim women themselves to produce fair representations of Muslim women which reflect their lifestyles and practices in Canada. The most obvious product of this new trend of positive representations of Muslim women is *LMOTP*. This show represents Muslim women differently than they have been represented in the past. It attempts to show them as educated, ambitious, independent members of society who hold authority in the workplace, at home, in politics and in their personal lives. The following chapters of this thesis provide a detailed discussion of common representations of Muslim women, followed by an analysis and discussion of *LMOTP*.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

> Rayyan: A barrier in our mosque? No way! The women already pray behind the men. Isn't that enough?
>
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 2*

As explained above, Muslims in Canada are not a new population demographic. The presence of Muslim women in Canada began in 1871 with five Muslim women: Martha Simons from the United States, Agnes Love from Scotland, and her three daughters Agnes, Elizabeth and Helen all of whom were born in Ontario (Canadian Council of Muslim Women, 2007). These five women were of European descent, and belonged to Western society, thereby avoiding stereotypes about the Muslim woman that will be discussed in this chapter. The first mosque in Canada was built in Edmonton in 1938 (Ibid). Mohamed Nimer's (2004) analysis shows that from 1991 to 2001, the Muslim population in Canada grew by 263% in just one decade, mostly due to an increase in immigration. The 2001 census claims that Canada has 579, 640 Muslims, out of which 276, 075 are women (Statistics Canada, 2004). These numbers indicate that Muslims are a significant part of Canadian history and society. Muslims in Canada are highly educated; 6% of Muslims hold Master's degrees, compared to 2% of Roman Catholics with Master's degrees (Mujahid, 2004). Despite high education levels, however, Muslims have a high unemployment rate: 14.4% compared to the 7.4% national average (Ibid). Daood Hamdani (Canadian Council of Muslim women, 2007) claims that Muslim women hold twice as many post-graduate degrees as Canadian women in general, but they are among the "poorest women in Canada, are underemployed despite high levels of education and tend to work part-time in low-paying jobs" (Jaffer, 2005: 82). Additionally,

Muslim women are subject to what Arwad Esber (1997) calls double strangeness, on account of being women and on account of being foreigners.

The literature surrounding the representation of Muslim women in Canada covers discussions on identity, representation, position of women in society, Islam in Canada, women's rights, the rights Islam grants to women, and women's position in Islam. The core of this study feeds from three epistemological roots: Niklas Luhmann's "The Representation of Society Within Society" (1987), John Millar's *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (1793) and Stuart Hall's theories about representation, identification and the Other. The frameworks used to look at representations of Muslim women in Canadian media are credited to Julia Kristeva, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said. As outlined in this Literature Review, the debates attached to this study relate to the general position of women in both Western and Muslim societies, representation of women in the media, multiculturalism in the media, the discourse surrounding the veil (*hijab*) and the representation of Muslim women in the media, with special emphasis on Canadian media.

Epistemology: Luhmann, Millar and Hall

Niklas Luhmann in his article "The Representation of Society within Society" (1987) studies the representation of society and the leader's control over it. He argues that historically, power and legitimacy rested with the one who was able to represent society within society. In modern societies, however, power is divided and parliamentary; therefore, the task of representing society has to be divided. With representation divided into parts, representation of the society as a whole, or representation of the unity of

society is only possible outside of the society, not within. Gotthard Bechmann and Nico Stehr (2002) explain that this point outside of society, from which the representation of society in its entirety is possible, is nonexistent. Like social systems, they elaborate, this point is also a system of interaction and differentiation. Without its link to society, therefore, it ceases to exist. In addition, Bechmann and Stehr (2002: 69) also point out that the point outside society from which society can be represented in its entirety is nonexistent because this point would have to be free from "any distortion of perception due to interests or ideologies...[however,] there can not be an object[ive] 'society' accessible to independent observation". To solve this problem, Luhmann proposes a solution: to rank the different parts of society, and thus to represent the difference of ranks from within society. This way, each rank participates to form the representation of the whole by representing its difference in relation to other ranks. It is a property of systems, Luhmann adds, that in relation to their surroundings, they appear as a unity, but internally, they are broken into partial systems, none of which are capable of representing unity of the whole.

Bechmann and Stehr (2002) further add that according to Luhmann, popular European theories about sociology and society have to be replaced by the understanding that society is the sum of differentiation between system and environment, or the differentiation of interaction. In today's time, there is a struggle to present society under one overarching umbrella term. Different labels for such united societies include "post-industrial society" and "post modern society". Such fabricated terms simply highlight Luhmann's claims that one aspect of society can not stand in for the entire society. In terms of representation, therefore, one aspect of society can not be used to represent the

society in its entirety. Each aspect or cross-section of society, of which there are limitless, has to be represented on its own. And to solve the dilemma of representing countless aspects of society, Luhmann's proposition of representing the difference of parts in ranking is suitable to represent the entirety of society.

This framework, if applied to the study of Muslim women in Canadian media, implies that Muslim women appear to represent the entire Muslim population. However, they are diverse and not unified within, and are unable to represent the Muslim population as a whole. One stereotypical Muslim woman or the image of the *hijab* cannot be a symbol of all Muslim women. The representations of Muslim women, thus, should account for the diversity and differences between them.

Preceding Luhmann's work, though related to the concept of ranks and difference, is John Millar's (1793) book titled *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks: or an Enquiry into the Circumstances which Give Rise to Influence and Authority in the Different Members of Society*[4] which examines the position of women in historical societies. According to Olson (1998), Millar understood that relations between the genders were at the core of all social relations, and these relations were the primary way to understand the differences among cultures. George Watson (1993: 50) feels that this book "was probably the first book in Europe to be devoted entirely to the theory of social difference, and almost the only one in the Western world before the present century". Millar, explains Watson, wrote about rank instead of class as the way to organize society (Ibid). He holds the view that all social, intimate and marital relations with women are determined by the

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[4] Richard Olson (1998) explains that Millar's 1771 book titled *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* was published as a second edition in 1773 and a third, expanded edition in 1779. This was followed by three additional editions culminating in 1798. This thesis makes reference to the second revision of the third edition published in 1793.

economic system, and by socio-political factors such as war, concept of ownership, the society's dependence on hunting and labor, evolution of technologies, and property. He explains that in medieval societies, women had been reduced to inferior ranks because respect was not based on sexuality or fertility, but on factors which men excelled in like strength and bravery. However, we have now advanced to a time when men have become refined and interested in the arts, commerce and their families, realms typically dominated by women. Men now see women as "friends and companions" (Millar, 1793: 86). Following from Luhamann's comments about ranking difference in society, Millar's book presents an interesting view on the ranks of women. Instead of focusing on inherent differences between the genders, Millar proposes that the ranks of women are economically and by extension socio-politically determined. Regarding women, he explains:

> Their condition is naturally improved by every circumstance which tends to create more attention to the pleasures of sex, and to increase the value of those occupations that are suited to the female character; by the cultivation of the arts of life; by the advancement of opulence; and by the gradual refinement of taste and manners. From a view of the progress of society, in these respects, we may, in a great measure, account for the diversity that occurs among different nations, in relation to the rank of the sexes, their dispositions and sentiments towards each other, and the regulations which they have established in the several branches of their domestic economy.
>
> (Millar, 1793: 69)

With respect to stereotypes about Muslim women that will be discussed below, it is worth noting that according to Millar, Greek women

> were usually lodged in a remote apartment of the house, and were seldom visited by any person except their near relations....They never appeared abroad without being covered with a veil, and were not allowed to be present at any public entertainment.
>
> (Millar, 1793: 89)

In lieu of this thesis, Millar's observations help explain the position of women in pre-Islamic society. He does note that these observations are valid for European societies, and do not account for religious aspects that can redefine the position of women in society. Islam grants women respect and equal positions alongside men. It allows them to inherit property and places them at the crux of the domestic realm. Although Millar's theories are based in medieval society, they can not be disregarded since they show the evolution of the status of women in different societies. The status of women in twenty-first century Canadian society proceeds a medieval past when women were deemed incapable of being in power. Furthermore, the representation of women in Canadian media also relates to the historical position of women in society.

The third epistemological direction in this thesis comes from Stuart Hall and his theories about representation, identification and the Other. Identification, according to Hall, is "a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristic with another person or group" (Hall & du Guy, 1996: 2). When one recognizes with a common set of characteristics of one certain person or group, one identifies with that person or group (Hall, 1997). Identification involves ambivalence; of associating with one and opposing the other (Ibid). Hall points out that identity is constructed through, not outside, difference. Identity can only be constructed in opposition to that which is different, in relation to the Other. One constructs a self identity by finding what one lacks in comparison to the Other. Hall sees identity in two ways: a meeting point to interpellate us into social subjects of particular discourses, and as the processes which construct us as subjects (Ibid). Furthermore, identity questions one's representation (Ibid).

Representations, Hall further explains, are "central to the processes by which meaning is produced" (Hall, 1997: 1). By representing something, we give it meaning; and by giving something meaning, we get a sense of our own identity and of who we are (Ibid). Hall points out the problems of representation that the Other faces:

> This having-it-both-ways is important because as I hope to show you, people who are in any way significantly different from the majority- "them" rather than "us"-are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seemed to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes-good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be *both things at the same time*!
>
> (Hall, 1997: 229)

Hall claims that the Other's difference is what makes him known to us. This difference constructs meanings in our minds, and allows us to rank the Other in reference to ourselves. By ranking the Other, we are able to construct the self, and our self identity as that which we are not (Ibid).

Hall's views on difference and rank are in agreement with Millar and Luhmann. Like Luhmann, Hall also claims that our own representation is constructed by ranking the Other as different from ourselves. In Canadian society, the Muslim woman is the Other or the outsider, due to her historical position as a woman, and Islam's perceived position as a non-Western religion. By establishing the Muslim woman as the Other, Canadian society is able to construct its own identity and representation. It is important to note that the Muslim woman is not the only Other that Canadian society defines itself against; other minority groups go through similar processes. Since representation imposes binary meanings, the Muslim woman is represented as everything that Canadian society is not:

uncivilized, oppressed and distressed. This concept is discussed in detail below as part of Edward Said's theories.

Framework: Third Space, Orientalism, and Foreignness

Third Space

Homi Bhabha's framework of Third Space is essential to this study. Bhabha (1994) says that as we expand our organizational definitions to include subject positions like "race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation", we find new self-identities constituted in these "'in-between' spaces" which Bhabha names Third Spaces (Bhabha, 1994: 2). Shahnaz Khan (2002) describes Third Space as a space where contradictory forces struggle to disavow colonial authority. The signs and signifiers of the dominant ideology are appropriated by the other culture which attempts to construct its own discourse through this new Third Space. Concepts like gender, race, identity classifications and ethnicities have all been redefined by Third Space discourses (Bhabha, 1994). Third Space disrupts the homogenous culture, and individuals construct new cultures based on their personal religious and national experiences and transform them into Western symbols (Khan, 1998). Bhabha goes on to explain that the intervention of the Third Space in the cultural knowledge disrupts the Western concept of a homogenous culture. This leads to the type of representation which "challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People" (1994: 54). In this Third Space, cultural signs can be "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 1994: 55). The Third Space is a hybrid of the two cultures it displaces. It creates

new histories and new structures of authority. Bhabha adds that cultural meanings may be appropriated to create new meanings, or they may give rise to new and unrecognizable meanings and representations (Rutherford, 1990).

Rubina Ramji (2003) explains what Bhabha calls "the exercise of colonial power through discourse". When the Muslim woman does construct her identity, the Western influence devalues it as a colonial object using discourses of racism, sexism, and Orientalism. Furthermore, Ramji explains that the Muslim woman sees herself through the rhetoric of the colonizer because they have become embedded in her identity. However, "these Muslim women have rejected the stereotypes of media and the discourses of self as a Muslim woman and have turned to the colonizer or Islamism for affirmation" even though the West either fears the Muslim woman or holds her in contempt (Ramji, 2003: 184). No matter which route she picks, the Muslim woman is alienated in these homogenized discourses. Karim H. Karim (2003) explains that for Muslims in Canada who stand at the cross-roads between culture, nationality and religion, the Third Space is the "zone of intense, cutting-edge creativity born out of the existential angst of the immigrant who is neither here nor there" (Karim, 2003: 5). These debates show that Third Spaces can be formed as a coping mechanism or as attempts at establishing identity by Muslims in Canada.

Muslim women in Canada merge a diverse selection of pasts, histories, cultures, and contexts with Canadian contexts, behaviours, expectations, norms, and histories. By combining several different cultures, Muslim women produce complex identities which they can relate to. These identities, according to Bhabha, are not directly descending from any of the original cultures. Instead, these identities exist in Third Spaces, which are

unique to these Muslim women. They are new identities which combine details from other identities, but are not the product of those original identities. These Third Spaces (or third identities) allow Muslim women to exist in a dominant Canadian culture while not completely letting go of their cultural identities or Islam. In these Third Spaces, Muslim women can question, reject, and challenge other identities and stereotypes, while making statements about new identities. These hybrid Third Spaces, therefore, are the reaction and product of ranking Muslim women as different from mainstream Canadian society and from each other.

Orientalism

Like Bhabha's Third Spaces, Said's Orientalism is also a very essential framework for this study. Edward Said introduces Orientalism as

> the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.
> (Said, 1978: 3)

As explained by Hall, a culture develops by placing itself opposite a competing Other culture. Said claims that "Orientalism helped define Europe's self-image" (Said, 1978: 3). The Orient became the West's competing alter ego to help the West gain a sense of superiority (Said, 1978). He emphasizes that European culture saw Islamic culture as static in time and place. Thus, Europe defined itself in opposition to be a dynamic and innovative culture that had power to judge and control the Orient (Ibid).

Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs, for example, include oil owners, oversexed, uncivilized, "camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved

wealth is an affront to real civilization" (Said, 1978: 108; Karim, 2003: 62). Karim (2003: 64) also adds a few current day stereotypes to this list: the *hijab*, the cloak and turban of the Muslim *ulama*, the Arab head-dress, Ayatollah Khomeni, *Hajj*, camels and sand dunes. Meanwhile, the Western consumer is considered to be the rightful owner or expender of the world's resources "because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being" (Ibid). Such stereotypes of Islam and the Arab world exist in representations of Islam in Western media.

Moreover, Said explains that Orientalism paves the way for the West to take over Eastern lands in order to save them. Stereotypes about the Orient, specifically the Oriental woman, also include exoticism: "'the exotic East' evokes simultaneous but contradictory feelings of attraction and revulsion, of fascination and terror; it invites prurient indulgence, but is to be kept at a distance" (Karim, 2003: 63). These stereotypes about the Oriental woman's exoticism justify the image of the Western man dominating her in attempts to tame her. Media images show the civilized Western male attracted to this exotic Eastern beauty; he is aware that he can civilize this Oriental woman, and by extension, the Oriental land she belongs to.

The Oriental land, like its inhabitants, is homogenized in the media. The "Orient" can take on many different meanings, the most common one being a symbol for Islam. Although Western media portrays Islam as one large world culture, Islamic "communities of interpretation" actually clash when representations of Islam are examined (Said, 1997). Different types of Islam come into question, each with its own interest: the media's Islam, the individual's Islam, the neighbor's Islam, the Western scholar's Islam, the Western reporter's Islam and the Muslim's Islam (Said, 1997: 43). This difference in

types of Islam, paired with the social and cultural complexities Muslims exist in, creates dynamic and conflicted identities that the media are unable to represent. For Muslim women, the context is even more complex depending on their status in society. These conflicted identities of Muslim women exist in Third Spaces, as discussed above. Said's notion of Orientalism claims that Western media homogenizes Third Spaces and attempts to show them as part of one culture only.

Similar to Niklas Luhmann, Said also links power and representation. He claims that Orientalist representations of Islam in the West are pervasive because of the political influence of those people producing them. The representations, according to Said, are less truth and more political agenda (Said, 1997). They are only tangentially related to Islam itself, causing a wrongful interpretation of Islam to be broadcasted into a society that gains much of its knowledge from the media (Said, 1997). Since Muslims in the West, especially Muslim women, are not in power, they are also incapable of controlling their image in the media (Ahmed, 1992). These Oriental representations are damaging on two levels: they damage the knowledge that the West gains about the Orient, and they damage the self-knowledge that the Orient gains about itself. Said (2001) explains that societies on the periphery of metropolitan centers of Western media gain most of the information about themselves from the Western media. This usually occurs because the information about non-mainstream societies is easily available through Western media, and restricted through local media. Orientalist images in Western media, therefore, result in Oriental self images in these societies. Oriental representations produced in Western media are "given as reality, mediated so powerfully, and accepted almost subliminally" so that even if these Oriental societies tried to challenge such representations, their

"primitive and crude" solutions would not be very productive (Said, 2001: 43). Karim H. Karim (2003) explains that no coherent image of Islam exists in the media because there has been no effort to explain relationships and diversities between and amongst Muslims. "This ambiguity combined with the media consumer's tendency to forget the details of previous reportage leaves the integration propagandist free to manipulate the meaning of 'Islam' according to her current needs" (Karim, 2003: 61). This lack of control by Muslims over their own image in the media has proved damaging to their position in Canadian society. Prior to *LMOTP*, the Canadian Muslim community was represented mostly through American images which were predominantly Oriental in nature. These representations portrayed Muslims as terrorists in both fictional media and news media, resulting in feelings of Islamophobia and the belief that Islam is an extremist religion.

It is worth noting, however, that despite being celebrated as an expert on representations of the East, Edward Said's followers occasionally refute him too. Rubina Ramji (2003), who quotes Said many times in her dissertation, points out that just as Said claims that the West has reduced the Orient into one homogenous entity, Said "himself has reduced the West into one homogenous whole"; and by not distinguishing between Islam, the Orient, Arab or the Middle East, he too has Orientalized the East (Ramji, 2003: 189). Also, Said homogenizes the West in the same way the West homogenizes the East. Robert Young (1990) agrees that Said's anti-method, which Said adopted to avoid any totalizing discourse, actually repeats the dualistic structures he was trying to avoid (Karim, 2003: 136). Ramji goes on to say that Said's theories do not take women into account and that Muslim women "appear irrelevant to the debate and to his discourse" (2003). Even though he critiques Western stereotypes and ideologies, Said offers no

solution or example to correct these stereotypes (Ibid). Akbar Ahmed (1992) also refutes Said; he states that it is not entirely true that the West can only see the Orient in a negative light. In today's postmodern times, there are instances of

> long-lasting and fruitful friendships between people from the West and Muslims: Thomas W. Arnold and Muhammad Iqbal, Olaf Caroe and Iskander Mirza, E.M. Forster and Ross Masood; or nearer our times, Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley, Ralph Russell and Khurshid-ul-Islam. They were equal friendships, symmetrical in their balance, not divided by 'border, nor breed, nor birth'.
>
> (Ahmed, 1992: 191)

Such critiques of Said are not entirely disregarded during this thesis. It is important to note that Said's theory of Orientalism is used in the framework for this thesis due to its merit. It provides a system of looking at stereotypes of Muslims in Western media and explains their inaccurate representation. It provides a historical background about where images of Muslims in the media come from, and sheds light on the power dynamics in play while these images are constructed. The points Said is criticized for do not contribute to the framework of this thesis.

Foreignness and Multiculturalism

Representing racial diversity in Western media begins by defining foreignness, a term intensely commented upon by Julia Kristeva. Technically speaking, the foreigner is one who "does not have the same nationality" (Kristeva, 1991: 96) as one's self. That being said, Kristeva also says that we all have some aspect of foreignness within us, and when we recognize that foreignness within ourselves, we stop detesting outsiders (Kristeva, 1991: 1). "The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and

communities" (Ibid). Kristeva seems to agree with Stuart Hall and Niklas Luhmann that we all have some aspect of Otherness in us and difference between us. However, while Hall holds Otherness and difference as essential to self-identity, Kristeva promotes identifying with the foreignness to erase the foreigner and recognize him as similar to ourselves. Where Hall insists on difference, Kristeva insists on erasure of difference. Similarly, while Luhmann encourages ranking differences between us, Kristeva emphasizes erasing the differences by recognizing that we are all similar in that we are all different. Larson (2006) explains that when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, we become conscious of the lack of difference between ourselves and others. Thus, to accept foreigners in a multicultural society like Canada, one has to recognize that everybody is a foreigner and that there is no difference between us and them. A concept like multiculturalism is achieved in society when we all recognize strangeness within ourselves; and when instead of welcoming the outsider-foreigner into our insider-society, we concentrate our energies on "promoting the togetherness of those foreigners that we all recognize ourselves to be" (Kristeva, 1991: 2).

Kristeva lists some of the qualities of foreignness that she claims everybody can relate to: a feeling of aloofness from the surrounding environment, heightened confidence and self-confidence in herself, creation of false selves that can adapt to the surrounding culture, the need to attach herself strongly to a passion or a cause, melancholia and nostalgia for the lost homeland, a feeling of not belonging to any nation or place, small and short-lived acceptances of the surrounding culture, freedom from ties to anybody, finding herself at the receiving end of hatred, attempts at remaining silent so as to not speak her mother-tongue, and attaching high value to work and career to support

herself.(Kristeva, 1991: 2). After recognizing these factors within ourselves, we reach the conclusion that, "If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners" (Kristeva, 1991: 192). Kristeva's theory presents a road map to the ideal multicultural society Canadians strive for. In the context of representations of Muslim women in Canadian media, Kristeva's concept of foreignness encourages the audience to understand that the Muslim woman's strangeness is not much different from their own strangeness, that she is not an outsider to this multi-faceted society.

When tied together, Kristeva, Said and Bhabha's theories form the central framework of this thesis. Representations of Muslim women have been subject to Orientalist stereotypes by Western eyes due to the forces of power and control over Eastern Oriental cultures. However, viewers of such images of Muslim women in Canada have to recognize that the strangeness of Muslim women is not much different from their own strangeness. Canadian media is attempting to change such negative representations of Muslim women by acknowledging their differences from other cultures instead of finding ways to minimize these differences. The differences between Muslim women and other Muslim women, as well as other individuals and cultures, are accepted and represented in Canadian media in an attempt to represent Canadian society as a whole. The result of such representations, this thesis argues, is Third Spaces of identity and representation; unique Canadian hybrid spaces where individuals can establish and construct their identities. These Third Spaces include shows like *LMOTP*, which are a uniquely Canadian mixture of Islam and the surrounding small town, Canadian culture.

Muslim Women in Canada

Women in Society

Women in civilized societies play many different kinds of roles. When their equality to men is considered, women are positioned at various points of the spectrum. Some feel that they are equal to men in capability and power while others feel that the two genders are inherently different and unequal. The status of women in society, according to John Millar, is predetermined because they are not equal to men in terms of physical, mental, and intellectual capabilities (Millar, 1793). Millar claims that there are inherent differences between men and women that enforce certain societal roles onto them (1793). Contrary to Millar, Azizah Al-Hibri uses the Qur'an to back up her claim that men and women are created equal, and that they are equally entitled to "live a full pious life" (Afzal-Khan, 2005) regardless of their gender. According to the Qur'an, men and women are created equally capable of fitting into societal roles. In fact, the status women hold in today's Western society, working at all positions that were previously limited to men, shows that women are indeed as capable as men.

Despite equal rights for women, the default citizen in society continues to be man. Simone de Beauvoir explains that in our (Western) society, the male is the "absolute human type" (Martin & Mendieta, 2003: 150) and that the woman is defined in reference to the man. "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other" (Ibid). This absolute position rewarded to men has caused women to fight for visibility, power, and rights. However, even when women are given rights and higher status, they are still considered the Other; they are still implicitly positioned in opposition to the men. One reason for this Other image may be Arwad Esber's (1997) explanation that it is hard for men to accept a

woman who is equal to them professionally, intellectually or symbolically. Margaret Stacey (1980) also discusses the position of women in historical societies. She observes that there have been some instances when women held power over men. However, in these instances, women exercised power and authority over other women as well; causing lower class women to be doubly oppressed. Thus, despite the struggle to achieve equal status and power as men, women retain their secondary position in society. Even when the power lies with a female, lower class women suffer oppression from men and other women on account of being the Other.

Regardless of the status of women in society, Houston and Kramarae discuss the act of silencing that all women experience: "namelessness, denial, secrets, taboo subjects, erasure, false-naming, non-naming, encoding, omission, veiling, fragmentation and lying" (1991: 388). Other ways of silencing women include "ridicule, enforcement of family hierarchies, male-controlled media, anti-woman educational policies, making women's bodies political battlegrounds, censorship, racism, homophobia, and terrorism" (Houston & Kramarae, 1991: 387) This act of silencing, they claim, not only prevents women from representing themselves, it also controls, restricts and suppresses those representations (Ibid).

Supporting Millar's work, Mattelart and Reader (1982) explain that in North American society, matters of production and public interest are controlled by men, whereas matters of reproduction and private life are controlled by women. Capitalist labor practices attach negative values to the type of work typically done by women whereas work done by men is seen in a positive light. Negative labels to describe women's work include repetitious, monotonous, and banal while work done by men is

described as action, change, and history (Mattelart & Reader, 1982), causing a hierarchy of values resulting in women's work becoming invisible. They explain that "the invisibility of women's work and the concealment of the productive value of their household tasks are of decisive importance in determining the image of them projected by the media and the media's relationship with them" (1982). Conversely, the negative image of women in the media also has an effect on how they represent themselves in the work force. Thus, the image of women sits in the center of a tug of war between work values and media representations. On the one hand, women's work is perceived as invisible and inferior, thereby resulting in negative portrayals in the media. On the other hand, women's inferior position in the media affects the way they are treated at work, and the values attached to the work they do. Representations of Muslim women in Canada are also affected by this tug of war.

Women's representation in Canadian media has been problematic. As George Spears and Kasia Seydegart (1986) report, MediaWatch, a women's media monitoring group, conducted a study of Canadian programming and revealed that women were underrepresented in all types of programming. Due to this study, the CBC took steps to ensure a higher representation of women in CBC programming. Despite these steps, however, females are still a minority in reporter positions and lead stories (Spears & Seydegart, 1986). Mahtani (2001) mentions another study done by MediaWatch on made-in-Canada dramatic series. The results of this study show "that only 4 percent of the female characters and 12 percent of the male characters were from diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds" (Mahtani, 2001: 121). Thomas (1992) discusses the 1979 Federal Government action plan entitled Towards Equality for Women. This plan demanded that

the Canada Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) formulate guidelines to erase gender stereotyping by 1980. This same study shows that ethnic and racial differences are also underrepresented in the Canadian broadcasting system. Thus, even though women are claimed to be equals in society, the quality of their work and their treatment in the media tells a story of misrepresentation and stereotyping. Muslim women, on account of being Muslim and women, face even larger challenges.

Muslim Women

Who is the Muslim woman? This question has as many variable answers as there are Muslim women. They are assumed to be a homogenous mass, united by their religion, sharing the same values and experiences, and facing the same challenges. Mohja Kahf says, "there really is no such creature as 'Muslim woman'" (Afzal-Khan, 2005: 181). Fawzia Afzal-Khan (2005: 1) relates her personal experience about being reduced to the one label of Muslim woman after moving to the United States. She narrates that Islam and her gender were not major parts of her identity prior to moving to the United States. Once she was in a Western culture, however, her female gender and her religious beliefs automatically became the most dominant parts of her identity, and were isolated as labels to define her to the outside world (Ibid). Fawzia Afzal-Khan, thus, became a Muslim woman without completely relating to Muslim women. A slightly different opinion is presented by Azizah Al-Hibri who ideally states that, living in North America, Muslim women are not bound by the cultural practices of their countries of origin, nor are they bound by the patriarchal aspects of religion; they are only bound by the Qur'an (Afzal-Khan, 2005). Realistically, however, Akbar Ahmed says that "the position of women

in...society mirrors the destiny of Islam: when Islam is secure and confident so are its women; when Islam is threatened and under pressure so, too, are they" (2002: 184).

The position of women in Islam does not necessarily conform to John Millar's framework relating women's status in society to economic and socio-political factors. In Islam, the position of women is not predetermined by physical or mental qualities. Instead, women in Islam are positioned through examples and guidelines in the Qur'an, *hadith*[5], and *sunnah*[6]. Historically, Akbar Ahmed (2002) argues, Muslim women have held an array of important positions: Khadijah, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad; Aishah, who led an army and Rabia, a Sufi saint. However, the Council on American Islamic relations documents instances in the United States where women were refused employment positions or fired from their jobs because they refused to take off their *hijab* (Bullock, 1999). The position of Muslim women in Islam, therefore, does not always translate into Western environments. Western societies employ some economic and social factors when granting women status as citizens and employees.

Shahnaz Khan (2000) says that the definition of the Muslim woman in Canada rests within a colonial discourse. Canada, being a colony of the British Empire as well as a settler colony, enjoyed a higher status in the British colonies. This imperial hierarchy has carried on and now reinforces the Muslim woman's position "as an inferior subordinate colonial" (Khan, 2000: 3). Muslim women in Canada are delegated to the "Other" communities of their origin, and then devalued for being part of those communities; their culture is homogenized, as is their historical context (Ibid). The

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[5] Sayings of the Prophet Mohammed.

[6] Way of life, traditions, and customs based on the life of the Prophet Mohammed.

treatment of Muslim women in Canada is very different from their treatment in Islamic cultures.

It is important to note that contrary to Western opinion, Islam does grant Muslim women rights. Azizah Al-Hibri outlines some of these rights: the Muslim woman retains her last name after marriage, is in sole control of her finances, can own property on her own, and is not obligated to share her funds or property with anybody (Afzal-Khan, 2005). Scholars view the marriage contract as a "service contract" which the Muslim woman enters voluntarily (Ibid: 168); she is not obligated to clean, cook or serve in her house. Her husband, however, is obligated by religion to provide food and shelter for her (Ibid). Al-Hibri clarifies that in instances where women were prohibited from entering the work force, it was not for religious reasons, but due to cultural reasons to protect their morality (Ibid). Margaret Stacey (1980) explains that women in Islam are granted a lot of power. Islam has two sub-universes: the universe of men which deals with religion and power in the society, and the universe of women which deals with domesticity, sexuality and the family. Each gender holds power over its universe. The universes are physically kept apart to separate the power and labor attached to each universe, and so the two can work together to form a structured social order (Stacey, 1980). Though the women are not confined to the domestic realm, they are granted more respect and power in domestic matters as opposed to the social or political worlds.

That being said, Haleh Afshar (1984) explains that rights and power granted to women in Islam are not always practiced in Muslim societies. Often, in Muslim societies, and even Western societies, women work for lower wages than men, their wages are controlled by their husbands, the working conditions are inferior to those of men, and

they are given inferior jobs. This reinforces gender roles as they would rather stay at home than be subject to miserable working conditions. Patriarchal ideologies, Afshar concludes, subject women to inferior labor stereotypes rendering "the sphere of domesticity a far more attractive and secure base for women than that of production" (1984: 247).

Amani Hamdan (2007) explains that Muslim women in Canada construct their identities in a unique way. She outlines the results of Shahnaz Khan's study which claim that Muslim women in Canada construct their identities "in the light of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion" (Hamdan, 2007: 134). They long for a set identity, and feel that the label "Muslim women" is too restrictive. Shahnaz Khan (2000: 19) discusses how individual women are faced with contradictory polarities in terms of identity, and how they individually "resolve the contradictions in their personal lives", suggesting diverse ways of constructing the identity of the Muslim women in Canada. Mainstream thought reduces these women into religious individuals, who do not face any conflicts in their minority groups (Ibid). In fact, Canada's multicultural laws and policies also tend to reduce these women into a homogenous group labeled "Muslim women".

> Multiculturalism in Canada works to erase ethnic or national difference so that women who are first- and second-generation and from different countries and racial groups come to occupy the position "Muslim woman".
> (Khan, 2000: 19)

Shahnaz Khan (2000) examines the contradictions facing Muslim women in Canada on a deeper level and explains the processes Muslim women go through while constructing their identities. After these women define themselves as Muslim, they have to face regulating discourses of both Islam and Orientalism, which is followed by the negotiation

of their minority culture's practices and policies with Canadian multicultural practices (Khan, 2000). The clash of cultural values and restrictive, one-dimensional identities are just one of the conflicts Muslim women face.

Other conflicts facing Muslim women relate to stereotypes and their image. Hoodfar (1992) states that Muslim women in the West have to put up a fight against three forces: racism, patriarchy from both their original and new communities, and the pressure to adapt their culture to the dominant culture. Shahnaz Khan (1998) also explains that when rejecting their image as the stereotyped Muslim Woman, individual women look to either the West or Islam for meaning, and fall into another trap. The West, through Orientalism tends to devalue them while Islamism tends to control them. Since stereotypes based in Islamism and Orientalism are influenced by the West (the very culture these women are immersed in) neither type of stereotypes can be resolved (Khan, 2000). This results in the Muslim woman rejecting both kinds of stereotypes, and suffering the loss of a sense of belonging. Even though stereotypes homogenize them, individual Muslim women do adhere to some definitions found in stereotypes to help form their identities. By rejecting the stereotypes in Orientalism and Islamism, they are rejecting the definitions and identity traits that help define them to Western cultures. The result of this process is an identity which is neither Eastern, nor Western; neither Islamic, nor Orientalist; it is a product of a Third Space.

Another way to view complex identities of Muslim women is through the concept of transparencies. Bhabha explains that transparencies are layers of context, one on top of another, and together, they are viewed as one way of defining the object underneath: "Transparency is the action of the distribution and arrangement of differential spaces,

positions, knowledges in relation to each other, relative to a discriminatory, not inherent, sense of order" (Bhabha, 1994: 109). Under this framework, when studying Muslim women, one sees overlapping transparencies of colonial subordination and power, women's negotiations and disavowal of this power, multicultural contexts the women relate to, and other contexts and histories attached to individual women (Khan, 1998). This concept of transparencies supports the claim that there is no one homogenous stereotyped Muslim woman. As previously stated, for the purpose of this study, the Muslim woman in Canada will include any female in Canada who claims her religion to be Islam. The forces that came together to shape her identity are a unique combination of negotiations between cultures, histories, contexts and knowledge. No Muslim woman is simply a Muslim woman. The individual Muslim woman is a combination of many other facets, only one of which is the "Muslim woman in Canada".

The Veil in the West

Any discussion about the Muslim woman includes the topic of the veil. Katherine Bullock (1999) discusses her reluctance at using the word "veil" because it is laden with negative stereotypes. The problem, she relates, is that the West has simplified the veil to mean only one kind of veil even though there is a diverse range of veils and equally diverse meanings attached to them. The veil, in English, means a piece of transparent fabric attached to a woman's hat (Bullock, 1999: 28). In Arabic, the *niqub* is the veil that covers a woman's face (Ibid). *Hijab* comes from the Arabic word *hojuba* which means to cover. *Hijab* is a complex notion that may or may not include covering the hair or face. It does include lowering one's gaze around the opposite sex for both men and women

(Ibid). The common Western usage of the word *hijab* limits it to "the headscarf that women wear over their heads" (Ibid). For the purpose of this thesis, the veil refers to the Western version of the *hijab*: the headscarf or head covering worn by Muslim women.

The *hijab* dominates stereotypes about Islam's mistreatment of women (MacDonald, 2006). Leila Ahmed comments that the negative view of the *hijab* helped patriarchal Western colonialists to justify their agenda to rescue Muslim women from oppression, and to impose their cultural values onto the "natives" (Ibid). Muslim women seldom have a voice in Western media, and when they do, the *hijab* seems to overshadow their message. However, post 9/11, Myra MacDonald explains, as the fascination with the Muslim world grew, Muslim women have been sought after by the media. "The veil was reconstructed, variously, as a form of resistance to Western ideology and secularism; as a fashion accessory; or, as evidence of Muslim women's agency and freedom of choice" (MacDonald, 2006: 15). The veil (*hijab*), thus, has become a symbol for Muslim women. At times, it symbolizes the injustice they suffered in Islam, while other times it symbolizes Muslim women's freedom of religious expression and freedom of choice. This symbol for Muslim women is as complex and conflicted as Muslim women themselves.

Even though the veil has become one of the signifiers of Muslim women's oppression, Myra MacDonald (2006) explains that the veil did not originate as a Muslim symbol and neither is it unique to Islam. Rather, it can be traced back to "pre Islamic Arabia, Greece, Assyria, the Balkans, and Byzantium" (MacDonald, 2006: 8). Jewish and Christian religions both promoted the veil. Saint Paul instructed women to take the veil in the presence of God and even today, covering of the head in church is commonly

practiced in Roman Catholicism (Ibid). Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron claim that the first recorded reference to the veil comes from an Assyrian legal text of the thirteenth century BC that encouraged only respectable women to veil, and forbade prostitutes from veiling (Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough, 2003). In Islam, the Qur'an calls for modesty in both men and women, and "women are specifically asked to draw their veils over their bosoms to conceal their sexual appeal from all except those forbidden by incest rules from having sexual relations with them" (MacDonald, 2006: 8). Contrary to Western belief, the veil is not unique to women, men have taken the veil as well. In Tuareg culture, men also practice veiling (Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough, 2003). MacDonald (2006) relates that the Prophet Muhammad veiled when he visited his wife in the presence of her father. The most common symbol for Muslim women, therefore, is not unique to Islam, or to women. However, in most societies today, it symbolizes Muslim women and is attached to their identities.

Moreover, the veil carries different meanings in different contexts. When detached from the Muslim woman, the veil on its own connotes two things in Western culture: a signifier of modesty and privacy in an intrusive public space, and a signifier of seductiveness (MacDonald, 2006). With respect to Islam, MacDonald explains, "the veil connotes restriction, a Foucauldian regime of the body imposed by patriarchal and oppressive cultures to inscribe Muslim femininity within rituals of control that extinguish selfhood and identity and produce a 'docile body'" (MacDonald, 2006: 15). In Western eyes, the veil has picked up negative connotations when attached to Islam due to "binary discursive constructions that see freedom of the body (and especially the female body) as symbolic of liberalism and recognition of human rights, and its restriction or constraint as

indicative of oppression and barbarism" (MacDonald, 2006: 15). These negative connotations are also rooted in Orientalist thinking and the West's fascination with the exotic and erotic Other. MacDonald explains that the veiled woman's image holds a charm for Western audiences because of Orientalist emotions of pity, desire, envy and fear towards the Other woman (Ibid). Western representations of Muslim women also fail to acknowledge Islamic constructions of sexuality. The veiled woman is shown to be a silent victim of bodily repression (MacDonald, 2006). MacDonald (2006) also observes that representations of Muslim women prevent access to sexualized images of the Muslim woman in the private space of the bedroom. "The veiled woman is normally denied pleasure, fun, or bodily self-expression" (MacDonald, 2006: 15). This thesis finds that Rayyan's character in *LMOTP* has challenged this lack of sexual self-expression for the Muslim woman. Going back to Oriental thinking, the veil signifies the opportunity for the Western savior to emancipate and liberate the Muslim woman from her oppressed position (Klaus & Kassel, 2005). This helps the West sustain it's identity in opposition to this veiled symbol of the East.

What these negative representations of the veil fail to show, explains Eisa Nefertari Ulen, is that Muslim women who choose to wear the *hijab* "act out real life resistance to the hyper-sexualization of girls and women in the West" (Afzal-Khan, 2005: 46). These Muslim women have agency over their bodies, and they choose to carry a symbol of their Islamic commitment on their physical selves (Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough, 2003). Another reason why Muslim women choose to veil is self assertion (Ibid). These women declare their presence and assert their position in society as a way of resisting their negative stereotypes.

> Studying Islam, and in particular taking the veil (a public pronouncement of piety), subverts the veil as a symbol of patriarchal control and redefines it as a marker of status and as a tool of emancipation, empowerment and, in some cases, a means of exerting power over those generally considered to have ultimate control.
>
> (Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough, 2003: 33-34)

Bullock (1999) explains that the *hijab* is not a way to protect women's sexuality from threatening the social order, but it is a way for women to assert their rights and be protected from harassment. Similarly, Muslim women began to wear the *hijab* and covering the whole body to stay protected from sexual abuses by colonial soldiers (Klaus & Kassel, 2005). Klaus and Kassel discuss how the dichotomies of *hijab* and lack of freedom versus unveiling and gender equality are over-simplified Western constructions that regard Muslims as a homogenous group, and do not take into account the varied experiences of individual Muslim women.

Just as Muslims are not a homogenous group, Muslim women, too are not homogenous. They are diversified individuals with different experiences, backgrounds, classes, cultures, etc. and they each have different reasons to don the *hijab*. Bullock (1999) discusses some of the diversified experiences that different Muslim women in Canada have in regards to their *hijab*. Among her examples, she relates the experience of Rania, a doctor, who is questioned by her patients about why she has to be "wrapped up like that" and asked whether she has hair under her *hijab* or not (Bullock, 1999: 87). Rania feels that even though she dresses in Canadian clothing purchased at Canadian retail stores, her patients want to fit her into "a category of culture" just because of her *hijab*. She feels that she is not accepted as a normal Canadian, but rather as an exotic Other. Rania's experience provides a mirror to study Rayyan's character in *LMOTP*, a

hijabi doctor whose patients ask similar questions about her headscarf. In other cases, explains Haddad (2002), Muslim women have been denied jobs because of complicated measures that would have to be taken to ensure religious accommodation. There are many other examples of Muslim women being rejected employment and other opportunities despite having the necessary credentials. The *hijab* has taken on a life of its own, attracting attention and stereotypical judgments that the wearer of the *hijab* is subject to by association.

Muslim women, therefore, encompass a variety of different positions in the domestic realm, workplace, and society. Islam grants them special rights and respect, but they still experience inferior stereotypes, labeling and silencing in a male dominated world. In the process of rejecting stereotypes about themselves, Muslim women sacrifice the image the West has about them. Although rejecting stereotypes is for their benefit, it involves giving up their image which negatively affects Muslim women by stripping them of their existence in society and their sense of belonging. In Canada, measures are being taken to undo the stereotypes that rule the image of the Muslim woman without completely erasing that image. The *hijab*, which is normally seen as a symbol of oppression, is actually a symbol of humility and demands respect. The media are the biggest culprit of misrepresenting the *hijab*, though, again, Canadian media are taking measures to accurately represent Muslim women.

The Muslim Woman in Canadian Media

Muslim Stereotypes in the Media

Mahtani (2001) discusses negative representations of ethnic minorities in Canadian media. These representations are based on comical or grotesque generalizations (Ibid). Ethnic minorities are shown to personify social problems in roles like rebels, drug dealers and high-school drop outs (Ibid). According to Hall's theory of identity through opposition to the Other, these representations promote positive images of mainstream heroes (Ibid). Henry explains that ethnic minorities feel a sense of shame and inferiority with respect to their culture, while the mainstream "white" audience feels a sense of elevation of its own culture (Ibid). Augie Fleras and Jean Kunz (2001) explain that minorities are subject to processes of miniaturizing, racializing and Otherizing. These processes are similar to the process of silencing experienced by women. In Canada, therefore, Muslim women experience prejudice on account of their religion and gender through processes of miniaturizing, racializing, Otherizing, silencing and stereotyping.

Akbar Ahmed (1992) discusses how one minority, the Muslim individual, is distrustful of the media because of the way he is misrepresented.

> He is also as disgusted as he is confused with his own sense of impotence in shaping reality around him; he can no longer challenge what is real or unreal, no longer separate reality from the illusion of the media.
>
> (Ahmed, 1992: 3)

The Muslim individual is marginalized, sentimentalized, and deliberately and maliciously misrepresented (Ahmed, 1992). He is unable to defend himself, or "to even comprehend the nature and objectives" of such representations (Ibid: 223).

While some examples of accurate representations of Muslims in Western media are beginning to surface, the general image of Muslims is still negatively stereotyped. Eastern women, especially, are portrayed as exotic, erotic, dangerous and powerless stereotypical characters (Jiwani, 2006). According to Anne Sofie Roald (2001), since Muslims only receive coverage in the media when they project some extraordinary news or opinions, these opinions are taken to represent those of the entire Muslim demographic: "a few parts sit in for the whole" (Roald, 2001: 7). Bullock and Jafri (2000) claim that issues related to Islam are usually covered in the foreign affairs section in Canadian newspapers, indicating that they are foreign to the Canadian nation. They conducted a study of Canadian daily newspapers and discovered that 76% of articles on Muslim women were about women in other countries like Iran, Algeria, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia (Bullock & Jafri, 2000). Even though there are Muslim women in Canada, the media tends to cover those outside of Canada, reinforcing the notion that they are outsiders.

Bhabha explains that individuals construct their identities by putting together their cultural, religious, national and cultural contexts (Khan, 2000). Muslim women, according to this theory, transform their contexts into Western signifiers, language and dress and form Third Spaces of contradiction, ambiguity and disavowal of colonial authority (Ibid). Therefore, the original signs already in oppositional polarities are appropriated and translated into Western signifiers which are included in Third Spaces. Augie Fleras and Jean L. Kunz (2001: 30) discuss a six-month study of Canadian newspapers which found that Muslims were often stereotyped as "barbaric fanatics". They do, however, admit that the quantity of multicultural representations in Canada has

increased, though the quality of these representations continues to suffer. Yasmin Jiwani (2006) explains that Western media are owned by Western conglomerates that influence the images of the Other in their medium. She quotes Stuart Hall as saying "the 'white eye' is always outside the frame-but seeing and positioning everything within it" (Jiwani, 2006: 32). Thus, the standard of the white conglomerate determines the image of Muslims shown in their media. Jiwani adds that the white eye is powerful and controls "discursive strategies of examination, naturalization, and universalization" (Ibid). Muslims, therefore, see themselves through this white eye, and position themselves in the same way non-Muslims would position them. This is damaging not only to the image of Muslims in the West, it is also damaging to their identity and status in Western societies.

This thesis takes into account that Canada does hold a unique position in the Western nations in terms of its stance on multiculturalism. In 1971, the multiculturalism policy was constitutionally accepted as part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was legislatively passed in 1988 (Thomas, 1992). These policies and legislations set the groundwork for the inclusion of multiculturalism within the new Broadcasting Act, 1991. Section 3 (1)(d)(iii) of the Act now stipulates that the Canadian broadcasting system should

> through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men and women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society.
>
> (Broadcasting Act, 1991)

Bart Beaty and Rebecca Sullivan (2006: 11) discuss the Canadian "policy of inclusion and tolerance where individuals may express multiple aspects of their cultural heritage

freely without loss of a sense of identity" as first promoted by Pierre Trudeau. Canadians, Trudeau explained, do not have to pick and choose an identity (Ibid). They would have a Canadian national identity and a different, hyphenated cultural identity. Thus, Canadians can consider themselves Native-Canadian, French-Canadian, Indo-Canadian and so on (Ibid). However, Beaty and Sullivan (2006) argue that this multicultural policy is a myth that

> allows Canada to present a nationalist myth of tolerance and acceptance of clearly identified 'others' even as its cultural policies whitewash the very significant differences between those cultures and between them and predominantly Anglo-European definition of Canadianness.
>
> (Beaty & Sullivan, 2006: 12)

They explain that in Canada, the only mainstream culture promoted and accepted is the "Canadian" culture. Minority cultures are accepted but only after being subject to a homogenization and transformation to the dominant "white" culture, despite the multicultural policy. Homogenization of difference, Jiwani (2006) claims, allows the media to represent minority groups as interchangeable hordes with no personality. Karim H. Karim notes that individuals relate to an array of identifications, often more than just two; and they often feel strongly about other aspects of their identities, like linguistic and religious, not just cultural and national (Haddad, 2002). Aujla (2000) theorizes that the Other does not have to exhibit foreign or exotic behavior to be subject to imaginary, racialized stereotypes. In Canada, even second and third generation South Asian Canadians are seen as foreigners (Ibid). Karim notes that even though "broadcast programs supported by Muslim groups" are increasing on the public sphere, "mainstream Canadian television still shies away from including images of Islam" (Haddad, 2002).

Overt racism is common in Canada, though its cousin, inferential racism, is more dangerous. According to Stuart Hall, inferential racism is

> those apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether 'factual' or 'fictional', which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions. These enable racist statements to be formulated without ever bringing into awareness the racist predicates on which these statements are grounded.
> (Jiwani, 2006: 44)

Jiwani lists the Canadian example of CHOI radio to show explicitly overt racism in Canadian "shock jock radio" (Jiwani, 2006: 44). CHOI, a Quebec radio station that aired "acerbic and derogatory commentary on racialized and other marginalized groups in society," had its licenses revoked by the CRTC in 2004 (Ibid). Muslims were one such group that the radio station tended to pick on. Minority groups, like Muslims, lack the power to manipulate mainstream media and make their voices heard. They also lack the credibility and legitimacy to refute racist comments if they were given access to mainstream media (Ibid). Mary Jane Miller (1996) interviewed Nada Harcourt who was the creative head of a dramatic series with the CBC titled *The Raccoons*. This interview shows that Harcourt was aware of Canada's cultural mosaic and attempted to reflect multicultural facets of Canada in her series. However, Harcourt insisted that there was a growth pattern involved and that ethnic voices would slowly have to be introduced into the mainstream. She suggests one way to solve this issue is to begin with a visible minority family in a series, but warns that one must be careful to not "tokenize" them (Ibid). This indicates that overt racism can be eliminated if minorities gain the power and credibility to refute stereotypes about themselves. However, this elimination process is

not instantaneous. Minorities have to slowly appear in the mainstream in positive images so that audiences can get used to seeing them in such positions.

The Muslim stereotype in Canadian media is currently in the process of finding the fine balance between accurate representations, government legislation and corporate interests. As suggested above, the Canadian mediascape treats Muslims better than they have previously been treated by Western media owing to Canada's insistence on becoming a truly "multicultural" society. The fact that Canadian society is reflected in Canadian media comes through in *LMOTP* where a small town Canadian community is represented in as diverse a light as permitted by the satirical comedic script.

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Canadian media constructions of "women" exclude Muslim women, argue Bullock and Jafri (2000). The images of Canadian women are constructed to be that which the "third-world woman" is not: "progressive, modern, liberated, free, educated, autonomous" (Ibid). Bullock and Jafri further explain that practices of Muslim women, like wearing the *hijab*, are associated with third-world cultures even when they are practiced by Canadian women. Islamic practices, thus, are seen as "backward" third-world practices and Islamic values are considered to have been imported into Canada instead of being Canadian. Bullock and Jafri argue, thus, that Muslim women in Canadian media are represented as outsiders; as distant Others whose religion promotes values that are different from Canadian values (Bullock & Jafri, 2000).

Elisabeth Klaus and Susanne Kassel (2005) discuss a study done on Canadian press coverage of Muslims. The study found that photographs of Muslim women were used only for their symbolic and connotative value and not their actual content. Often, the

text of the article and the content of the photograph used did not match, indicating that the most popular symbol related to Muslim women, the *hijab*, has become an entity on its own, and the women who don it have become invisible homogenous selves, overshadowed by their symbols (Klaus & Kassel, 2005). Rubina Ramji illustrates stereotypes about the *hijab* through an article by Michele Lemon in the *Globe and Mail* on January 31, 1995 (Ramji, 2006). Writing about a Muslim woman wearing a face covering in Mississauga, Ontario, Lemon writes: "Her oppression, for oppression it is, becomes a symbol of the difficulty all women once faced and a startling reminder that the struggle for equality has not ended" (Ramji, 2006). This example illustrates the invisibility that takes over the individual Muslim woman when she appears in *hijab*. Even though the Muslim woman does not feel oppressed, she is perceived in the media as being oppressed and struggling for equality. The *hijab* takes on its own meanings, and becomes a stand-alone symbol for the Muslim woman who is wearing it. When in *hijab*, the Muslim woman becomes invisible while a piece of her clothing is elevated in visibility, power and meaning. The irony lies in the fact that Muslim women are indeed struggling for equality, just as Western audiences perceive them to be. However, their struggle for equality asks for equal representation in society and the media. Muslim women do not want to be reduced to their *hijab*, and be represented as the dynamic, multi-faceted individuals they are. The oppression and inequality they suffer does not come from their own culture, but from the Western culture which homogenizes them into Oriental stereotypical Other beings.

Sharon Todd discusses another Canadian example where the *hijab* signified a negative ideology, and was not recognized as an individual Muslim's right to self-

expression. "On September 7, 1994, a 12-year-old girl, Emilie Ouimet, a recent convert to Islam, was sent home for not complying with the request to remove her hijab" (1998: 438). Todd argues that the media seem unable to consider the different meanings and contexts of the *hijab*. Instead, they focus on oppression and repression of Muslim women by the *hijab*. Bullock and Jafri (2000) discuss another study which found that most newspaper articles focusing on Muslim women in Canada, represented Muslim women as outsiders or "immigrants" of South Asian or Middle Eastern culture. This tendency of the media to relate immigration to "Canadianness" stems from racialized discourse in Canada about what constitutes a "real" Canadian (Ibid).The lifestyles and diversity of Muslims in Canada were rarely discussed. This study also found no references in the newspapers to Black Muslims in Canada. Furthermore, Bullock and Jafri add, 87% of the articles they looked at focused on the *hijab*, implying that it was the only important aspect of their identities (Ibid). Such studies show that Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media are represented as foreigners, not belonging to Canada, victims of oppression, and "potential carriers of anti-Canadian values" (Ibid).

Not only Muslim women, but women in general, are underrepresented in the media. Hannah Pandian (2006: 461) discusses the international Global Media Monitoring Project by the Toronto-based media awareness group Mediawatch. The results of this project show that even though 43% of television news viewers are women, they only make up 17% of interviewees in news programs around the world. For instance, South Asian Canadian women, a visible minority demographic in Canada, remain Others in their own land on account of not being Canadian enough (Aujla, 2000). They are portrayed in colonial and Oriental stereotypes, as helpless victims of abuse and arranged

marriages, or as oriental exotic beings for the Western man's pleasure (Ibid). Despite being second or third generation Canadians, these women are considered foreign. Aujla comments "though they are in their country of origin, they are not of it" (Ibid). Sadia Kutti argues that in Western media, three main stereotypes prevail in regards to the Muslim woman: the sexualized belly dancer, the oppressed woman in a *hijab*, and the militant Muslim woman who wears the *hijab* and carries guns (Bullock & Jafri, 2000). These stereotypes match those of Islam in general as an exotic, backward and barbaric religion.

One attempt by Muslim women to counter these images is through assimilation, whereby they attempt to adapt to the dominant culture in hopes of belonging to it. However, even assimilation does not completely change their position as Others. Bullock and Jafri's discussions with Canadian Muslim women found that these women felt trivialized, devalued as citizens, and ignored in their own country (2000). In addition, Canadian Muslim women feel that they have to fight two battles; one against racism and the other against sexism.

That being said, it is important to note that the Canadian policy on gender and media is arguably one of the most developed policies related to gender communication today. As explained above, the CRTC laid down guidelines and rules to encourage self-regulation for broadcasters and to ensure proper female representation in their programming. The CRTC, along with non-governmental organizations like the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) continue to work together to ensure the proper implementation of Canada's broadcasting policy. Linda Trimble (1990) also discusses the CRTC Task Force to ensure proper portrayal of women in Canadian media. She explains

that the Task Force was a result of the Towards Equality for Women plan put together by the Government of Canada to raise the status of women. In 1985, the CRTC commissioned ERIN Research to conduct a content analysis of the Canadian media industry (Ibid). The results of ERIN Research's analysis show that women were underrepresented in all Canadian media including television, news, radio and advertising. The quality of women's representations was also analyzed and found to be inaccurate. The results indicated that women were interviewed in a non-expert capacity, they were associated with home and domestic affairs, they were cast as consumers, and they were generally stereotyped into gender specific roles (Trimble, 1990). Despite voluntary self-regulation by the media industry, women's portrayals were still not accurate by the mid 1980s. Liss Jeffrey (1993) summarizes a content analysis of gender role portrayal conducted by Tannis MacBeth-Williams at the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia: powerful, authoritative, prominent, knowledgeable characters were mostly male. However, some improvements in the image of women were also found: women were shown equal to men with regards to sexual behavior; they were shown in non-traditional occupations; and sexist comments about women had decreased (Ibid). Representations of women, therefore, have slowly improved in Canada owing to government and industry regulation.

Representations of Muslim women have also slowly improved over the last two decades. Bullock and Jafri (2000) claim that Muslim women who have been living in Canada for more than 20 years have observed that coverage of Muslim women has improved in the Canadian media in both quantity and quality. The biggest improvement they notice is coverage on their lifestyles and culture, such as articles on Muslim

holidays. Another example of such coverage is the CBC's investigative report about the *hijab* in 1995. The reporter interviewed Muslim women and gave a voice to covered Muslim women who were not generally heard in Canadian media (Bullock, 1999). However, Bullock (1999) explains, even that attempt at objectively representing Muslim women failed because the reporter implied that wearing the *hijab* is a practice of Other nations, not of Canadians. She wonders, "can the *hijab* pass the litmus test of being Canadian?" (Bullock, 1999: 30).

The media's inclination towards portraying Muslim women as outsiders and their simultaneous attempts at accurately representing these women indicates that the debates and issues surrounding the Muslim woman in Canadian media are diverse and dynamic. In Canadian society, women, in general, and Muslim women specially, have experienced silencing, marginalization, invisibility and negative stereotypes. Muslim women, contrary to misconceptions about them in Western societies, enjoy many rights in Islam; yet, they are among the poorest demographic in Canada. They experience racism and sexism in the workplace, schools, and the media, thereby negatively shaping the society's interactions with them. The *hijab*, although an article of clothing, has taken on connotations and meanings that stem from Orientalism. In Western media, the *hijab*'s meaning is elevated to the extent that it becomes the primary signifier of the Muslim woman wearing it. Muslim women lose their voice and individuality, and are represented as silent, passive, often oppressed, women clad in the *hijab*. Canada, however, has been taking steps, though independent media-monitoring groups, legislation and government recommendations, to accurately represent women and minorities in the media.

This thesis attempts to regard the diversity of Muslim women and their voice, and show that their representation on CBC is unique and relatively accurate. John Millar's theory about how the position of women in society is determined by the economic system explains the stereotyping and invisibility women have experienced. Stuart Hall's teachings about identity and the Other show how Muslim women have been subject to negative stereotypes in order for the dominant Western culture to define itself in a positive light. Niklas Luhmann's solution of ranking difference in society presents itself in the Canadian media which attempt to accept differences instead of masking them under the rhetoric of progress and equality. Together, theories by Hall, Millar and Luhmann form the umbrella under which the framework for this thesis exists.

The framework used to examine representations of Muslim women in Canadian media stems from theories constructed by Julia Kristeva, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. The recognition of difference in ourselves, as explained by Kristeva, allows Canadian society to accept outsiders and represent them in the media. To be able to achieve fair representation of Muslim women, Canadian society has to accept the differences that exist between all cross-sections of Canadian society instead of focusing solely on the strangeness of Muslim women. Representations of Muslim women are currently shaped by Orientalist stereotypes which are rooted in a history of colonialism and power struggles. By taking control of their own representation, Muslims are fighting Orientalism as defined by Said. The creator of CBC's *LMOTP*, Zarqa Nawaz, is one example of Muslims constructing their own representations and providing a means to educate Canadian society which gains much of its cultural knowledge from the media. In such cases Muslims are able to contest Orientalist stereotypes in the media, and to produce

positive representations which encourage Canadian society to replace Orientalist stereotypes with more accurate and fair imagery. Productions like *LMOTP*, this thesis argues, are examples of Homi Bhabha's Third Spaces. These spaces provide a place for Muslims to reconstruct their identities by combining different cultures and religions, and by questioning dominant identities and stereotypes. Identities and cultural artifacts produced in these Third Spaces exhibit characteristics of the original cultures and religions, but also contain unique characteristics which can not be found elsewhere. *LMOTP* is one example of products that came out of Third Spaces.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

> Babar: Nobody said being a Muslim was easy!
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 8*

Representations of Muslim women in the Canadian non-news media seem to be absent prior to September 11, 2001. In prime time shows, *LMOTP* is among the first to emphasize representations of the Muslim woman. The show was released on January 9, 2007 on CBC television in Canada[7]. The third season began airing on September 24, 2008 (Ibid). Its main cast includes four Muslim women of different ages and ethnic backgrounds: Rayyan, Sarah, Fatima and Layla. These four Muslim women are studied in this thesis to examine the representation of Muslim women in Canadian media.

Research Design

This thesis examines representations of Muslim women on *LMOTP* and compares these representations to those of other characters. The portrayal of characters on the show, especially their dialogue, interactions, and clothing, will be analyzed to gain an understanding of how Muslim women are represented in CBC television shows. For this purpose, content analysis is used as a research design. Bernard Berelson (1952: 204) defines content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Using this definition, this thesis employs content analysis to conduct an objective quantitative analysis of the

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[7] *Little Mosque on the Prairie* page on Internet Movie Database, retreived at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0923293/ on September 26, 2008.

manifest content in the show. However, as McLeod and Tichenor explain, content analysis "includes qualitative methods and sometimes the quantification of information" (2007: 36). Following from this description, this thesis contains both the qualitative analysis of representations of Muslim women on *LMOTP*, and the quantification of that analysis into numeric data.

Once the visual elements to be studied are selected, a criterion of coding and classifying the data is established for the content analysis (McLeod & Tichenor, 2007). These criteria of selection are a set of rules that explicitly outline how the researcher will analyze the data and recognize the messages (Berg, 2007). The criteria of selection for this thesis stem from an overview of the data and a review of the literature, and allow documentation of minute details in representations of Muslim women.

The content analysis examines the manifest content of the selected sample. Prior to data collection, the themes and concepts of this thesis are explicitly outlined and defined to help refine the coding process. Moreover, the conceptual and operational definitions are outlined further in this chapter to help the reader understand the premise of this content analysis. Since only one coder is conducting all the coding, an inter-reliability test is not required.

This thesis takes the interpretative approach to content analysis, which allows the researcher to treat actions taken by the characters as text with layers of meanings (Berg, 2007). These layers of meaning are analyzed through the filter of the frameworks outlined in the Literature Review to uncover symbols and meanings attached to representations of Muslim women. These meanings are further deconstructed to reveal

themes that serve as categories to sort the data, which, as explained below, is a crucial step in content analysis.

Berg (2007) explains the processes of analyzing codes in content analysis. Based on his sequence, the skeletal plan for this thesis follows. Data are collected and transcribed into textual form (transcripts). From this data, codes are formed based on the literature surrounding representations of Muslim women. These codes are matched with the corresponding sections of the transcripts, and the transcripts are rearranged to fit into these categories. Therefore, the codes (and their corresponding data) are categorized into themes from the Literature Review. The data are analyzed to extrapolate patterns that explain how the image of the Muslim woman has been represented. These patterns help conclude findings about how the Muslim woman is represented on CBC.

Research Questions

A preliminary scan of Canadian television shows does not reveal any substantial representations of Muslim women prior to the 1990s. The literature shows that Muslim women have been a part of Canadian society since the nineteenth century (Canadian Council of Muslim Women, 2007), but their representations have only entered Canadian mainstream media in the twenty-first century, with *LMOTP* being the most prominent example. This thesis examines the quality of this image of the Muslim woman, and the dynamics and debates surrounding it. The central research question in this thesis asks: How has the image of the Muslim woman been (re)constructed on CBC television? As the data is analyzed, the following sub-questions are added to this thesis: What roles does the Muslim woman play in society, according to the Canadian media? How do the

Muslim woman's roles in the media correspond to her position in Canadian society? What stereotypes define representations of the Muslim woman? How are representations of the Muslim woman evolving in Canadian media? What does CBC do differently to portray Muslim women? The case of *LMOTP* will be used to explore these questions, and to introduce theories that may explain the evolution of representations of Muslim women in Canadian media and Canadian society in general.

Microscopic Conceptual Approach

McLeod and Tichenor explain that in the microscopic conceptual approach "the emphasis is primarily on the individual as a unit of analysis" (2007: 14). In the case of this thesis, the unit of analysis is the representation of the Muslim woman in *LMOTP*. The unit of analysis is individual across all cases: the single media example, *LMOTP*, is picked out of all possible media; the single religion of Islam is picked out of all possible religions; and the single representation of the Muslim woman in Canada is picked out of all possible representations on *LMOTP*. All these singular choices imply that this thesis follows a microscopic conceptual approach.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning allows the researcher to go from particular observances to general statements. This "generalization from measured results is an inductive process" (McLeod & Tichenor, 2007: 10). Deductive reasoning, on the other hand, allows the researcher to go from general theory to particular observations that confirm the hypothesis or theory. The first half of this thesis, including the Literature Review, follows a qualitative

trajectory that examines particular cases of representations of Muslim women in Western media, and concludes at the formation of a general theory about representations of Muslim women in Canadian media. Therefore, the first half of this thesis follows inductive reasoning. During the second half of this thesis, however, the quantitative analysis helps the logic flow from a general theory about representations of Muslim women in Canadian media to particular representations on *LMOTP*. This indicates that the deductive approach to reasoning is used during the quantitative analysis of this thesis. Thus, this thesis uses both inductive and deductive reasoning at different points of analysis.

Sampling Strategy

The universe to be studied, the CBC show *LMOTP*, is growing in size during the process of this thesis. Its first season comprised of eight shows, each show being 22 minutes long after accounting for commercials. Its second season consists of twenty shows, also 22 minutes in length each. During the course of this thesis, the show is airing its third season. This expanding universe is too large for this thesis to examine. Thus, the non-random purposive sampling strategy has been used to draw the sample: all eight shows from the first season. This sample is chosen because it reflects the producer's aim to portray Muslim society and Muslim women without any audience feedback. When these episodes were filmed, the producer did not know that the show would break viewership records on CBC. Without this knowledge, these episodes are closest to the original aim of the show. The second season, after critical acclaim and very high viewership numbers, is visibly different from the first season in terms of ideologies and issues raised.

Consecutive seasons of *LMOTP* introduce racier themes and more racist dialogue. Also, relationships between the genders increase in the second and third season. This thesis, therefore, studies only the first season because without audience feedback, it best reflects the producer's and director's intentions.

The eight shows in this sample have been further broken down into scenes for the content analysis. Each scene consists of one or more camera shots, cuts, characters and transitions. In this thesis, the deciding factor for what comprises a scene is a change of location. Thus, a scene continues as long as the action takes place in the same location. The moment the action changes to a different location, the scene changes as well. There is no predetermined number of scenes in any episode, nor is there a predetermined length of each scene. Furthermore, only scenes with at least one Muslim woman are being analyzed. The results and percentages mentioned in this thesis are the product of tests performed on scenes with Muslim women only.

Chapter 5 in this thesis discusses the results of the content analysis. The results indicate that the number of scenes involved in a certain process coincides with the amount of time that process occurs. For example, a test to find out the number of scenes a certain woman interacts with men produces similar results to the amount of time she spends interacting with men. This proportionate relationship is due to the fact that most of the scenes are of medium length. A higher number of scenes, therefore, implies more time. Thus, this thesis examines the number of scenes as the dependent variable in most cases. Instances where the amount of time is discussed are instances where the two, number of scenes and time, did not match.

Exploratory and Explanatory Study

The nature of this thesis is both exploratory and explanatory. McLeod and Tichenor explain that

> people use *exploratory research* to assess the opportunities for undertaking a study, to try out various methods for collecting information for a proposed larger study later on, or to learn the language and concepts of the topic used by those who will be studied.
>
> (McLeod & Tichenor, 2007: 29)

This thesis explores the debates surrounding the representation of the Muslim woman in Canadian media, and outlines the literature and frameworks to study relatively recent representations of Muslim women in Canadian media. It also defines symbols and phenomenon related to Muslim women's image in Canada. Due to these reasons, this thesis is exploratory in nature.

However, this thesis also links theories about Orientalism, Third Space discourse, power, and representation to each other to form a singular generalized framework that can be used to explain representations of Islam in the West. On account of finding such a relationship between various theories this thesis is also explanatory in nature.

Constructs, Concepts, and Operational Definitions

Constructs included in this thesis are abstract themes that are pulled out from the review of literature and are necessary for the content analysis. Conceptual definitions for this thesis are based on the theory and theoretical frameworks from the Literature Review. These conceptual definitions describe how observations about the data formed the basis

for concepts. *Figure 1* outlines the constructs and conceptual definitions used in this thesis.

Figure 1: Conceptual Definitions used in this study

Construct	**Conceptual Definition**
Representation	The act of giving meaning to something by attaching mental images to it.
Representation of women	A contested concept that deals with issues of power, accurate representation of demographic, stereotyping, sexualizing, fetishising.
Women in workplace	Presence of women in the workforce. This involves issues of gender-specific jobs, glass ceilings, and sexism.
Muslim	Any individual practicing the religion of Islam.
Muslim woman	Any woman who identifies with Islam, regardless of her ethnic origin or her degree of religiousness.
Hijab	A very complex notion that can include covering of the face or head for women, lowering of the gaze in the presence of the opposite sex for both men and women, or simply a state of being in modest clothing. For the purpose of this study, *hijab* will be defined using the Western meaning: the head covering worn by Muslim women in the presence of men.
Power	To have the power over others, to be able to affect others.
Status in society	The degree of relative respect and power one enjoys in society. Women have, in historical times, been subjected to lower status in society than men.
Stereotype	A generalized, simplified conception about somebody which may or may not be based on reality.
Media	The collective mass media.
Perceived image of Muslim women	The perceived image of Muslim women, especially in the West, is made up of stereotypes about them. It includes the wearing of the *hijab*, Muslim women's lack of voice, oppression faced by Muslim women, and the belief that Muslim women are uneducated individuals who prefer to stay in the domestic realm instead of working.
Canadian culture	Perceived to be the culture practiced by the majority of (white) Canadians. This term is problematic because of the many cultures clashing in Canada, and because American culture directly affects Canadian culture.
Gender	Not only does gender mean being classified as male or female, gender also means stereotypes and gender roles attached to that gender.

Feminism	A discourse related to social and political rights of women, advocating equal rights of women.
Educated	Having attained a higher level of education. (e.g.: post-secondary)
Professional	To be working in a profession or career.
Culture	Attitudes, practices, beliefs, and norms that are particular to one nation or social group.
Multiculturalism	In a social group, inclusion of different ethnicities, races and cultures.
"Otherness"	The quality attached to those different from ourselves. This stems from Stuart Hall (see Chapter 2).
Foreignness	The quality of being an outsider in a dominant culture. This stems from Julia Kristeva (see Chapter 2).
Identity	Following Stuart Hall's definition, it is the process of attaching meaning to one's self in contrast to others.

Constructs for this thesis are measured in the content analysis. Since this thesis is qualitative in nature, operationalization of the conceptual definitions reveals how observations about the data lead to those conceptual definitions. For instance, observations about Rayyan's character on *LMOTP* reveal that she is empowered, educated and holds a professional career as a doctor. These observations help make a conceptual connection between the roles of women in the labor force, the power related to different jobs, and the acceptable occupations for Muslim women in *hijab.* Operationalization of these concepts reveals the processes that led to the formation of conceptual definitions from the data set. Some operational definitions of concepts, along with the elements that are examined in the content analysis, follow in *Figure 2*

Figure 2: Concepts, Operational Definitions, and Elements examined in this thesis

Concept	Operational Definition	Elements to be examined
Hijab	How well a (Muslim) woman follows the requirements of the *hijab* on screen. Does she wear the *hijab*, if at all, and does her clothing reflect Islamic dress? Three classes of *hijab* are analyzed in this thesis: full *hijab* with no hair visible, loose *hijab* with some hair visible, and no *hijab* at all. Attitudes of people (individuals and masses) towards a Muslim woman's *hijab*.	o Appearance of *hijab* o Quality of *hijab* o Overall clothing of the Muslim woman o Attitude of the Muslim woman about her *hijab* o Attitudes of other Muslim women about each others' *hijab*, whether they complement it or comment on it o Attitudes of Muslim men about the Muslim woman's *hijab* o Attitudes of non-Muslim men about the Muslim woman's *hijab* o Attitudes of non-Muslim women about the Muslim woman's *hijab*
Quantity of images of the Muslim woman	Amount of media coverage of Muslim women and issues relating to Muslim women. This can be compared to coverage of non-Muslim women, non-Muslim men, and Muslim men.	o Frequency of images of the Muslim woman o Frequency of images of other characters
Beauty and sexuality	Beauty and sexuality attached to a Muslim woman's physical appearance. Whether other characters find the Muslim woman beautiful or sexual.	o Interdiegetic comments about the Muslim woman's sexuality and beauty o On screen emphasis on the Muslim woman's clothing, body and physical appearance o Instances of the Muslim woman partaking in acts to increase her beauty or sexuality

Oppression	The state of being oppressed, often by forces related to Muslim women's status as a minority (Muslim, female, and of a certain ethnicity).	o Any external oppressive forces acting on the Muslim woman (dominating husband, mother in law, societal expectations to behave a certain way, limitations on dress, education, career, etc.) o Any internal oppressive forces acting on the Muslim woman (internal conflict to behave a certain way, values that cause the Muslim woman to act a certain way, subconscious values, etc.)
Values of Muslim women	The religious and moral values held by Muslim women on screen. Instances where Muslim women relay values to other characters, or make value based judgements will be measured.	o Instances where the Muslim woman talks about values (e.g., Rayyan refusing to date) o Instances where the Muslim woman judges the actions of other characters based on her values o Instances where the Muslim woman performs certain actions based on her values
Muslim women in the workplace	The dynamics of Muslim women in the workplace. It includes Muslim women's competence and ability to do certain jobs, their willingness to take on work typically reserved for men, other people's attitudes about seeing a Muslim woman in that career.	o Different careers the Muslim woman is shown in o Number of working Muslim women compared to other demographics on screen o Type of jobs held by the Muslim woman o Skills required for jobs held by the Muslim woman o Competence of the woman in her jobs o Any interdiegetic comments by other characters towards the competence of the Muslim woman in that job o Daily schedule of the Muslim woman as shown on screen o Emphasis on career for/by the Muslim woman

Marital status/ Relationship status	Condition of being married or unmarried, single, engaged, etc.	o Marital status or relationship status of the Muslim woman o Frequency and quality of relationships the Muslim woman is shown to have with men outside of her immediate family o Roles the Muslim woman is "expected" to fulfill as part of her relationship/marital status
Level of "Islamness"	The degree of how much Muslim women practice Islam. This covers a wide spectrum from Sarah's character (not religious) at one end to Rayyan's character (very religious) at the other end.	o Instances the Muslim woman partakes in Islamic activities like prayer o Instances the Muslim woman discusses Islam o Whether the Muslim woman wears the *hijab* o Instances the Muslim woman takes actions to further her Islamic knowledge
Knowledge of Arabic	This is a measure of how closely the Muslim woman is familiar with the Qur'an (which is in the Arabic language). This is not to say that individuals who speak Arabic know the Qur'an better than non-Arabic speakers. This is simply a measure of whether the Muslim woman in question, during the 22 minutes of the show, is shown to be familiar with the Qur'an through verbal/visual cues.	o Pronunciation of Arabic words o Language spoken and whether it is close to Arabic or not o Use of Arabic words in daily language. This includes words like *Assalam-o-Alaikum*, *imam*, *inshAllah*, *zikr*, etc.

Ethnicity	The ethnic group(s) Muslim women associate themselves with, or belong to. Does the ethnicity belong to a majority group (e.g., European) or a minority group (e.g., Arab)? Does a Muslim woman's ethnicity allow others to stereotype her in certain ways?	o The ethnic origin of the Muslim woman o How closely Muslim woman relates to her ethnic origin o Frequency of references made by the Muslim woman to her ethnic origins o Frequency of references made by other characters to the Muslim women's ethnic origins
General attitude	This measures the general state of mind Muslim women portray on screen. For example: Rayyan's attitude is feminist, while Fatimah's character is emancipated and struggling at the same time.	o Feminist attitudes portrayed by the Muslim woman o Struggling attitudes portrayed by the Muslim woman o Independent attitudes portrayed by the Muslim woman, etc.
Role	The function assigned to characters in the show. This thesis tests for the following roles: subject of the scene, a key role, a supporting role, an other important role, and an unimportant role	o Number of characters on screen in the scene o Characters with the most dialogue in the scene o Characters who are central to the plot of the scene o Characters who can be removed from the scene without a change of script

Variables are constructs that take different values. Variables need operational definitions which explain how that variable will be measured. They specify the operations taken in order to measure that variable. Operationalization for this thesis occurs after the formation of conceptual definitions, as well as after data collection to link the data to the constructs. *Figure 3* shows concepts and their corresponding variables used in this thesis.

Figure 3: Concepts and Variables to be used in this study

Concept	**Variable**
Representation	o Positive representations o Negative representations o Relationship of representation to actual demographic o Context of representation o Role women are shown to represent
Women in workplace	o Types of work o Competence of women for that work o Gender roles attached to work o Power allocated and related to that work
Power	o Economic status o Marital status o Patriarchal hierarchy o Children o Level of education o Autonomy and independence
"Otherness" and Foreignness	o Nationality versus race o Languages spoken o Dress, food, lifestyle o Familial roles
Perceived image of Muslim women	o Types of suitable jobs o Levels of employment o Presence or absence of *hijab* o Levels of education o Levels of independence
Gender	o Roles associated with female gender o Power associated with female gender o Jobs associated with female gender

Other than the elements listed in *Figure 2*, themes relating to the Muslim woman when overtly discussed onscreen will also be looked at. Furthermore, the semantics of dialogue delivery, tone, intonation, body language etc. will not be examined because of time and space restrictions on this thesis.

Reliability and Validity

To enhance the reliability of this thesis, only one coder is used. However, by using only one coder, this study is susceptible to bias from a limited point of view. To minimize personal bias, the researcher has formed conceptual definitions stemming directly from the Literature Review. Furthermore, the operational definitions were formed by closely studying the literature, previous studies, and the sample. This way, the effect of the researcher's biases on the analysis is minimized. Similarly, the qualitative observations of this study are rooted in plot descriptions and character profiles on *LMOTP*'s website[8] and Zarqa Nawaz's interviews. The qualitative observations in this thesis expand on existing descriptions of the characters, and reflect the creator's intended representations. Other measures to enhance the reliability and validity of this thesis are based on theories by various scholars of the field of research methods.

For the quantitative analysis, this thesis uses Joppe's definition of reliability. Nahid Golafshani (2003: 598) quotes Ryerson University Professor Marion Joppe regarding reliability in a quantitative study: "The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability". Moreover, Joppe explains that a study is reliable if similar results are produced with a different methodology (Ibid). This thesis has been constructed to produce results which are similar across different methodologies. Interviews with Muslim women in Canada, like the excerpt mentioned in the Literature Review, show results similar to this content analysis of *LMOTP*. The conclusions drawn from studies by Katherine Bullock and Gul Jafri (2000), and Shahnaz Khan (2000; 2002) confirm the

[8] www.cbc.ca/littlemosque

findings of this thesis, as do theories of Western scholars like Karim H. Karim and Akbar Ahmed. Furthermore, each quantitative observation has been made twice, ensuring the reliability of the quantitative parts of this thesis. Despite objective treatment of the data, William Neuman acknowledges that qualitative research is ambiguous about reliability (2007). Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2002) explain that reliability in qualitative research is not always a concern because reliability relies on consistency of results in repeated operations. Qualitative measurement, however, is a single, nonrepeated observation (Ibid). Furthermore, repeated qualitative observations take place in a changing environment where the contexts and the researcher's realities are in flux. These changing factors can not guarantee similar qualitative observations (Ibid). Given the ambiguity of reliability in qualitative research, this thesis provides a rich overview of representations of Muslim women in Canada in Chapter 2. This allows repeated qualitative observations to take place in a context similar to the one at the time of this analysis, thereby adding to the reliability of this thesis.

Since this thesis is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, validity has been taken into account for both the qualitative and quantitative analysis. This thesis accounts for measurement validity by ensuring that the operational definitions correlate with the conceptual definitions. The validity of the quantitative portion of this thesis, thus, depends on how well the concepts represent the media's treatment of Muslim women. The validity of this thesis also depends on how authentic the results drawn from this study are, and how well they portray the representation of the Muslim women in Canadian media. Special care has been taken by the researcher to ensure a well-rounded, accurate correlation between the concepts and the operational definitions which is then

confirmed by the results. Neuman (2007: 223) explains that validity in qualitative research is based on three factors: the researcher's interaction with the data has to be persuasive and genuine, a large and diverse collection of data have to support the claims made in the study, and lastly, validity grows as the researcher discovers new connections between data. For the qualitative part of this thesis, validity is ensured through the genuine, personal experiences of the researcher. The researcher belongs to the demographic of Muslim women in Canada, and has experienced, first hand, the experiences discussed in the Literature Review, as well as the experiences faced by the four Muslim women in *LMOTP*. This viewpoint ensures that the methodology and analysis are authentic and fair. Moreover, the experiences of other women as well as the results of the studies by Gul Jafri, Bullock and Khan, which are discussed in the Literature Review, indicate that many different parties share experiences with the findings of this thesis. Furthermore, by connecting these experiences and studies to current representations of Muslim women, the validity of this thesis is ensured.

Lastly, special care has been taken to ensure that the criteria of selection is "sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of message content and [is] rigidly and consistently applied so that other researchers or readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results" (Berg, 2007), ensuring reliability of measures and validity of findings. Together, the research design, sampling strategy, content analysis, variables, and operational definitions helped construct a content analysis form that studies the representation of Muslim women in *LMOTP*, providing a methodology that can be extended to study representations of Muslim women across other media.

Content Analysis Form

The content analysis form is the final product of the methodology. It provides a quantitative questionnaire which can be applied to any scene in *LMOTP*. Each episode is broken into individual scenes, each of which takes a case number. The total number of women in the scene is identified, as well as their particular names and the amount of screen time each character received. The themes mentioned in the scene are stated. The content analysis form also contains specific queries about the characters in the scene: what kind of *hijab* they were wearing, where the scene took place, the role the women played, whether they spoke Arabic in the scene and whether they interacted with men or women outside their families. The last part of this content analysis form asks about conflicts or oppression faced by the characters. The execution of this content analysis requires this form to be filled out for each character in each scene. The results of this process are discussed below in Chapter 4: Results and Analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

> Babar: This is all because of Rayyan!
> Layla: But she's the best Muslim I know!
> Babar: That is what I am afraid of.
>
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 8*

The content analysis of the first eight seasons of *LMOTP* produced results of two types. The qualitative analysis provided insight into each of the four characters studied, and their relationships and communication dynamics in the town of Mercy. The quantitative analysis provided results about the treatment of their representations in a particular medium, and how these representations accounted for the context of Canadian, multicultural, national television regulations. The following discussion shows the most significant quantitative results of the content analysis.

Figure 4: Length of scenes with Muslim women

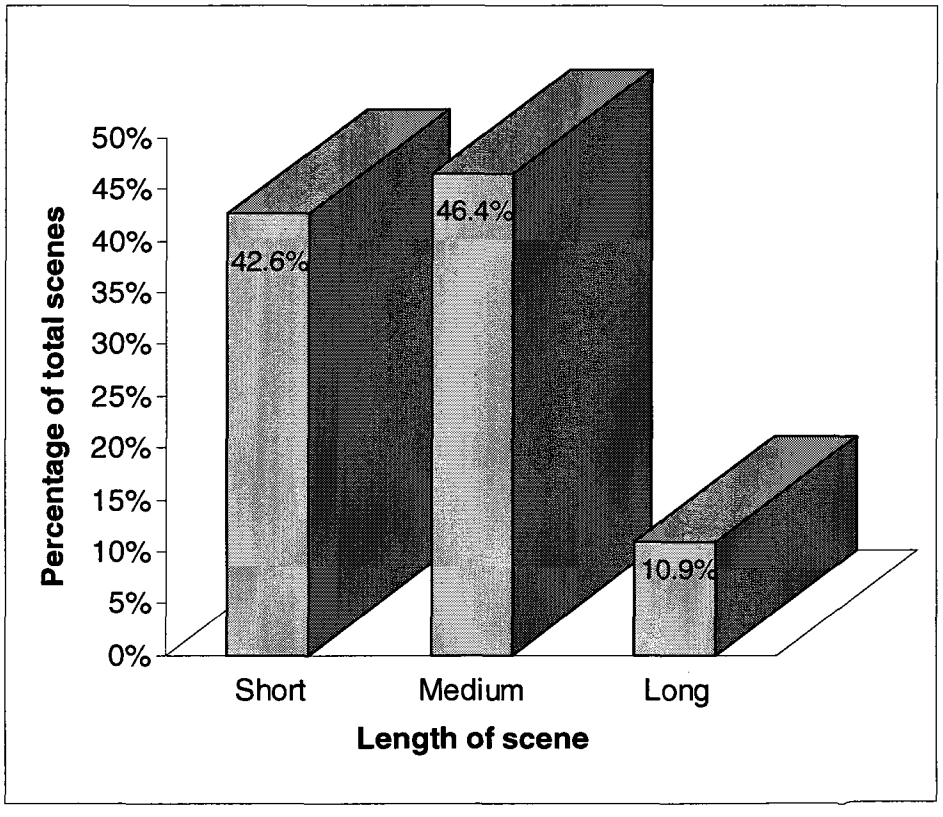
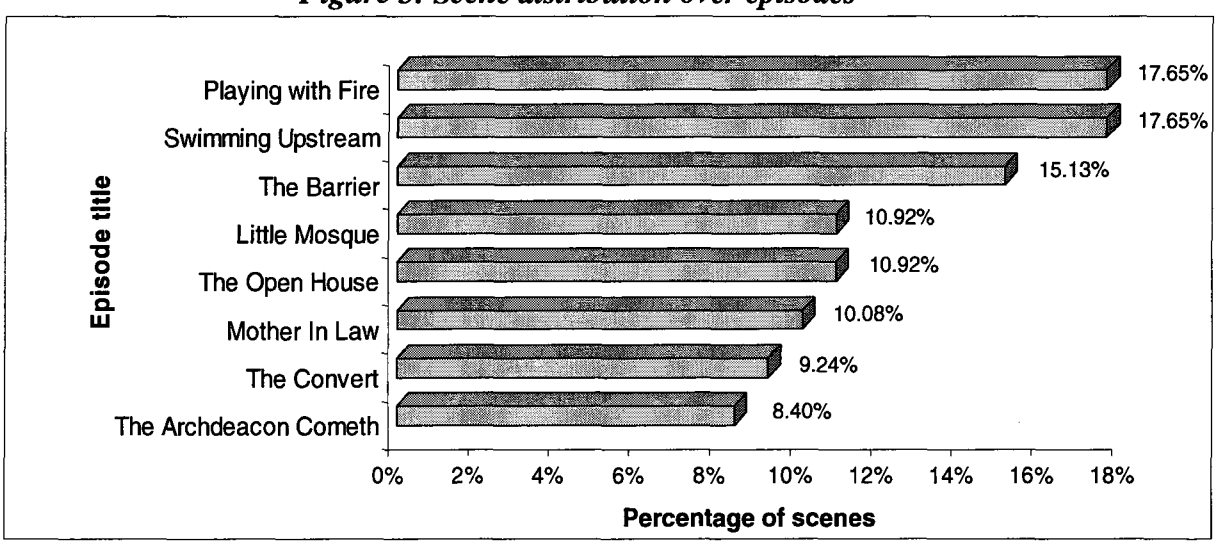


Figure 4 shows the breakdown of the length of scenes. As indicated, most of the scenes with Muslim women were of medium length (46.45%). 42.46% of the scenes analyzed were short, while 10.93% were long in length. Chapter 5 discusses scene length and its significance to this thesis in detail.

Muslim women played different types of roles in each episode depending on the theme of the episode. Episodes with themes related to Muslim women contained more scenes with Muslim women in important roles. *Figure 5* shows how the scenes containing Muslim women were distributed over the first eight episodes of *LMOTP*.

Figure 5: Scene distribution over episodes



According to this chart, the episodes "Playing with Fire" and "Swimming Upstream" both contained the most scenes representing Muslim women: 17.65% of the total scenes analyzed. These were followed by "The Barrier" and "Little Mosque", each at 10.92% of the total scenes analyzed. "The Archdeacon Cometh" contained the least scenes with Muslim women: 8.4% of the total scenes analyzed. It important to note that these

percentages do not represent the percentage of scenes with Muslim women in each episode; these numbers represent the percentage out of the total 119 scenes containing Muslim women and show how the scenes were divided between the eight episodes. These episodes are individually discussed in Chapter 5.

Theme of the Scenes

Different themes were extracted from each episode, and from each individual scene. Even though each episode had its own overarching theme, this theme did not always extend to the individual scenes. Thus, while one episode may have been about a Muslim woman's right to swim in a public pool, the scenes in that episode may have touched upon themes relating to Islam, clothing, and parental issues. Thus, the individual scenes each revolved around its own central theme. Out of all possible themes, only the themes listed in *Figure 6* were represented in the first season of *LMOTP*.

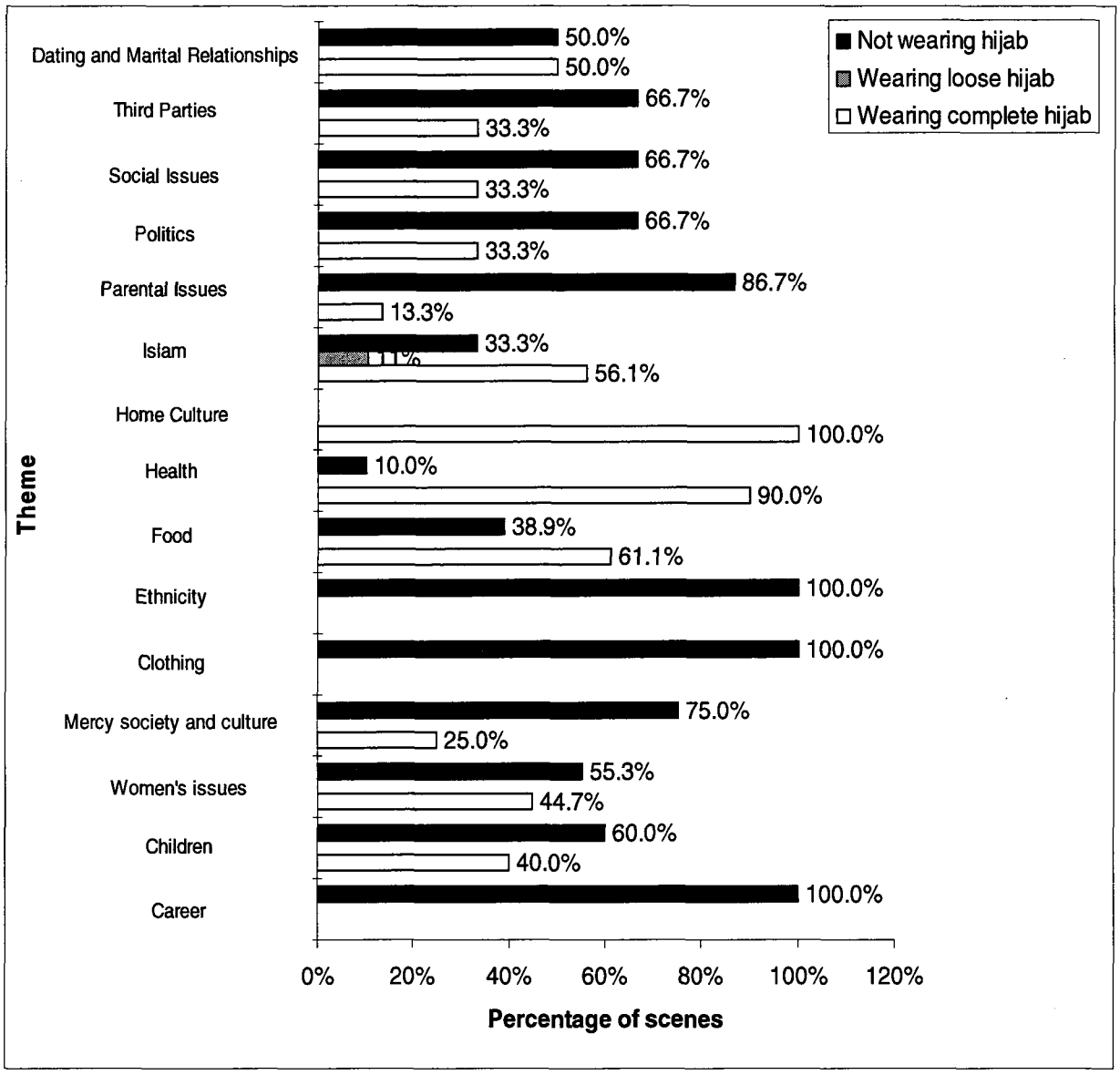
Figure 6: Frequency table showing theme distribution

Theme	**Percentage of scenes**
Islam	30.30%
Women's Issues	19.30%
Parental Issues	10.10%
Dating and Relationships	8.40%
Food	8.40%
Health	5.90%
Mercy Society and Culture	4.20%
Children	3.40%
Career	1.70%
Home Culture	1.70%
Politics	1.70%
Social Issues	1.70%
Third Parties	1.70%
Clothing	0.80%
Ethnicity	0.80%

Islam, which was the theme of 30.3% of the 119 scenes, was the most popular theme. The second most common theme was women's issues, which was represented in 19.3% of the scenes analyzed. Parental issues, in 10.1% of the scenes, was the third most common theme, followed by food and dating and relationships. The following chapter discusses the significance of these findings, and explains why Islam, women's issues and parental issues were the most common themes.

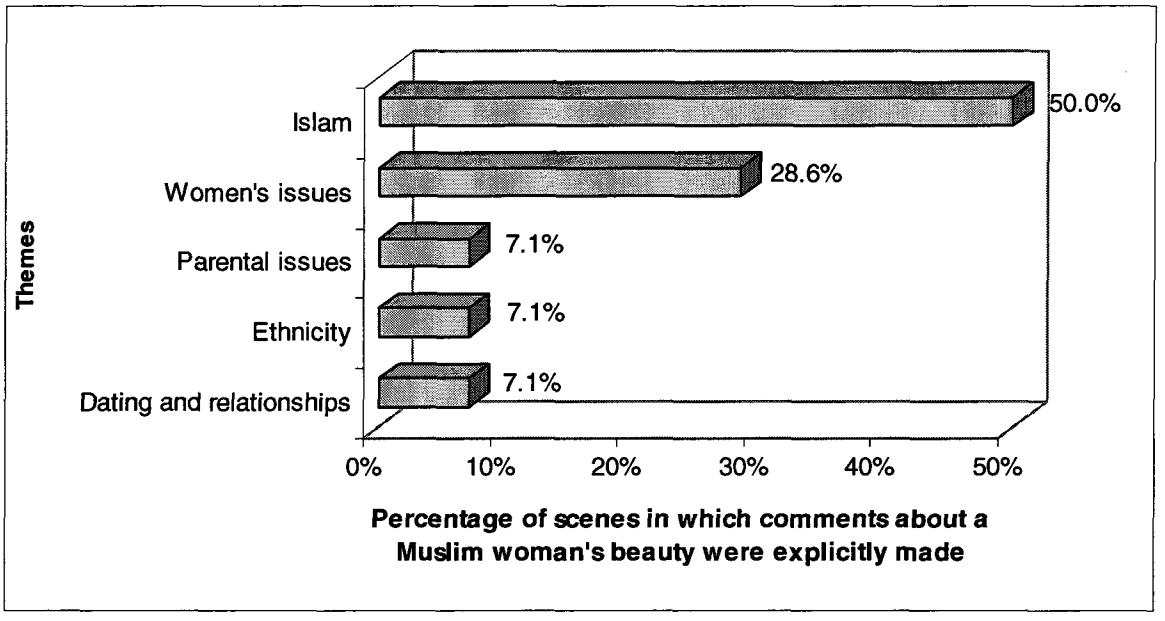
As discussed in Chapter 2, the *hijab* is closely tied to representations of Muslim women. A cross tabulation test revealed a relationship between different levels of *hijab* and the different themes of the scenes. *Figure 7* shows the results of this test. The Muslim women were not wearing any form of *hijab* in any of the scenes revolving around career, ethnicity and clothing. They were wearing complete *hijab* in all the scenes related to home culture, and in 90% of the scenes relating to health. *Figure 7* also reveals that the *hijab* was worn in majority of the scenes only when the themes were Islam, home culture or health. The Muslim women wore the *hijab* in exactly half the scenes about dating and relationships, and did not wear the *hijab* in the other half. For all other themes, the Muslim women were represented without *hijab* more often than in *hijab*.

Figure 7: Levels of hijab taken in scenes with different themes



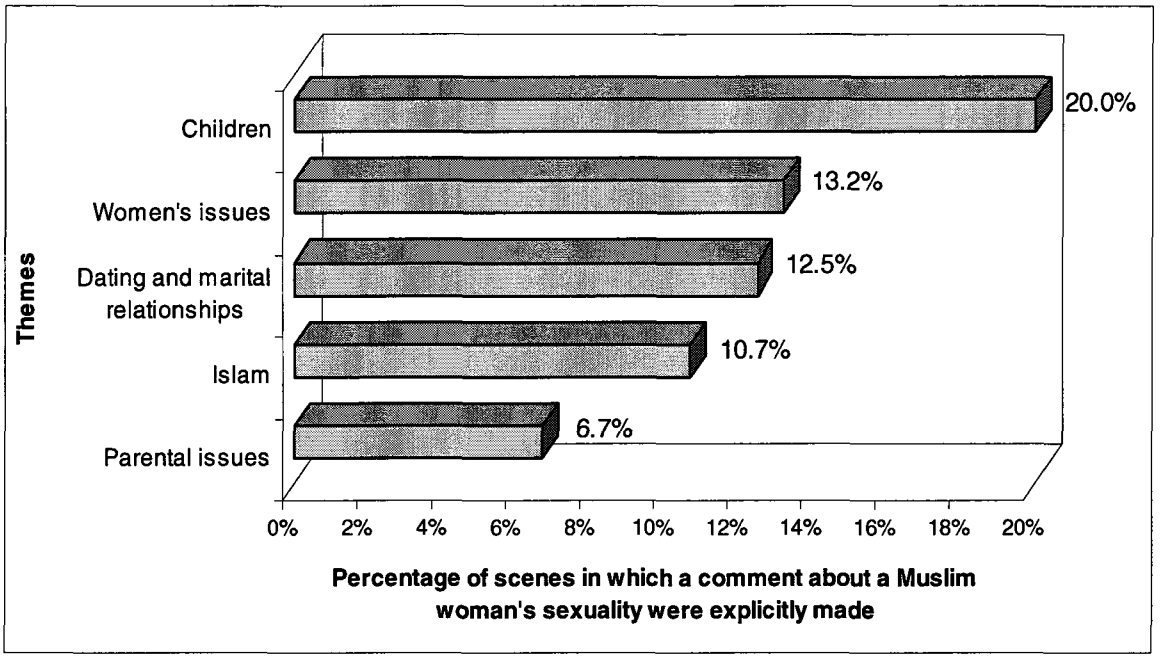
The theme of the scene is also related to scenes which contained explicit comments about a Muslim woman's beauty. As *Figure 8* shows, when comments were explicitly made about a Muslim woman's beauty, the theme was most often Islam (exactly half the scenes). The second most common theme in scenes containing comments about beauty was women's issues at 28.6% of the 119 scenes analyzed.

Figure 8: Theme distribution in scenes which contained explicit comments about a Muslim woman's beauty



Similarly, there was a significant relationship between the various themes and scenes which contained explicit comments about a Muslim woman's sexuality. *Figure 9* indicates that in scenes containing comments about sexuality, the most common theme was children at 20% followed by women's issues at 13.2% of the scenes. These relationships agree with findings from the Literature Review, as discussed in the next chapter.

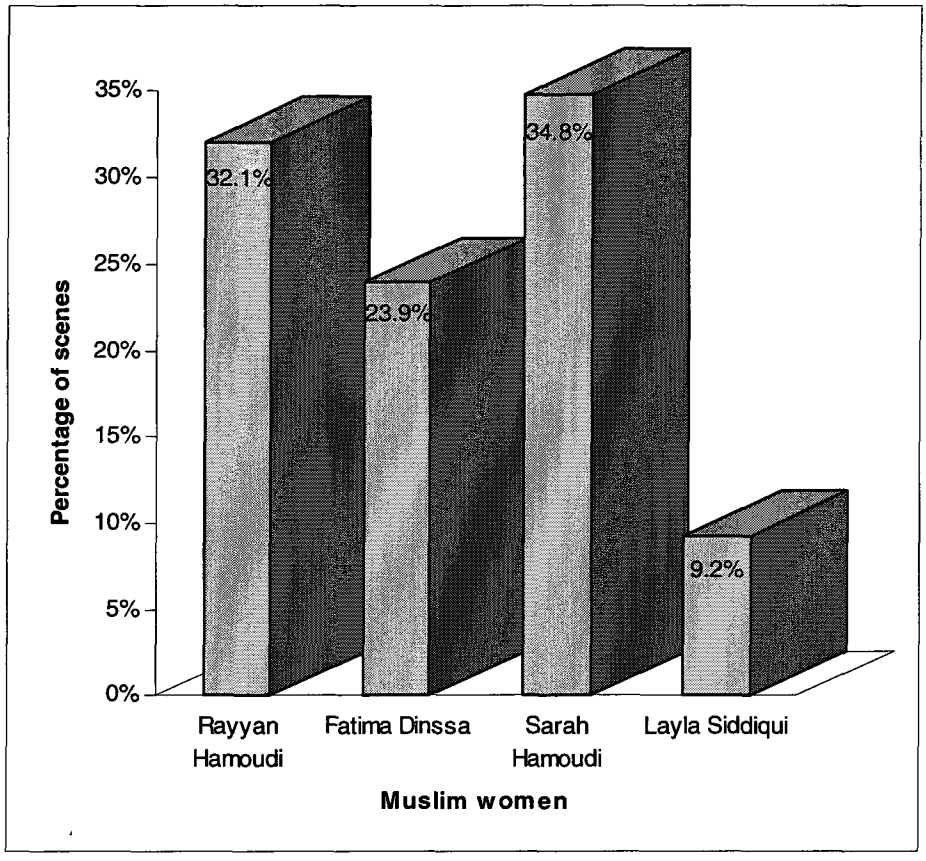
Figure 9: Theme distribution in scenes which contained explicit comments about a Muslim woman's sexuality



Characteristics of the Four Muslim Women

Another important variable in this study is the personality of each of the characters analyzed. The four Muslim women, Rayyan, Fatima, Sarah, and Layla, have vastly distinct personalities. Their personalities interact with other variables to produce interesting results. The amount of time allocated to each woman differs, depending on several factors. The number of scenes allocated to each woman also differs for each woman. *Figure 10* shows the percentage of scenes, out of the total 119 analyzed, in which each woman appears. Sarah was present in 34.8% of the scenes, followed by her daughter, Rayyan, who was present in 32.1% of the scenes. Fatima and Layla, both secondary characters, were present in 23.9% and 9.2% of the total scenes analyzed, respectively.

Figure 10: Percentage of scenes allocated to each Muslim woman



Sarah and Rayyan are both prominent characters in the first season of the show. Their presence in most of the scenes with Muslim women relates to the fact that they represent a certain demographic in Canada. This is further discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 11, which shows the percentage of time each woman is represented on screen, agrees with the results of *Figure 10.* Sarah received the most time exposure (37%) just as she received the most scene exposure. Rayyan was second in terms of time at 36%, while Fatima and Layla were represented 20% and 7% of the time, respectively. These findings agree with each other, and are elaborated upon in the Findings and Discussion.

Figure 11: Percentage of time allocated to each Muslim woman

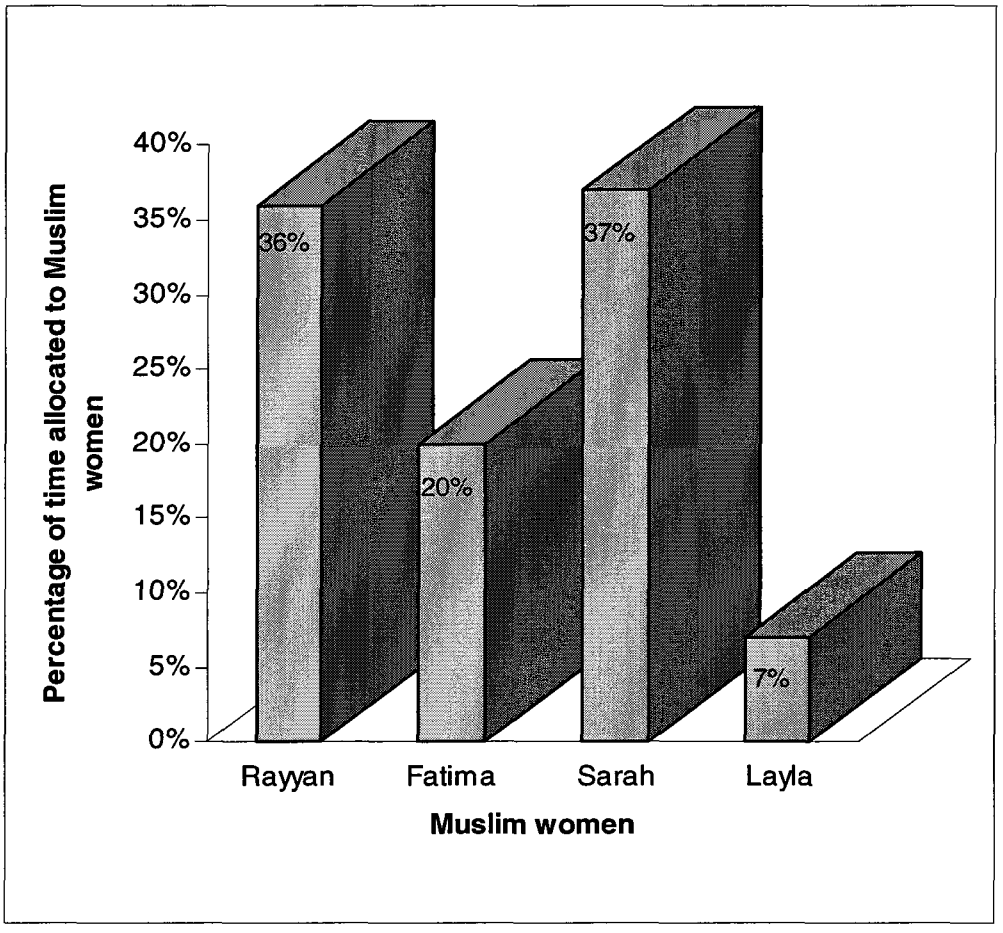
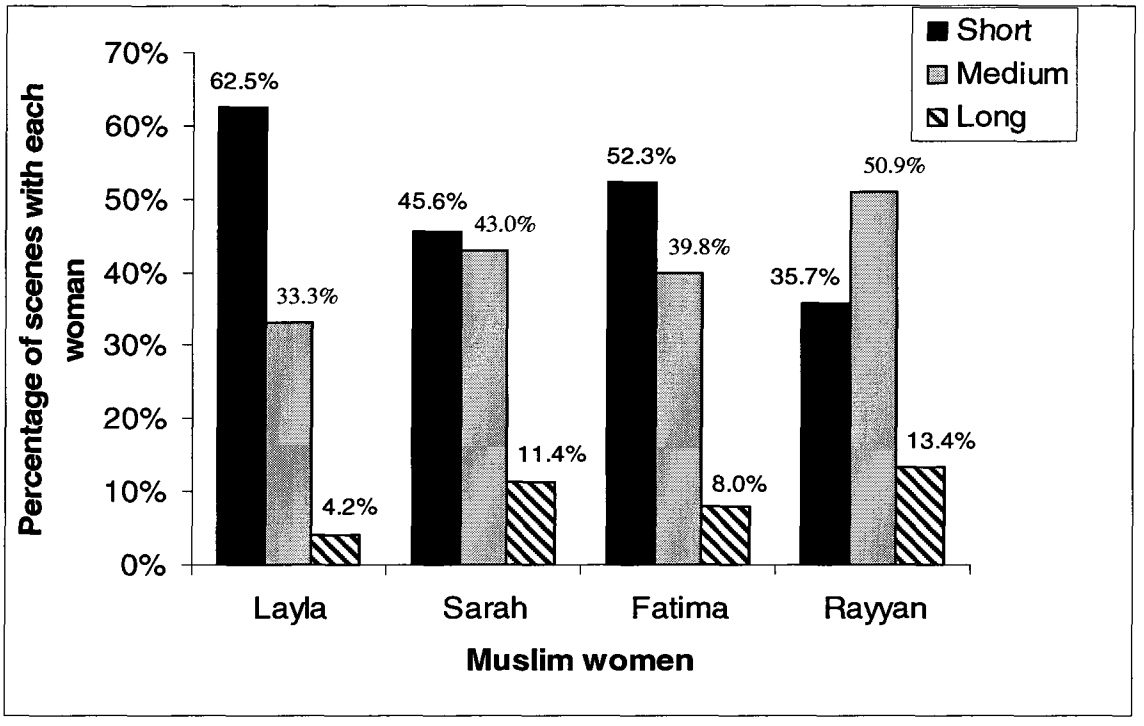


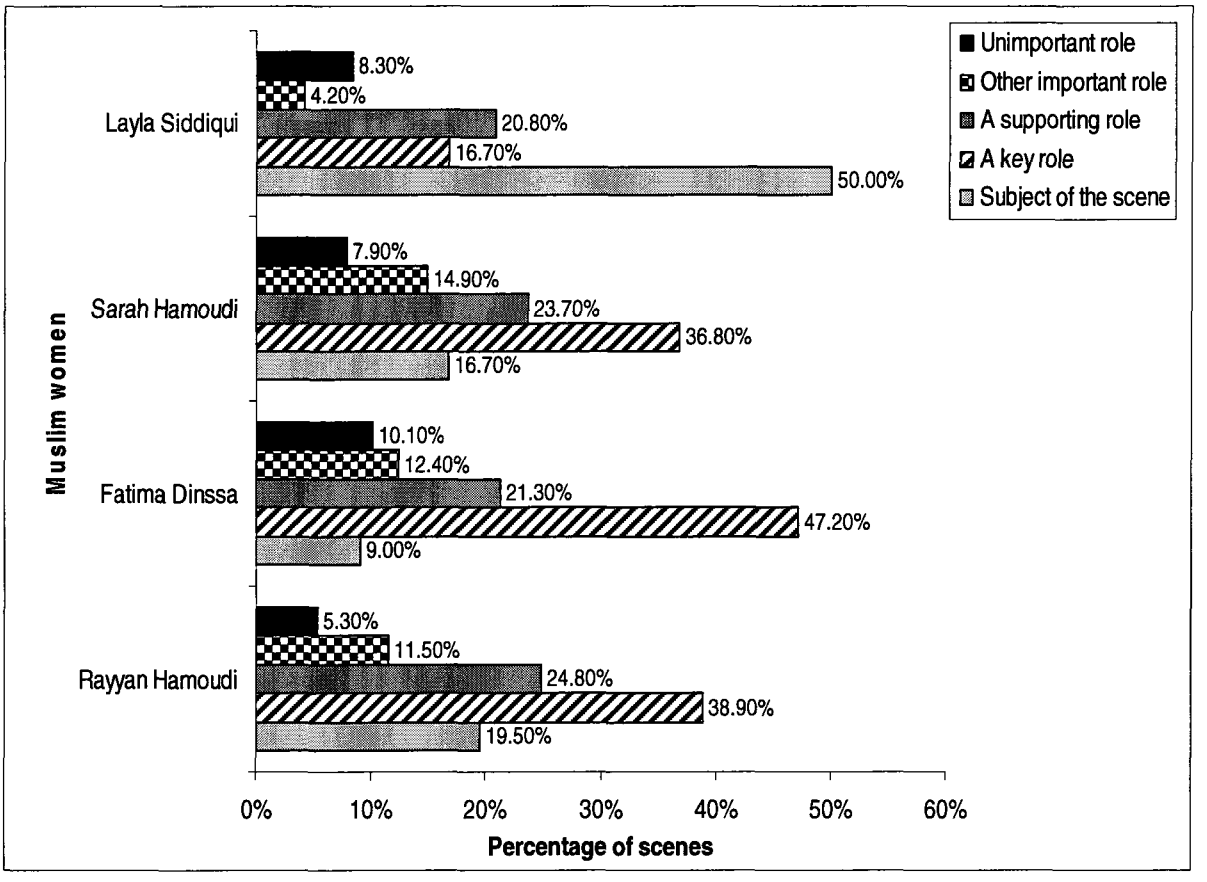
Figure 12 shows the scene lengths for each individual woman. According to these findings, only Rayyan's scenes were most often of medium length (50.9%). Layla, Sarah and Fatima appeared in mostly short scenes. Layla's scenes, in fact, were short in length 62.5% of the time. This indicates that each character was treated differently on screen depending on their role and their importance to the plot.

Figure 12: Length of scenes for each Muslim woman



Like the amount of time allocated to each character, the different roles played by each woman, also indicate her importance to the show. *Figure 13* lays out the percentage of scenes each woman appears in with respect to different roles. According to this chart, half of Layla's scenes showed her as the subject of the scene. In fact, when Layla did appear on screen, she was most often an important character for the scene. She also appeared alone in the scene most often. Sarah, Fatima and Rayyan were usually represented in key roles, with at least one other character on screen. It is important to note that each of the Muslim women played an important role in the scenes she appeared in. Scenes where the Muslim women were represented as the subject or in a key role were more common than scenes where they played other important (not directly supporting the plot of the scene) or unimportant roles. They were not reduced to the background, and had a dialogue in most of their scenes. This agrees with the findings of the Literature Review, and is further discussed in the Findings and Discussion.

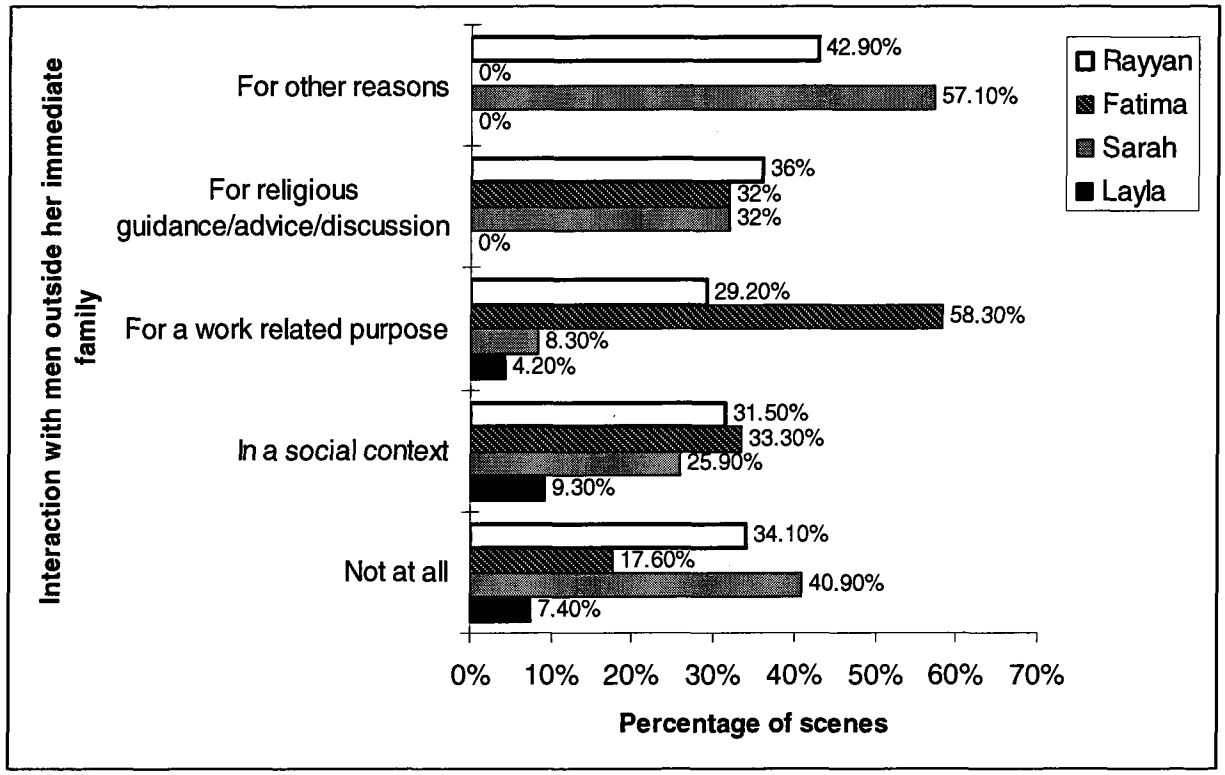
Figure 13: Roles played by Muslim women



These four Muslim women interacted with both men and women outside of their immediate family. *Figure 14* shows the reasons the women interacted with men other than their husband, brother, father and son. According to this chart, Sarah was most often represented in scenes where there was no interaction between Muslim women and men outside of their immediate family; 40.9% of these scenes featured Sarah. When the interaction took place in a social context, the scenes were more or less equally divided between Sarah, Rayyan and Fatima; though Fatima did top the list at 33.3% of the scenes. When the interaction took place for a work related purpose, Fatima, a restaurant owner and cook, was again at the top in 58.3% of the scenes. Scenes where interaction between Muslim women and men outside of their immediate family took place for religious

reasons were relatively uniformly divided between Sarah, Rayyan and Fatima. Sarah, as discussed in the next chapter, had other reasons to interact with men other than her husband, at 57.1% of the scenes categorized under "other reasons". Layla, whose character does not receive enough screen time to top any of these categories, most often interacted with men other than her father for social reasons; she appeared in 9.3% of the scenes where Muslim women interacted with men other than their family for social reasons.

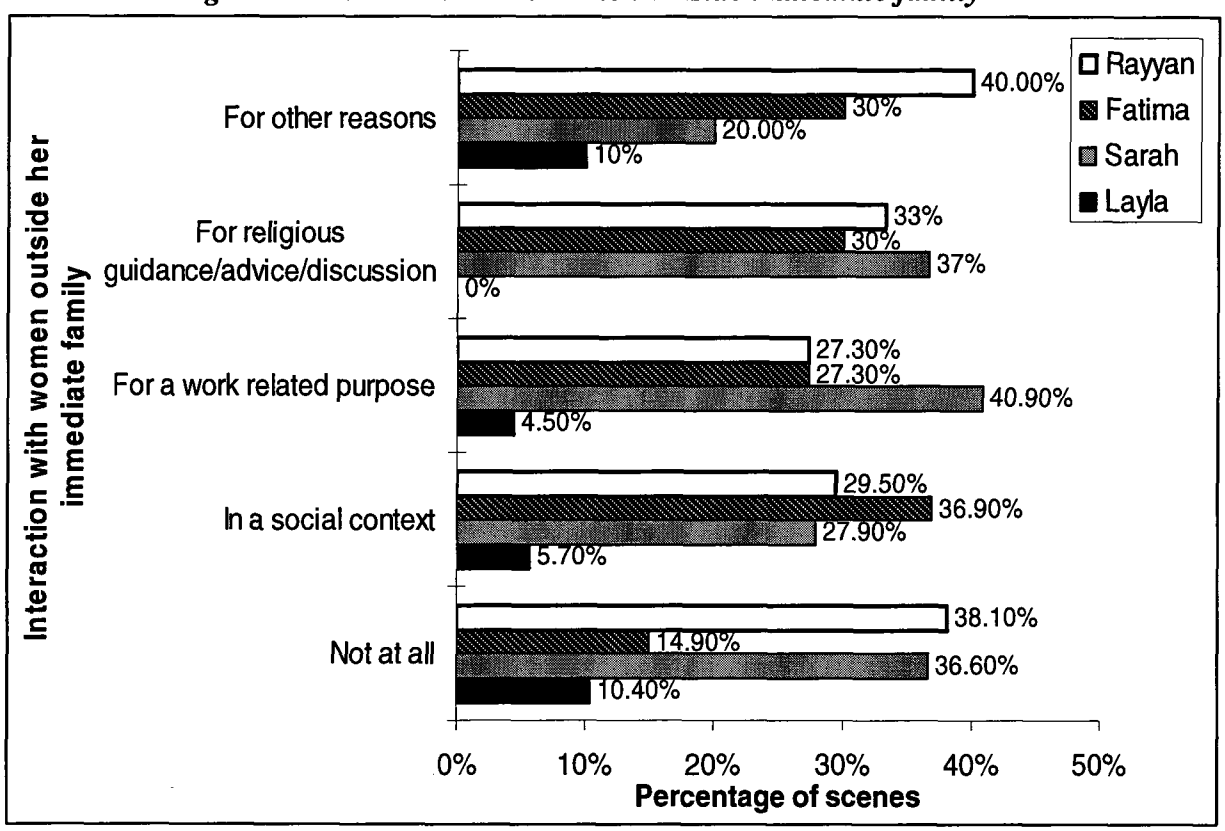
Figure 14: Interaction with men outside immediate family



The interaction between the Muslim women and other women outside of their immediate family is also significant. *Figure 15* indicates that in scenes when there was no interaction between Muslim women and other women outside of their family, Rayyan and Sarah were represented most often. In scenes where this interaction occurred for social reasons,

Fatima was present most often, at 36.9% of the scenes. Work related purposes caused Sarah, the mayor's assistant, to interact with women other than her daughter in 40.9% of the scenes. Like the interaction with men, interaction with women for religious reasons was more or less evenly divided between Sarah, Rayyan and Fatima. Rayyan, however, also interacted with women other than her mother for other reasons in 40% of the scenes. These findings, especially when compared to the findings of interaction with men, are significant, and are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

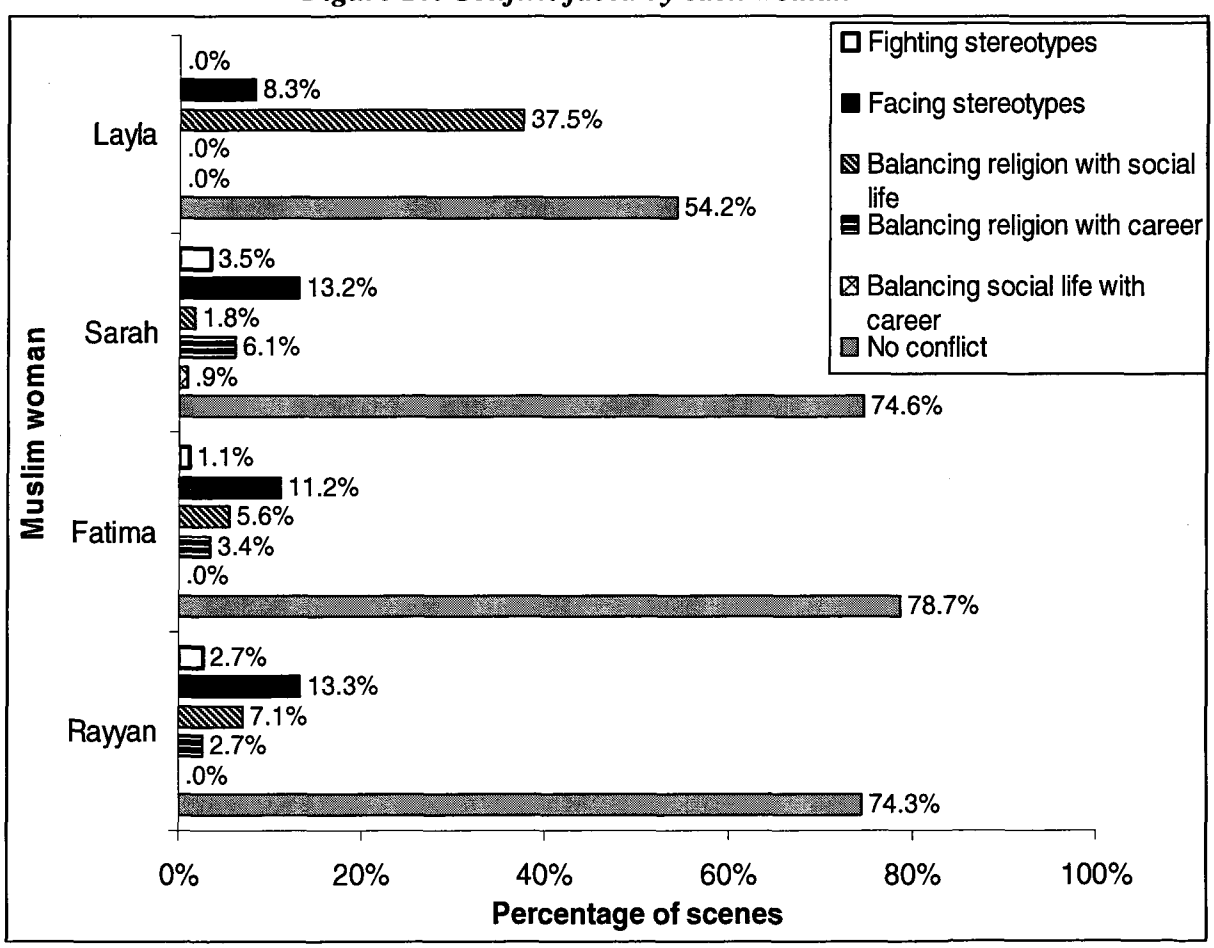
Figure 15: Interaction with women outside immediate family



The Muslim women in *LMOTP* experience different conflicts which result from their status in Canadian society. The Literature Review discusses this status in detail. As indicated in *Figure 16*, this thesis found that five main conflicts are faced by the Muslim

women in the first eight episodes of the show: fighting stereotypes, facing stereotypes, balancing religion with social life, balancing religion with career and balancing social life with career. That being said, it is important to note that most of the scenes representing Muslim women did not contain any conflict. Over 74% of scenes with Rayyan, Fatima and Sarah did not have any conflict, while 54.2% of Layla's scenes showed her to be conflict-free. When Layla did face a conflict, it was balancing religion with social life most often (37.5% of her scenes). Sarah's most common conflict showed her facing stereotypes in 13.2% of her scenes. This was also the case with Fatima in 11.2% of her scenes and Rayyan in 13.3% of her scenes.

Figure 16: Conflict faced by each woman

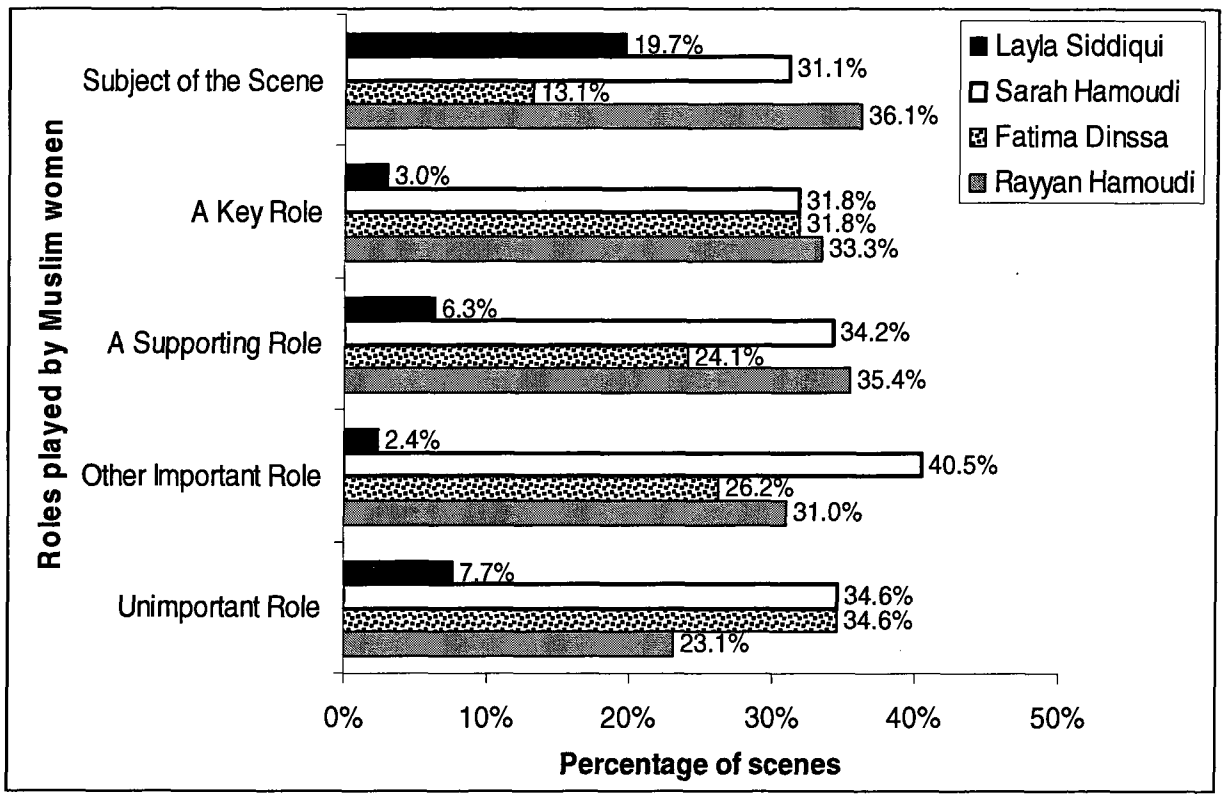


Other significant conflicts included balancing religion with career for Rayyan, Fatima and Sarah, and fighting stereotypes for Sarah and Rayyan.

Roles Played by the Muslim Women

As previously discussed, the roles played by each character indicate the importance of that character to the show. *Figure 17* provides a different perspective on *Figure 13*. According to this chart, Rayyan was most often the subject of the scene in the 47 scenes where a Muslim woman was the subject. Her 36.1% position was closely followed by Sarah, who was the subject of the scene in 31.1% of the scenes where a Muslim woman was the subject. Out of the 119 scenes analyzed, 73 scenes showed a Muslim woman in a key role. Out of these 73 scenes, Rayyan played the key role in 33.3% of the scenes, and Fatima and Sarah each played the key role in 31.8% of the scenes. Out of the 37 scenes where a Muslim woman played a supporting role, Rayyan was again represented the most in 35.4% of the scenes followed by Sarah in 34.2% of the scenes. Out of the total 119 scenes analyzed, 18 scenes showed a Muslim woman in an other important role, out of which 40.5% showed Sarah in that important role. Only 9 scenes out of 119 represented a Muslim woman in an unimportant role. These scenes mostly showed Sarah or Fatima, each in 34.6% of the 9 scenes. These numbers collectively indicate Rayyan's importance to the show. Her central position is discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 17: Roles played by Muslim women



Actions and dialogues of characters playing important roles resonate better with the audience, and are granted more importance than those of unimportant characters. Usage of Arabic words and references made to the Qur'an were tested for each role, and the results are displayed in *Figures 18* and *19*. According to *Figure 18*, Arabic words were not heavily used in any of the roles. When the Muslim women played a supporting role, the use of Arabic words was most common: 11.4% of the scenes showed Muslim women using Arabic words.

Similarly, *Figure 19* indicates that the Qur'an was not mentioned in most of the scenes. When the Muslim women played either a key role, or an unimportant role, they mentioned the Qur'an, or referred to parts of it, in 3.8% of the scenes. When they played a supporting role, they mentioned the Qur'an in 2.5% of the scenes. They did not make

any reference to the Qur'an when they were either the subject of the scene, or played an other important role.

Figure 18: Use of Arabic words over different roles

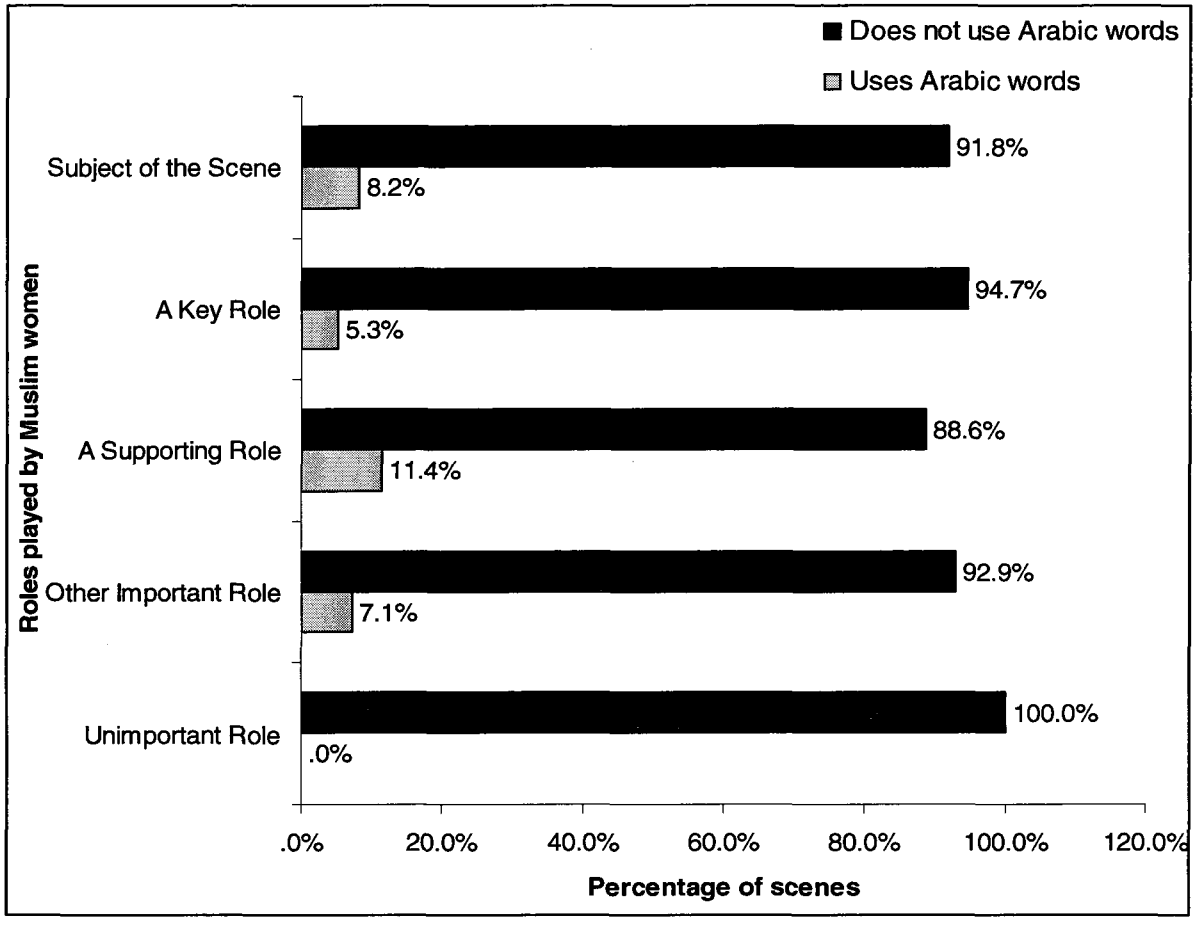
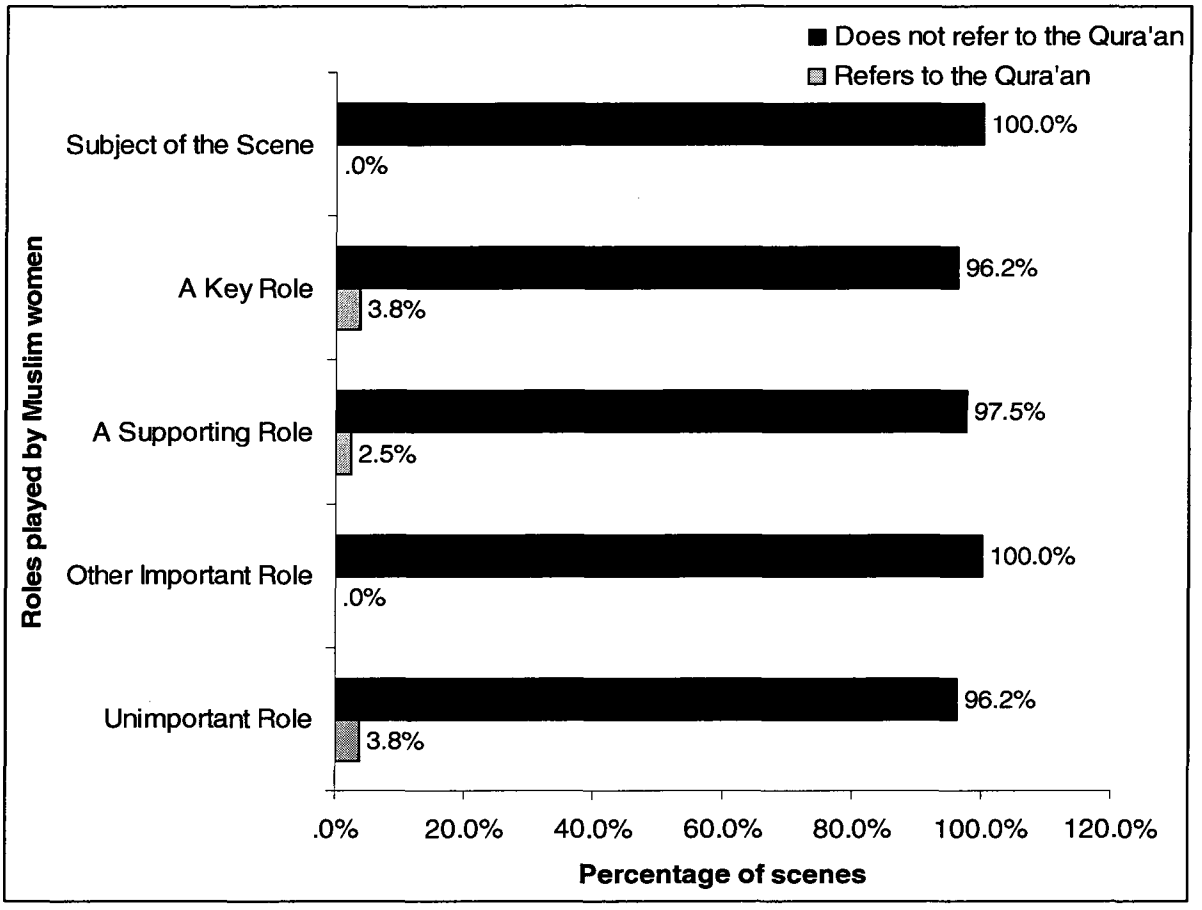


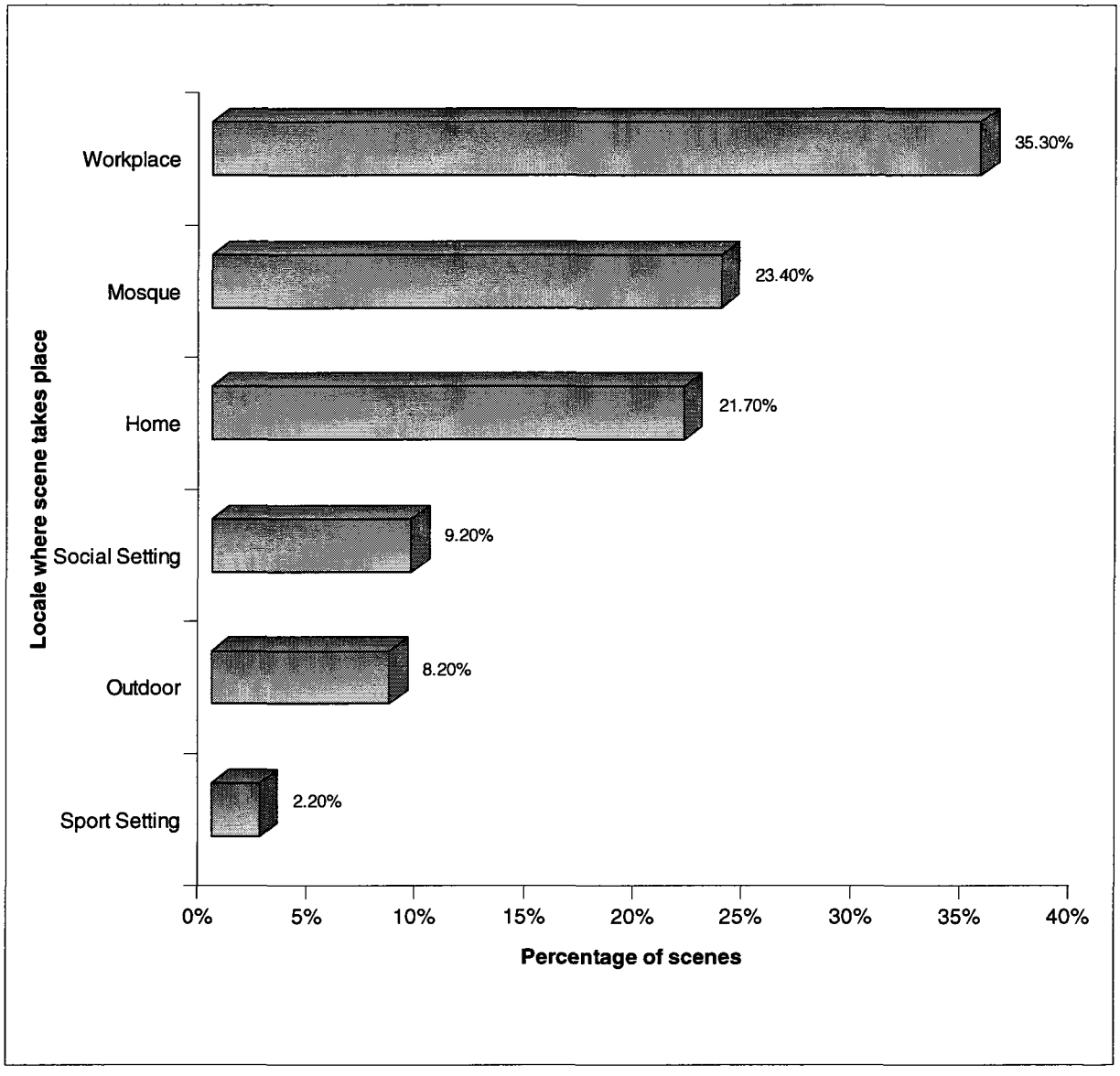
Figure 19: Reference to the Qur'an over different roles



Locale of the scene

Like the theme, the locale where the scene takes place is also an indicator of the themes which are important to the show. According to *Figure 20*, the workplace was the most common locale in scenes with Muslim women, totaling 35.3% of the total scenes. The second most common locale in 23.4% of the scenes showed the Muslim women at the mosque. This was followed by 21.7% of the scenes taking place at the home.

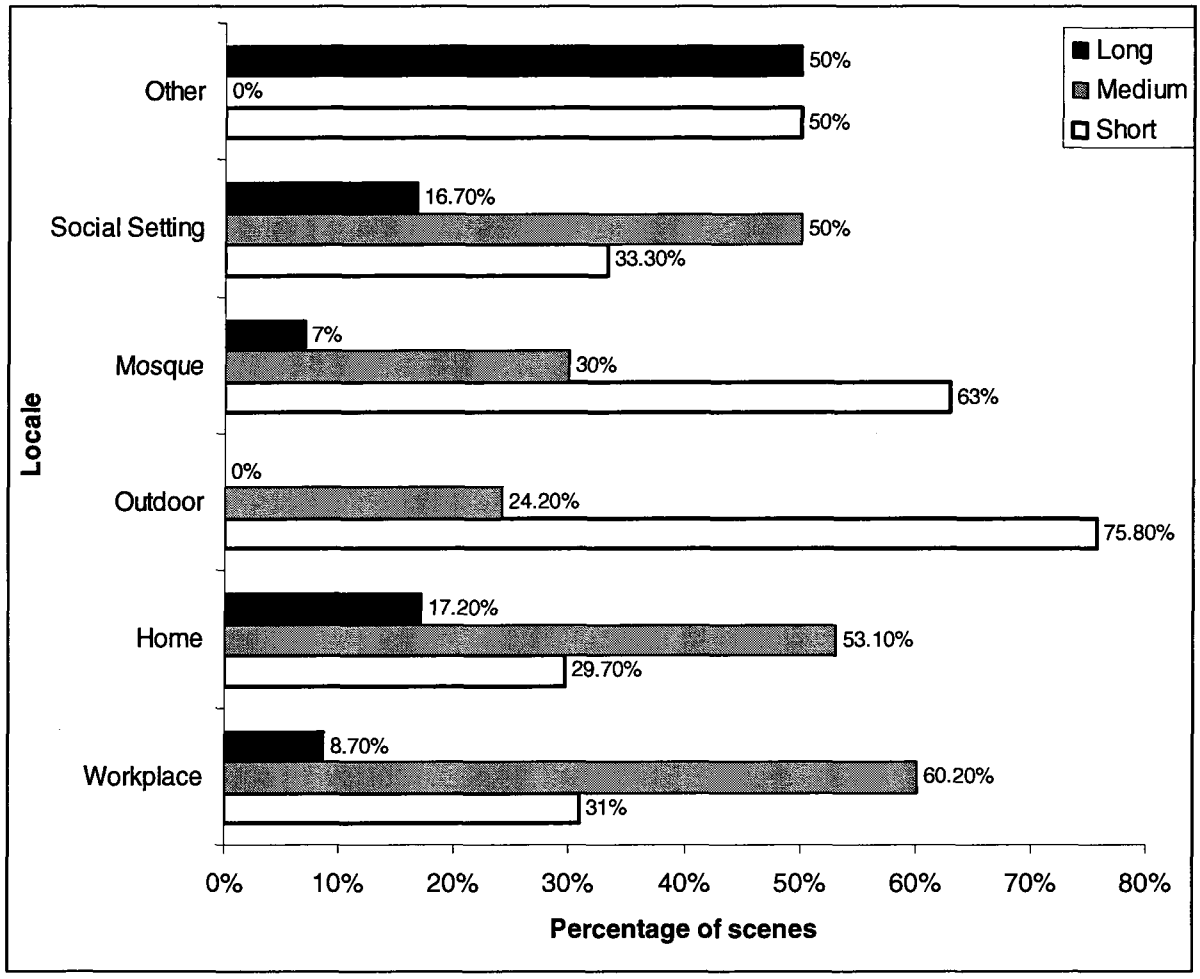
Figure 20: Scene distribution according to locale



The length of the scene at each location also indicates the importance granted to each locale. Longer scenes at a certain place indicate that place is central to the plot of that episode. As *Figure 21* indicates, scenes at the workplace and home were mostly of medium length. Scenes that took place at the mosque, or outdoors, were most often of short length. None of the locales had predominantly long scenes, though scenes at the pool in "Swimming Upstream" were divided equally between long scenes and short

scenes. Therefore, the pool is the only locale (categorized as other) where long scenes were common. These results, as all the others, are elaborated upon in the following discussion.

Figure 21: Length of scenes in different locales



Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

> Marlin: I notice your daughter doesn't wear the *hijab*.
> Baber: The wind was very strong today. It must have blown off.
> Layla: For the nine zillionth time, I'm not wearing it!
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 5*

In *LMOTP*, Muslim women have significant roles as part of the main cast, and are represented in all the episodes, regarding a variety of issues. In the first season of *LMOTP*, 63.5% of the scenes represented at least one of the four main Muslim women: Rayyan Hamoudi, Sarah Hamoudi, Fatima Dinssa and Layla Siddiqui. These four women, by extension, represent the various forms of Muslim women in Canada. The following section will give a brief qualitative description of each of the four characters as well as observations made about them during the analysis.

Qualitative Observations about the Four Muslim Women

Rayyan Hamoudi is one of the two primary female characters on the show; the other one being her mother, Sarah Hamoudi. Rayyan is a Muslim feminist doctor, whose feminist arguments steer the show in the direction of women's rights. She is outspoken, and often struggles with the balance between her religious practice and her social life. Over the course of the show, Rayyan falls in love with a childhood friend, and eventually marries him. Rayyan's character dresses in Islamic outfits and wears a strict *hijab* in public spaces. She also follows Islamic teachings more than her parents. Not only does Rayyan represent Muslim women in Canada, she is also a role model for female Muslim viewers

of the show. Fan weblogs like *Hijab Chique*[9] document Rayyan's clothes and *hijabs*, and post links on where to buy similar outfits. Sitara Hewitt, the Canadian actress who plays Rayyan, has appeared as a dancer in several Canadian productions. She is also the co-host of *You Bet Your Ass*. She has previously trained with the WWE, and participated in several sports shows[10]. Such roles have granted her a fan following, and attached a unique sex appeal to her roles. She is half Pakistani, half Welsh, allowing her to portray a diverse number of ethnicities, as well as attract a large audience who relates to her mixed origins. Rayyan, thus, is the representation of the young, multicultural, educated, feminist, second-generation Canadian Muslim woman in *LMOTP*.

Rayyan's mother, Sarah Hamoudi, is a convert to Islam, owing to her marriage to Yasir Hamoudi (who is Lebanese Muslim). Sarah is a liberal feminist, and an important character to the show. She handles Public Relations issues for the mayor, and thus, has a voice in issues relating to the town of Mercy. Her liberal attitude toward Islam, feminism, and even social issues places her in the middle of many conflicts in the show. This position grants her the power to balance both sides of the debate and present a middle solution. Her relationship with her husband, which at times is shown as overtly sexual, is given much attention. In fact, Sarah and Yasir's relationship is the only instance of sexual behavior on the show. Sarah's character represents Muslim women in Canada who struggle to balance Canadian life with Islam. Sheila McCarthy, the actress who plays Sarah, is the most well known actress in the cast. She has a long record of appearing in

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[9] The 2007 archive on http://hijabchique.blogspot.com/ is dedicated to Rayyan. The author felt that she was running out of material to blog about because Rayyan repeats clothes. Therefore, she has branched the blog into other areas in 2008.

[10] Roles plus photographs are listed on Sitara Hewitt's home page http://www.sitarahewitt.com/

Canadian and American projects[11], and draws audiences to *LMOTP*. Therefore, due to McCarthy's fame from other projects, and Sarah's central position on many issues in the show, Sarah's character is central to the show.

Fatima Dinssa is a Nigerian-Canadian woman who gains Canadian citizenship during the second season. Her character brings satire and sarcasm, as well as traditional Islamic beliefs to the show. She is a widow and a single mother, and owns Fatima's Café, the local hangout. As the quantitative analysis will show, many of Fatima's scenes take place at her restaurant, where she argues with customers in support of Islam. She also advises her Muslim friends, especially Babar, on different Islamic issues. Like Rayyan, Fatima is always in a strict *hijab* in public spaces. She represents entrepreneurial Muslim women in Canada who are independent, yet follow Islamic principals closely.

The last character analyzed in this study is that of Layla Siddiqui. She is a second-generation Pakistani-Canadian young woman in her teens. After her mother's death, Layla is raised by her father, an extremist Muslim named Babar who also struggles with balancing Islam and his Canadian lifestyle. Layla represents younger Muslim women who do not necessarily practice Islam to the extent of their parents. She does not want to wear the *hijab*, causing constant tension between herself and her father. She also wants to live a regular "Canadian" life with friends, study dates, sports and boyfriends. Although she wants to follow a "decadent lifestyle", in Babar's words, she also understands the value of her Islamic upbringing. Layla brings a conflicted image to the show, and indicates that practicing Islam in Canada is not always straightforward.

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[11] A full list of Sheila McCarthy's projects in different capacities can be found at her Internet Movie Database page at http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0565319/.

Overview of Representation of Muslim Women

As explained in Chapter 3, only scenes which represented these four women were analyzed in this thesis. In the first eight episodes, 119 scenes represented at least one Muslim woman out of the four. Longer scenes indicate the materials and characters in them are complex, and the exchange between characters is more substantial. Shorter scene lengths reflect simple exchanges between characters, as well as less substance and importance of the scene. Long scenes also indicate that the characters represented are central to the plot, and are capable of holding audience attention for long periods. Short scenes imply that the characters represented do not warrant deep engagement from the audience, nor are they able to maintain audience engagement for long. In the first season of *LMOTP*, 46.45% of the scenes with Muslim women were of medium length, as shown in *Figure 4* in the previous chapter. Long scenes with Muslim women were the least common, at 10.93% of the scenes analyzed. This indicates that in the scenes analyzed, the Muslim women could not hold audience attention for long, nor advance the story alone. However, this may not be entirely true. Representations of Muslim women have come a long way since the 1990s and are still in the process of evolving. The shorter scene lengths for Muslim women may simply be the remains of traditional representations of Muslim women, which were discussed in Chapter 2. The medium and short scene lengths also reflect the fleeting nature of shots and scenes in sitcoms, and do not necessarily discredit Muslim women as important characters.

The type of role played by Muslim women is also analyzed to see whether the women were important characters or relatively disposable characters. This analysis helps determine the kinds of priorities which shaped representations in this show. When the

Muslim women were represented on the show, they played a key role in 39.7% of the scenes. They were the subject of the scene 25.5% of the time, and played a supporting role in 20.1% of the scenes. They were unimportant screen characters in 4.9% of the scenes. These numbers indicate that the majority of the roles Muslim women played were important roles needed to advance the plot. As mentioned in the Analysis and Results, the Muslim women played important roles as the subject, key character or important character more often than they played other important roles or unimportant roles. Thus, contrary to stereotypical portrayals of women in the media which were discussed in Chapter 2, the Muslim women in *LMOTP* occupy important roles and take up as much screen time as the other characters.

On average 1.55 Muslim women were present in each of the scenes analyzed. 55.5% of the scenes analyzed had only one Muslim woman represented, and only one scene represented all four Muslim women at the same time. This scene is the last scene of the second episode, "The Barrier". It takes place in an outdoor setting, during a run to raise money for a community rink. Layla is shown to be at the forefront of the run, actively taking part in it. Fatima, while conversing with Babar, is praising Layla and her beauty. Sarah is shown to be kissing her husband after a fight they had. Rayyan, meanwhile, is humorously commenting on her parents' intimacy and indicating that she does not approve of their public display of affection. To sum up this scene, the four Muslim women represent a microcosm of this episode through their dialogues and actions, and by taking up important roles as the subject of the scene or key or supporting characters. They participate in Mercy events just as much as other citizens do, reinforcing the fact that the women in this show are not outsiders or Others in small town Canada.

In *Figure 5*, scene distribution over episodes provides a breakdown of each of the first eight episodes. Each episode deals with one overarching theme and its scenes deal with individual subthemes which may or may not coincide with the main episode theme. An episode containing more scenes with Muslim women implies that the episode theme is related to issues and themes of Muslim women. An episode containing lesser scenes with Muslim women means the themes of that episode do not relate to issues of Muslim women. Applying this framework to the first season of *LMOTP* reveals that the episodes titled "Swimming Upstream" and "Playing with Fire" both had the most scenes (17.65% each) with Muslim women; whereas "The Archdeacon Cometh" had the least scenes with Muslim women, at 8.4% of the 119 scenes analyzed.

"Swimming Upstream" shows Sarah reluctantly sacrificing a business trip so that the city can afford a female lifeguard for the community pool, allowing Muslim women to swim there. In the same episode, Fatima forbids a non-Muslim man to touch her and appears in an Islamic bathing suit. Meanwhile, Layla insists on dressing up for Halloween, which has been converted into an Islam-friendly occasion called Halaloween. "Playing with Fire" shows Rayyan dating a non-Muslim firefighter, Layla arguing with her father about Islamic school, and the town taking a deep interest in Rayyan's relationship with the firefighter. Both of these episodes deal with women's issues. On the other hand, "The Archdeacon Cometh" revolves around the mosque and church, and does not deal with women's issues. "Little Mosque" which contains 10.92% of the scenes analyzed, is the pilot episode. It introduces all the characters, and the dynamics of the town of Mercy. This episode places Fatima at her restaurant, Sarah at the mayor's side, and Rayyan in conversation with Amaar, the new *imam*. "The Barrier", which contains

15.13% of the scenes with Muslim women, is about the battle of the sexes. Layla wants to participate in a fundraising run, which her father is not supportive of. Her father, Babar, also wants to erect a barrier between the men and women at the mosque. This positions him in contradiction to Rayyan, whose feminist beliefs cause her to fight against the barrier, and against stereotyping of Muslim women. "The Open House" contains 10.92% of the 119 scenes analyzed. This episode is about bridging the gap between the Mercy church and the Mercy mosque, both of which are located in the same building. Fatima insists on catering for the event, while Rayyan and Babar insist on holding their own presentations. "The Convert", with 9.24% of the scenes analyzed, shows a radical convert to Islam who the Muslim community does not accept. "Mother In Law", which relates to women's issues, contains only 10.08% of the scenes analyzed. This episode shows Yasir's mother insisting that he take a second wife, against Sarah's wishes. In this same episode, Fatima has been asked to cater for a gay wedding, causing uproar in the Muslim community. Layla and Rayyan do not occupy important roles in this episode. This breakdown of episodes indicates that Muslim women play a prominent role in episodes about Islam and feminist issues, while church-mosque relationships and issues about business and politics do not dedicate a substantial amount of scenes to Muslim women. Even though women are present in all the themes tested for, some themes were more women-centric than others.

Theme of the Scene

The theme of the scene relates to several variables. The relationship between the theme of the scene and other factors like *hijab*, role of the Muslim woman, beauty, and sexuality

reveal how the image of the Muslim women was treated in the show. *Figure 6* shows what percentage of the scenes with Muslim women revolved around each theme. The theme of Islam (30.3% of the scenes analyzed) was the most common theme. The Islamic theme presented as the backdrop for many different contexts: as a religion to be learned, taught, and discussed; as a lifestyle practiced by Rayyan and Fatima and contested by Layla; as an oppressive force for Layla; and as a solution for Rayyan. Other common themes include women's issues at 19.3% of the 119 scenes, parental issues at 10.1%, food at 8.4% and dating and relationships also at 8.4% of the total 119 scenes analyzed. Each of the themes listed in *Figure 6* were tied to the Muslim women in the scene. This agrees with conclusions drawn from the review of literature that Muslim women are not heterogeneous beings, but multifaceted individuals, each with their own take on Islam. Since they are Muslim women, Islam and women's issues are both at the center of their representation. However, Islam and women's issues are not the only two themes they are involved in. They lead regular Canadian lifestyles: they work, participate in sports, engage in social activities, discuss food and health issues, and participate in activities relating to their immediate surroundings. In other words, the women in *LMOTP* live everyday Canadian lifestyles balanced with Islamic practices, much like Muslim women in Canada live off-screen. The themes represented on-screen represent lives and issues of Muslim women in Canadian society.

One area where the representation of Muslim women in *LMOTP* adheres to stereotypes faced by Muslim women in Canadian society is the relationship between the main theme and the *hijab*. The type of *hijab* taken by a Muslim woman is represented as an indicator of how religious she is, as discussed in the Literature Review. Even though a

woman's *hijab* and clothing do not necessarily reflect her religiousness, this show uses the *hijab* as a symbol of religiousness. Furthermore, this show tends to classify certain "conservative" themes as Islamic while other "liberal" themes are presented as more Canadian and less Islamic. In this respect, *LMOTP* reinforces the stereotype of Islam as an outside, Other religion in Canada. Conservative themes are reserved for Islamic representations while liberal themes are pushed outside of the Muslim community in this show, a process which confirms Orientalist stereotypes of Islam as a conservative religion.

Figure 7 in Chapter 4 shows that the presence or absence of the *hijab* in a particular scene is related to the types of themes the scene deals with. Themes which are not conservative, and can be controversial; themes like career, dating and relationships, feminist issues and issues with parents; are reserved for Muslim women not in *hijab*. On the other hand, themes which are conservative, and conform to Islamic principals; themes like Islam, food and home culture; are dealt with in scenes where the Muslim women are wearing complete *hijab*. Since Islam was a predominant theme in all the episodes, it received high exposure in all scenes, regardless of the level of *hijab*. This is especially obvious in scenes where the Muslim women were wearing loose *hijab*. These scenes were limited to Sarah Hamoudi's character when she was engaged in prayer. The only times Sarah wore a *hijab* were instances when her religious practice required the *hijab*. Islam was also a common theme in scenes where the Muslim women were wearing a complete *hijab*. When the women were not wearing *hijab*, the most common theme was women's issues, which is a more liberal theme than Islam. Also, the theme of parental issues received most attention in scenes where the Muslim women were not in *hijab*,

which agrees with the claim that themes that question Islamic ideals were avoided when the women were in *hijab*. Other themes which agree with Islamic principals like food and health were also discussed mostly in scenes when the Muslim women were in complete *hijab*. Career received more attention in scenes where the Muslim women were not in *hijab*. Lastly, the issues of dating and relationships, and Mercy society and culture were equally distributed over scenes where the Muslim women were in complete *hijab*, or not wearing the *hijab* at all. This last observation implies that personal relationship issues and issues relating to the immediate society are not limited to Islamic principals, and are common for women across all religions. This relationship between the theme and the level of *hijab* indicates that the Muslim women in *LMOTP* tend to appear in *hijab* in conservative situations which confirm their domestic or religious roles in society. On the other hand, when the women were involved in liberal themes like women's rights, career, and dating, they were not in *hijab*.

Furthermore, the above observation implies a relationship between the image of a religious Muslim woman and a conservative lifestyle which may not always hold true. The appearance of *hijab* in certain themes connotes that the Muslim woman who practices Islam by wearing the *hijab* does not defy traditional values and conservative lifestyles. Scenes when the *hijab* is not present imply that the liberal, unorthodox Muslim woman who does not wear the *hijab* engages in activities like her career, fighting for women's rights and dating. This implicit relationship, as the Literature Review states, comes out of decades of colonial stereotyping, and can not be corrected instantaneously.

The four Muslim women in question were not sexualized or objectified. This is visible in the fact that only 7.6% of the representations contained explicit comments

about their beauty, while 8.2% of the representations contained explicit comments about the women's sexuality. Most of these comments were made by Sarah's husband about Sarah or by Layla's father about Layla. Layla's father and Fatima discussed how she is growing into a beautiful young lady in 12.5% of Layla's scenes, while Sarah's husband made sexually explicit comments about his wife in 9.7% of Sarah's scenes. Thus, the few comments (whether good or bad) made about beauty or sexuality of Muslim women were made by family members, in accordance with Islamic principals.

Explicit comments made about the Muslim women's sexuality and beauty also relate to the themes in each scene. *Figure 8* shows that when explicit comments about the Muslim woman's beauty were made, those scenes usually dealt with Islam followed by women's issues as a theme. Other themes which related to comments about a Muslim woman's beauty were parental issues, ethnicity and dating and relationships. The fact that most of these scenes dealt with Islam as a theme confirms that comments about a woman's beauty in this show also conformed to Islamic guidelines. Similarly, in scenes containing explicit comments about a Muslim woman's sexuality, the most common themes were also themes appropriate in an Islamic context. *Figure 9* shows that 20% of the scenes where comments about a Muslim woman's sexuality were explicitly expressed dealt with children as a theme. This was followed by women's issues at 13.2% of the scenes, and dating and marital relationships at 12.5% of the scenes containing explicit comments about a Muslim woman's sexuality. Islamic guidelines require a Muslim woman to dress and act in a way that does not entice inappropriate behavior or comments from men other than her immediate family. The findings of this study confirm the qualitative observation that most of the comments made about a Muslim woman's

sexuality were made by Fatima and Baber about Layla entering puberty, which is also in accordance with Islamic guidelines. Other instances included Yasir making comments about his wife, and one instance of Rayyan's date making a comment about her. Although not always appropriate in an Islamic setting, most of these themes fall under Islamic guidelines and lifestyles. Just like the women in this show, other characters also maintain an Islamic lifestyle, especially when interacting with Muslim women.

Characteristics of the Four Muslim Women

The different Muslim women in this show were not represented equally. Sarah Hamoudi, who was present in 34.8% of the scenes analyzed, received the most exposure in terms of scenes. Rayyan Hamoudi, at 32.1%, was represented in the second highest number of scenes. Fatima Dinssa appeared in 23.9% of the scenes and Layla Siddiqui appeared in 9.2% of the scenes analyzed. Furthermore *Figure 11* shows that Sarah and Rayyan also received the most screen time out of the total 6690 seconds analyzed: 37% and 36% respectively. The higher number of scenes and screen time dedicated to Sarah and Rayyan indicates that the issues that Sarah and Rayyan deal with are important to the show. Also, these women reflect the widest number of Muslim women in Canada and are thus, featured in the most number of scenes for the audience to relate to. In order to attract mass appeal and large audiences, *LMOTP* covers a diverse selection of Islamic issues and portrays many different types of Muslims in Canada. The two main Muslim women, Sarah and Rayyan represent the "average" Muslim woman in Canada. Sarah's character, one of a moderate Muslim woman, is involved in her career, business, politics, marital relationships, home, and local societal issues. Rayyan's character, a devout liberal

Muslim woman, is involved in Islamic and feminist issues. Thus, importance is given to Muslim women involved in issues relating to their immediate society, business, their personal and marital relationships, feminism and Islam. Moreover, the struggles faced by these two women are represented as struggles faced by most Muslim women in Canada: conflicts faced by Sarah in balancing religion with social life and career, Rayyan's defense of feminist positions, and both Sarah and Rayyan's attempts to learn more about Islam. Other issues like conflicts relating to ethnic (home) cultures exemplified by Fatima and arguments with male parents experienced by Layla are secondary issues to the audience which is largely comprised of Muslims in Canada.

Each of the four women was treated differently in terms of length of representation. *Figure 12* indicates that 50.9% of Rayyan's scenes were of medium length, while Sarah, Fatima and Layla's scenes were mostly short in length. As discussed above, scene length is long for characters that are able to maintain audience interest and advance the plot at the same time. Short scenes are reflective of the audience's short attention spans, and the need to cut between scenes to advance the story. Shorter scenes with Sarah, Layla and Fatima indicate that they are more disposable characters, and that their representations are to the point. Rayyan's representations, however, are worthy of longer screen time.

Scene lengths can be compared to the roles played by each of the four Muslim women as shown earlier in *Figure 13*. According to the findings, Rayyan, Sarah and Fatima played mostly key roles. Meanwhile, Layla, when she did appear on screen, was mostly the subject of the scene. This does not logically follow from the screen times allocated to each woman. The following breakdown will help justify the representations

in terms of time and role: Rayyan appeared most often in key roles in long scenes. She is an important character in the show and an audience favorite. The plot of the episode is often linked to Rayyan, and thus she is either the subject or plays a key role in 58.4% of her scenes. Sarah also played a key role, though her scenes were distributed over varying lengths. Sarah, a convert to Islam, is the most secular character of the show, and also the most connected to other characters. She works for the mayor, is married to the local contractor, is the mother of the most important female character, and is friends with all the secondary characters. Thus, she is the microcosm of Canadian society interacting with Muslim culture. The length of her scenes depends on the situation, and her importance in the scenes stems from her multifaceted character which helps advance several different plots. Fatima played a key role in 47.2% of her scenes, but her scenes were mostly short in length. Fatima's character owns a restaurant, and Fatima is most often serving food and playing advisor to the other characters of the show. The act of advising or serving food puts her in the scene with at least one more character, resulting in her taking a key role. As for her short scenes, it has been previously pointed out that Fatima's issues are secondary issues, causing her representation to be shorter in length. Lastly, Layla was most often the subject of the scene, though her scenes were also mostly short in length. Layla appears very little in the show, but when she does appear, she is the subject of the scene. Most of the scenes with Layla show her father worrying about her Islamic education, her mixing with non-Muslim boys or her dislike of the *hijab.* This places her in the subject role, though the secondary nature of her issues and conflicts minimizes her scene length to short scenes. To sum up the above breakdown, the four Muslim women

play roles of varying importance depending on the nature of their issues, while the length of their scenes reflects their importance to the show.

The Muslim women tend to live a Canadian lifestyle while balancing it out with Islam. Their interaction with men outside of their family, for example, follows Islamic guidelines. Out of the 119 scenes examined, 50.5% of the scenes show the Muslim women not interacting with men outside of their family. Out of the remaining scenes, 9.2% interactions with men outside their immediate family were for work related purposes, 5.4% were for religious guidance/discussion/advice and 32.6% were for social reasons. This percentage for social reasons seems high. However, it is important to note that this show has a small cast, and in a small town like Mercy, social relationships and friendships are few but strong. This percentage confirms the qualitative observation that Fatimah and Babar are close friends who advise each other, just as Rayyan and Amaar advise and confide in each other.

Figure 14 shows the individual breakdown for each Muslim woman's interaction with men outside her immediate family. The Literature Review explains that Islam requires that Muslim women limit their interaction with men outside of their immediate family so as not to tempt the men. In modern Islamic societies, however, women do interact with men at work and in other situations. When doing so, they are advised to wear appropriately covered clothing and to not entice the men. The results of this study reveal that Rayyan, Sarah and Layla do not interact with men outside of their family in most of their scenes. Fatima does interact with men for social purposes or work related reasons. Due to the nature of her job, Fatima attracts customers of both genders to her restaurant, and as explained above, she often listens to their stories and offers advice.

Also, Fatima is the only Muslim woman out of the four who does not have a male family member in the main cast. She does have a son who makes an appearance in only one episode out of the eight. Thus, most of her interaction with men has to be with men outside of her family, or not at all. Rayyan, Sarah and Layla also interact with men outside of their family for social reasons. Almost half of Layla's interactions are for social purposes, causing much grief for her father. Rayyan and Sarah's interactions for social purposes are often with Babar or Amaar, who are also main characters of the show. These interactions, due to the small cast, can not be avoided, and encourage audiences to understand that Muslim women are not oppressed and are allowed to interact with men outside of their families.

In addition, the four Muslim women interact with other women at similar levels as well. Out of the 119 scenes analyzed, 29.9% showed the Muslim women interacting with other women in a social context; 14.7% interactions between women were for work related purposes, and 6.5% were for religious purposes. The individual breakdown for each Muslim woman also shows trends similar to their interaction with men outside of their immediate families, as displayed in *Figure 15*. Thus, *LMOTP* does not seem to differentiate between interactions with men and women since the trends over both genders are similar. Interactions between characters depend on the situation and the relationship between characters. These interactions are not predetermined by religious guidelines, challenging common misconceptions about Muslim women.

Similar to their interaction with men, Muslim women face conflicting forces in Western cultures, which pull them in different directions. The Literature Review gives a detailed outline of such conflicts, which include balancing work with religion, balancing

social life with religion, facing stereotypes, and fighting stereotypes. In *LMOTP*, the most common conflict for the Muslim women was facing stereotypes, which occurred in 12.5% of the scenes. This was followed by the conflict of balancing religion with social life at 9.8% of the scenes and balancing religion with career at 4.9% of the scenes. However, the majority of the scenes (69.6%) did not contain any conflict. The individual breakdown for conflict faced by each woman, as shown in *Figure 16*, is significant, because it reveals ongoing conflicts experienced by each character. This analysis extends beyond the eight episodes analyzed, and indicates what type of conflicts Muslim women face in different situations. Rayyan, for example, faces stereotypes in 13.3% of her scenes. Similarly the other women also face stereotypes in many of their scenes. As the Literature Review explains, Orientalist representations paired with Muslim women's position as foreigners in Canada result in stereotypes being biggest problem facing Muslim women. Rayyan also has problems balancing religion with her social life in 7.1% of her scenes, most of which are due to her interest in a Canadian non-Muslim man. She attempts to date him in "Playing with Fire", and faces difficulties reconciling Islam with her relationship. Such situations are common in Canadian society where different cultures and religions interact openly. Layla faces a similar conflict in 37.5% of her scenes. Her problem lies in the fact that her extremist father does not permit any social interaction or activities for Layla outside of the mosque. Layla's conflict reflects the conflict faced by many second-generation Canadian Muslims whose parents are not ready to give up their home culture. In 6.1% her scenes, Sarah is struggling to balance Islam with her career, specifically when she attempts to pray five times a day. She also has trouble coming to terms with the fact that in "Swimming Upstream", she has to sacrifice a work related trip

for a female bodyguard in Mercy to support Muslim women. Again, these conflicts are reflective of the conflicts Muslim women face in Canada.

Roles Played by Muslim Women

Figure 17 shows which characters appear most often in each role. According to this analysis, most of the important roles were played by Rayyan. She appeared as the subject of the scene in 36.1% of the scenes, followed by Sarah who played the subject in 31.1% of the scenes where a Muslim woman was the subject. Rayyan also played a key role in 33.3% of the scenes where a Muslim woman played a key role, which is more than Sarah or Fatima, both of whom played a key role in 31.8% of these scenes. Rayyan topped the supporting roles with 35.4% of the scenes where Muslim women played supporting roles, while Sarah followed in supporting roles in 34.2% of the scenes. Other important roles were most often played by Sarah, while unimportant roles were divided between Sarah and Fatima, each at 34.6% of the scenes. Even though most of Layla's scenes showed her as the subject of the scene, she sits at the bottom of each role in *Figure 17* due to her minimal screen time. Rayyan's character is highest in all the important roles due to the fact that she is one of the primary characters of the show. She is also the most popular character on *LMOTP*, with both male and female fans. Due to her popularity in the media before this show, Sitara Hewitt has attracted a large audience to *LMOTP*, explaining why her character occupies most of the important roles in the first season. Sarah, as explained above, also plays a significant amount of important roles. She encompasses average Canadian values, and moderate Islamic principals. Her character connects with the widest number of Muslim women in Canada because she faces a diverse selection of conflicts

and struggles. Therefore, her character is shown in important roles. Fatima brings satire and attracts an ethnically diverse audience to the show. Her dialogue and actions represent middle-aged Muslim women in Canada, giving her character relative importance as well. Thus, each woman brings a different representation to the show, translating into different reasons to portray important roles.

Even though *LMOTP* promotes Islamic values, the Muslim women in question do not constantly engage in Islamic activities. As the Literature Review discusses, Muslim women, and Muslims in general, are represented as being religious fanatics. The Muslim women in this show, however, only occasionally engage in religious discussion. Out of the 119 scenes examined, only 8.2% contained explicit use of Arabic words by Muslim women, and only 2.2% contained explicit references made about the Qur'an by Muslim women. The Arabic words used were mostly greetings (Assalam o'Alaikum), or nouns (Ramadan, *imam*). This indicates that these four Muslim women are not extreme Muslims, but regular women who work, and make occasional references to Islam. *Figure 18* reveals that the Muslim women use Arabic words most often in supporting roles, though they also use Arabic words in key roles and roles as the subject of the scene to a lesser extent. This reinforces the fact that the Muslim women in this show do not make extensive use of Arabic words. *Figure 19* shows that these women refer to the Qur'an most often in key roles, followed by supporting roles. This also indicates that characters in important positions refer to the Qur'an as an indicator of Islamic practice. However, it is important to note that in none of the scenes where they appeared as the subject of the scene did the Muslim women refer to the Qur'an. This can be explained by the fact that

the Qur'an was only mentioned in scenes with an Islamic theme, and the Muslim women were not always the subject of these scenes.

Locale of the Scene

The locale where Muslim women are represented in is another important aspect of their representation. The review of literature indicates that Muslim women are increasingly becoming active members in all aspects of Canadian society, especially the workforce. The findings of this study confirm this trend. Even though the Muslim women in *LMOTP* are shown at home and in the mosque, both traditional locales for Muslim women, they most often were represented at the workplace. The home and mosque were other common locales in scenes with Muslim women. Sport settings were the least common, totaling 2.2% of the 119 scenes analyzed. This shows that Muslim women were frequently shown working, at home or engaged in religious practice. These activities are regular Canadian activities and can not be limited to one religion or culture. Therefore, the Muslim women in *LMOTP* engage in Canadian activities while dedicating time to religious activities as well.

Regarding the workplace, it is important to note that the nature of the workplace varies; it includes one's own workplace, as well as the workplace of a spouse or friend. Therefore, the Muslim women may not always be shown to be working; they were simply positioned in an environment where work takes place. Individual cross tabulation reveals that Rayyan was most often represented in a workplace (30.1% of Rayyan's scenes), at home (23.9% of Rayyan's scenes), and at the mosque (31% of Rayyan's scenes). Rayyan's character, as previously mentioned, is a role model for Muslim women, and

these numbers reveal the roles that this show promotes to Muslim women in Canada. Fatima was also most often represented in a workplace (40.4% of Fatima's scenes) or the mosque (32.6% of Fatima's scenes), indicating that her short scenes, where she is often a mediator or advisor, position her in the context of her restaurant or the mosque. Sarah's most common representations were divided between a workplace (28.1% of Sarah's scenes), her home (26.3% of Sarah's scenes), and the mosque (28.9% of Sarah's scenes). Layla's scenes most often took place in her home (25% of Layla's scenes) or outdoors (37.5% of Layla's scenes), coinciding with her character's target age demographic. Layla is also the character most engaged in sports and recreational activities, again, matching her character's target audience. Each woman, thus, is represented in locales which match her role and target audience in the show.

Cross tabulation of locale with length of scene reveals slightly different patterns. Scenes at the workplace, home and social settings were mostly of medium length, while scenes at the mosque and outdoor settings were mostly short in length. Given that longer scenes contain longer dialogues between characters, deeper discussion and more substantial representations, *Figure 21* reveals that scenes at the workplace, home and social settings represented Muslim women engaged in problem solving and discussion more than scenes at the mosque or the outdoors. This is in agreement with findings from the Literature Review; the mosque is traditionally a male led domain where the women are followers as part of the congregation. Similarly, Muslim women, in public spaces like the outdoors, are advised to not draw attention to themselves. Therefore, the Muslim women in *LMOTP* play dominant roles in private spaces, and tend to take on relatively passive roles in public spaces where they do not have much voice.

Hijab Worn by Muslim Women

As indicated in the Literature Review, the *hijab* is closely linked to representations of Muslim women. Despite its many meanings, contexts, variations and styles, it is taken to be a symbol of Muslim women around the world. The characters in *LMOTP* portray some of the variations of the *hijab*. Fatima's character is not represented without a *hijab*, except in one episode when she is about to go for a swim. She wears a strict *hijab* with loose Islamic clothing in 70.8% of her scenes. Rayyan's character also wears Islamic clothing and a strict *hijab*, though her character does take off the *hijab* when she is either around women or her father. Also, whenever Rayyan is portrayed at home, she is usually not wearing the *hijab*. Rayyan is shown in strict *hijab* in 58.4% of her scenes, and in no *hijab* in 38.9% of the scenes. Sitara Hewitt, the actress who plays Rayyan Hamoudi in the show, is one of the few visible minority Canadian actresses who have appeared in mainstream Canadian shows. She is also known to portray sexually provocative roles, attracting audiences to Rayyan's conservative character in *LMOTP*. Therefore, to attract fans to the show and represent a variety of Muslim women, Rayyan's character appears without a *hijab* occasionally. Sarah only wears a loose fitting *hijab* (with some hair visible, and un-Islamic clothing) when engaging in prayer. She tends to take off her head cover as soon as the prayer ends. Layla's character is engaged in conflict with the *hijab* in the first season. In 75% of the scenes, she does not wear the *hijab*, and fights for her right to not wear it. Overall, the first season of *LMOTP* equally represents Muslim women both wearing and not wearing the *hijab*. 48.4% of the representations analyzed were in complete *hijab*, and 48.4% of the representations were not in *hijab*. The remaining 3.3% of representations were Sarah Hamoudi when she was wearing loose *hijab*. These

numbers match with the Literature Review in that Muslim women are not strictly limited to representations of the *hijab*, and can practice Islam in different ways.

Another aspect of representations of *hijab* is the locales where the *hijab* is taken. Islam requires that women take the *hijab* in public spaces where they may attract men. They do not have to wear the *hijab* inside the home, and whenever they are in the company of immediate family members or other women. In the first season of *LMOTP,* the *hijab* is taken in its complete form (with Islamic clothing and no hair visible) most often in the workplace (65.7% of workplace scenes show the Muslim women in complete *hijab*) as well as the mosque (61% of scenes in the mosque show the women in complete *hijab*). The *hijab* is not taken at all mostly in scenes inside the home (82.8% of scenes shot in the home show the women in no *hijab*) and outdoor settings (54.5% of outdoor scenes show the women in no *hijab*). This indicates that the Muslim women in the show only take the *hijab* during religious activities, like in a mosque, or at work settings where they will interact with men who should not see their hair according to Islamic principals. However, as explained in the Literature Review, Muslim women vary in their religious beliefs, just as they do in this show. Therefore, not all the characters take the complete *hijab* when at work, nor inside the mosque.

Cross tabulation also reveals that the Muslim women are in full *hijab* in over half of the scenes where they appear as key, supporting, important or unimportant characters. However, the Muslim women are not wearing *hijab* in 52.5% of the scenes where they appear as the subject of the scene. This indicates that the *hijab* is shown on characters of varying importance, but limited when the character is the subject of the scene. The *hijab*

is receiving increasing mainstream coverage, but has not yet reached the point where its representations are part of the popular culture.

The relationship between *hijab* and comments made about the Muslim women's beauty is not significant, since there is an even split between the Muslim women wearing complete *hijab* and not wearing *hijab* and comments made (or not made) about their beauty. This indicates that characters in the show are not influenced by the *hijab* when they comment about a woman's beauty. In terms of sexuality, however, the *hijab* does follow a specific trend. When comments about a woman's sexuality were explicitly made, the Muslim woman was not in *hijab* in 63% of the scenes. This implies that comments about a woman's sexuality, which may be considered inappropriate in a conservative Islamic culture, are reserved for women who are not in *hijab*. This confirms the discussion in Chapter 2 about how the *hijab* is a symbol of respect and protects the Muslim woman from inappropriate comments. That being said, the discourse of *hijab* is just one part of representations of Muslim women, and is only one issue out of many that representations of Muslim women have to account for.

The relationship of the *hijab* to utterances in Arabic or about the Qur'an indicates that the Muslim women are most often in complete *hijab* when using an Arabic word (58.3% of the scenes where Arabic was used) and mentioning the Qur'an (75% of the scenes where the Qur'an was mentioned), implying that women in complete *hijab* are more religious and capable of referring to Islamic teachings. A qualitative overview of the data reveals this to be true: Sarah and Layla are the two Muslim women who do not wear complete *hijab*. They are also the two Muslim women who struggle with Islamic teachings. On the other hand, Fatima and Rayyan are the two most learned women on

Islam and also the two who practice Islam the most. Despite the close relationship between the *hijab* and Islam, it is important to note that Muslim women in this show and in Canadian society in general are not defined by their use of the *hijab*. Other aspects of Canadian society also affect their practice of Islam.

The last variables tested in this study were oppression and conflict. The Literature Review outlines the many oppressive forces and conflicts that Muslim women experience. This thesis, however, shows that the Muslim women in *LMOTP* do not experience oppression or conflict to that extent. Out of the 119 scenes examined, 84.8% did not contain any oppressive forces. 5.4% of the scenes showed religious expectations acting as oppressive forces and 6.5% of the scenes showed a male parent exerting oppressive forces on the Muslim woman. This 6.5% is mostly made up of Babar attempting to enforce his ideologies on his daughter Layla, reinforced by the fact that 45.8% of Layla's scenes show her father exerting oppressive pressure on her. This case can not be generalized to Muslim society in Canada because Babar's character is a caricature of extremist Muslims, and does not reflect the ideologies of most Muslim male parents.

It can be concluded that this thesis analyzes representations of four Muslim women in *LMOTP* for many different variables. The findings indicate that Muslim women in this show represent Muslim women in Canadian society, and they act as examples of Muslim women in Canada. Unlike typical Western representations of Muslim women, these women are given screen time comparable to men, and their representations are not stereotyped. They take the *hijab* when necessary, and take it off when permitted. They are not oppressed, nor do they face any significant conflicts. The

only conflict they face is that of stereotypes, which, as discussed in the Literature Review, plagues most representations of Muslims in the West. These women lead regular Canadian lives. They work, own businesses, and have professional careers as doctors. They participate in community events, sports, and social events. They also interact with men and women of their society equally. Other characters treat them as they treat non-Muslim women. They are not seen as outsiders in Canadian society; they are accepted in regular positions and roles similar to those allocated to non-Muslim characters. Other characters make occasional comments about the beauty of Muslim women, and refrain from making inappropriate comments about their sexuality. The themes dealt with in this show apply to other representations of Muslim women as well. These themes include feminist issues, Islam, career, children, food, third parties and parental issues. Therefore, the Muslim women in *LMOTP* are a microcosm of Muslim women in Canadian society. They are not treated as Others, and are not represented in an Orientalist light. They live Canadian lifestyles while balancing Islamic principals. Following from the Literature Review, these four Muslim women are not part of a homogenous group of Muslim women, nor are they entirely Canadian. They have merged the two lifestyles and cultures together. The hybrid lifestyle they choose to live combines Islamic culture with Canadian culture, and adds characteristics that belong to neither. This culture is a Third Space, as defined by Homi Bhabha. Rayyan, Sarah, Fatima, Layla, and by extension all Muslim women in Canadian society, have formed Third Spaces in which they merge their cultures to form hybrid cultures which balance different cultural and religious forces, and provide a grounds for the women to contest stereotypes, expectations, and loss of identity. The women in this show are represented in defiance to Orientalist stereotypes of

Muslim women. They are not represented as outsiders, Others or foreigners. Instead, these four women are represented as Canadian society itself. Even though Canadians deny a dominant, default, Canadian culture, it does exist. And the four Muslim women in question follow this dominant Canadian culture by combining it with their Islamic culture and producing a Third Space of culture(s).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

> Amaar: The perfect Muslim solution: Nobody's happy!
> *Little Mosque on the Prairie, Season 1, Episode 2*

Executive Summary

This analysis of the representation of Muslim women in Canadian media begins with theory rooted in the writings of three scholars: Niklas Luhmann, Stuart Hall and John Millar. Luhmann (1987) warns that the unity of a society can not be represented from within society because the power structure is parliamentary or hierarchical. When applied to this thesis, Luhmann's theory helps explain why Muslim women appear as a unified and homogenous group to the Western eye even though they are internally diverse. One stereotypical Muslim woman, therefore, can not stand in for the entire gamut of Muslim women. Luhmann suggests that one way to represent the entire society as a whole is to rank the difference between the parts and represent those ranks. This implies that Muslim women can be represented to Western society by representing the differences between them, rather than homogenizing those differences. Similarly, Muslim women's demographic can be represented by highlighting the ways these women are different from mass Canadian culture; instead of asking them to assimilate into the culture, the media should celebrate their distinctive practices and unique culture.

John Millar (1793) linked social, political and economic factors to the status of women in society. He, too, promoted representation of the ranks in society. Historically, he claimed, finance, war, bravery and technology have been dominated by men while domestic matters and children have been handled by women. This dichotomy has granted

men positions of power. In recent times, however, as women have crossed into male domains, they have been treated as friends, equals, or partners. Women's status in Canadian society is linked to the economic and socio-political realms, as Millar states. Even though they have crossed into male dominated careers and positions, their representations still show remnants of the lower status they previously experienced. When applied to *LMOTP*, however, this observation takes a different trajectory. The important roles played by Sarah in both her workplace and her home, Rayyan in the mosque and in Mercy society, Fatima in her workplace, and Layla at her home are all products of Muslim women's higher status in society. Following Islamic guidelines, their representations, although not perfectly accurate, show them holding equal status to men. They get equal screen time and dialogues as the men, and are not, in any way, represented as inferiors.

The third branch of epistemology is inspired by Stuart Hall's writings about representation, identification and the Other, which help explain the stereotypical light that Muslim women have previously been represented in. These women are seen in binary opposition to the dominant Western woman. Thus, the Muslim woman is seen as that which the Western woman is not: oppressed, weak, passive, covered, sexual, exotic, dependent, uneducated, and a slave to the stereotypical Muslim terrorist. Such representations of Muslim women have been common in Western media prior to *LMOTP*. This show attempts to present the Muslim community as the default culture, with practices and norms similar to Canadian society. These measures ensure that Muslim women are not categorized as the Other, and that they belong to the town of Mercy as much as any other citizen.

The epistemology helps link theories for the framework used in this thesis. This framework combines Julia Kristeva's theories about foreigners amongst us (1991) with Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) and Homi Bhabha's Third Spaces (1994). Said suggests that in the West, Muslims are viewed as Orientalist stereotypes like terrorists, uneducated folk, uncivilized barbarians, oppressed women, and third-world individuals who are outside Western culture. Orientalism has affected representations of Muslim women in most Western media. *LMOTP* is one of the first instances where non-Orientalist images of Muslim women have been produced for mainstream media. This show represents Muslim women as strong, independent, active, educated members of society. These representations reflect the different types of Muslim women in Canada, and attempt to show the challenges faced by real women on a daily basis.

Julia Kristeva (1991) states that we need to recognize that we are all outsiders on some level. She explains that by highlighting the difference between us, we simply label some individuals as outsiders or foreigners. Instead, all members of society have to understand that each of us is unique and different from the others, and that we are all foreigners. This process is especially important in a multicultural Canadian society where differences form the bond that allows different cultures to coexist. By understanding how each member of society is different, Canadian society can accept Muslims who are as different as everybody else, and thus, consider them a part of society. *LMOTP* presents the differences between the multicultural Muslim community and the predominantly white non-Muslim community by recognizing differences between them. This show highlights the idiosyncratic practices of all groups and cultures, implying that members of these cultures are foreigners; therefore, nobody is a foreigner.

According to Homi Bhabha (1994), layers of transparencies and contexts are merged to form identities. All identities are complex and unique. The product of different contexts and histories are hybrid spaces of culture, identity, and existence. These spaces are Third Spaces where Muslim women can question and shape their identity, and produce a culture which is a unique combination of Islamic values and Canadian beliefs. The women in *LMOTP* have each created Third Spaces for themselves. In these hybrid spaces, they merge their beliefs, practices, desires, ambitions, histories, and cultures. Their identities are products of Third Space; similarly, this thesis argues, *LMOTP* is also a product of Third Space.

The methodology used in this thesis helps study the representation of Muslim women in *LMOTP*, and produce results which extend to the representation of Muslim women in Canadian media. Inductive reasoning in this thesis leads to a study that is both explanatory and exploratory in nature. A qualitative and quantitative content analysis is conducted on the first eight episodes of *LMOTP* comprising the first season. The content analysis focuses on the four Muslim women who are part of the main cast: Sarah, Rayyan, Fatima, and Layla. The results of the content analysis show that *LMOTP* is a new way of representing the Muslim woman in Western media.

Contrary to images of Muslim women in the 1990s, representations in *LMOTP* show women in roles that reflect their roles in Canadian society. The four women analyzed each hold an important position in the show, and can not be discounted as secondary characters. They receive equal screen time as the other characters, and most of their roles are long or medium in length. Depending on the situation and the scene, they are appropriately represented as the main characters of the scene. In fact, majority of their

roles show them as the subject of the scene, key characters, or supporting characters. The presence of the *hijab* is used as symbol of Islam in this show, and is discussed as a theme several times. Muslim women have been reduced to the symbol of the *hijab* in most media representations prior to this show. The Muslim women in *LMOTP*, however, use their identity, work, education and personality to define themselves instead of passively allowing just the *hijab* to represent them. Also, contrary to typical representations, Sarah, Rayyan and Fatima are not forced to wear the *hijab*; they wear the *hijab* according to their free will, for religious expression and modesty. Layla, however, is forced to wear the *hijab* by her father. She fights for her right to choose when to wear it, and only wears it when engaged in religious activities. These four women are not oppressed, and Islamic rules are not imposed on them to the extent shown in other media. Contrary to Western media, the Muslim women in *LMOTP* received satisfactory on screen treatment which is reflective of their position in society.

Similar to their counterparts in Canadian society, the four women in *LMOTP* follow Islam to different degrees. Rayyan, the most religious out of the four, is a strict *hijabi* while her mother, Sarah, is a Muslim convert and the least Islamic out of the group. Fatima and Layla fall in between. Together, these four women encompass the spectrum of Islamic followers in Canada from liberal to conservative. The mosque is one of the main locales where these Muslim women are positioned, the other ones being the workplace and the home. However, they act as followers in the mosque, as appropriate to mosque etiquette. In terms of education and work, these four women are represented as educated, outgoing, independent individuals, each with their own career. Sarah and Rayyan are employed by the city and are shown to be competent in their positions.

Fatima owns the main restaurant/café in Mercy, and her food is known to be the best in town. These roles show Muslim women in important positions in Canadian society, even though not all Muslim women in Canada have reached such levels yet.

LMOTP places Muslim women in certain themes which are relevant to Muslim women in Canadian society. Such themes include Islam, women's rights, food, children, relationship issues, and work. Although these are not the only themes affecting Muslim women in Canadian society, they have been deemed the most relevant by the producers of the show. Despite fair representation of themes related to Muslim women, this show indirectly places limits on certain themes as appropriate for Muslim women. This results in labeling and stereotyping of Muslim women into certain appropriate or inappropriate categories. Although this classification of themes is similar to other stereotypes Muslim women face, it is dwarfed in comparison to the fact that the four Muslim women in *LMOTP* exemplify Muslim women in Canada more accurately than other media. The conflicts they face, like balancing their social lives with religion and fighting stereotypes, as well as how deeply they practice Islam all portray the struggles of Muslim women in Canadian society.

Stereotyping has been a long time issue with representations of Muslims. The show itself does not stereotype the women other than the example mentioned above, nor does it portray them in an Orientalist light. Instead, the four Muslim women characters face stereotypes from other characters, and attempt to fight them. Male characters in the show, like Fred, Babar, Amaar and Yasir occasionally offend the Muslim women by stereotyping them. In response, the Muslim women fight the stereotype and always win the battle. By explicitly presenting and commenting on these stereotypes, *LMOTP*

critiques popular media stereotypes and draws the audience's attention to Orientalism and stereotyping which implicitly take place in Canadian society. Furthermore, the four women are not objectified, their sexuality or beauty is not a focal point, and they do not refrain from interacting with men around them. In fact, they interact with men and women in their surrounding environment equally, and for similar reasons which include religious discussion, work related issues and social reasons. Mercy is a small town, and the small cast of the show has to interact extensively with each other to advance the story. This has led to the women being represented as equal to the men in the show, and their opinions holding as much merit as those of the men. In many ways, these women have been represented in an ideal Islamic light, leading to a major limitation. Islam lays out guidelines about the position of women in society. As mentioned in the Literature Review, women are granted respect and rights equal to men. In practice, however, this is not always true. *LMOTP* portrays women in Mercy society as equal to men. They enjoy rights and respect, as laid out in Islamic guidelines. This portrayal promotes positive representations of Muslim women in the media, but it also homogenizes Muslim women into a collective mass. The real problems faced by Muslim women in Canadian society are mentioned at a very basic level for fear of reinforcing them. The resulting image, with positive portrayals while ignoring realistic problems, is an idealistic image of Muslim women in *LMOTP*.

The four women under analysis are represented as ideal Muslim women who do face struggles and conflicts in their daily lives, but successfully find solutions to these problems, thereby ensuring respected positions and status in Canadian society. They engage in different types of social activities, sports, work and household tasks. They are

well rounded individuals who have found a balance between Islam and their social lives, career, family life, and personalities. As stated previously, these Muslim women, like Muslim women in general, have created Third Spaces in Canadian society. In these Third Spaces, they fight stereotypes, merge different cultures, and live in a dynamic web of forces that guide their lives. The hybrid cultures in these Third Spaces, of which *LMOTP* is one example, do not belong to one nation or religion. These hybrid cultures are an amalgamation of different cultures, and therefore, a good fit for Canadian society which claims to accept all cultures equally. In these Third Spaces, the Muslim women of *LMOTP* deny Orientalist representations of themselves. They deny being treated as foreigners or outsiders on account of their religion. They participate in Canadian activities, especially the workforce, as any other member of the society would. This show, therefore, has provided Canadian society and its Muslim women with a positive example of post-Orientalist imagery and representations. Moreover, the characters in the show, specially the four main Muslim women, are represented in an idealistic light. These representations serve as positive role models for the Muslim community to emulate.

The Canadian mediascape has increasing instances where Canadian Muslim women have picked up activities, clothing styles, speech patterns, and recipes. After audience requests, the *LMOTP* homepage[12] now lists Fatima's recipes as shown in the show. Similarly, fan websites like Hijab Chique[13] discuss clothing and *hijab* styles worn by the characters on the show. *LMOTP* groups on Facebook and other social networking sites have a growing number of members who discuss each episode in detail. One discussion is dedicated entirely to popular quotes and jokes in the show, which are then

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[12] www.cbc.ca/littlemosque
[13] http://hijabchique.blogspot.com/

repeated by the members. To thoroughly discuss the phenomenon of emulating the characters of this show is beyond the scope of this study, though it is one possibility for future studies.

Rationale, Contribution to Knowledge, and Future Studies

LMOTP has drawn a large audience to CBC, and boasts some of CBC's highest viewership numbers. It is also airing around the world in different languages. This show is a media phenomenon that attempts to show Muslims in a realistic light. As feelings of Islamophobia grow in the Western world, shows like these also grow in importance to counter negative opinions of Muslims. *LMOTP* therefore, is a unique and important phenomenon and deserves close analysis. This thesis conducts both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the show, and concludes that the Muslim women in the show defeat stereotypes in the media while their positive representations serve as an example for future representations of Muslim women.

This thesis also opens the gates for potential quantitative research in the field of Canadian media and Islam. Given that Muslims make up a significant percentage of the Canadian demographic, Canadian media should reflect their demographic by representing Muslims more often. Further more, Canadian media studies usually analyze American media instead of Canadian content. This thesis is an example of conducting a study on Canadian programming content about Muslims. Therefore, it will help Canadians understand the shortcomings and stereotypes in Canadian media, and eventually help producers overcome them. Future studies on *LMOTP* can adapt the methodology used in this thesis and expand the sample size to include all the episodes. Future studies may also

benefit from conducting a comparative analysis on the treatment of Muslim women versus Muslim men in *LMOTP*. Lastly, this thesis encourages a quantitative analysis in an area which is rich with qualitative analyses and personal tales.

The rationale of this study lies in the fact that *LMOTP* is an innovative step in the direction towards fair representation of Muslim women in Canadian media. Representations of minorities have suffered from Orientalism and stereotyping for decades and Canada is at the forefront of correcting these representations. Given Canada's experience in dealing with a multicultural population, and its legislation directed towards multicultural programming to accurately reflect its population, CBC's *LMOTP* comes as a welcome change to the representation of Muslims in Canada.

Limitations

The first limitation of this thesis stems from the fact that this analysis examines only four representations of the Muslim women in Canada. Although these characters are well rounded, they do not represent the entire array of Muslim women in Canada. As the Literature Review states, Muslim women are not a homogenous group. *LMOTP*, however, attempts to gather all Muslim women and represent them as one of four Muslim women in this show.

The second limitation stems from the time constraint on this thesis. This thesis analyzes only the first eight episodes which comprise the first season of *LMOTP*. It is, however, continually airing new seasons, and the characters are evolving as the producers discover nuances and discrepancies in them. The four Muslim women in the first season

have developed into slightly different personalities by the third season. This thesis thus, homogenizes these women into their representations as they were in the first season.

The third limitation of this thesis relates to the men in *LMOTP*. This thesis only analyzes the women in the show, in reference to previous representations of Muslim women in Canadian media. It misses out on what can be an excellent area for further research: analyzing the women and the men in a study in reference to each other. The way the different characters are treated may reveal patterns that have been missed here. Muslim men have also been stereotyped in Orientalist light by the media, and this show has attempted to refute some of these stereotypes. Also, the Muslim community in *LMOTP* is portrayed different from Muslim communities in other media. By including the men in the study, one can analyze the representations of Muslim men, Muslim women and the Muslim community.

Zarqa Nawaz, the producer of *LMOTP*, is a Canadian Muslim woman who has based many of the episodes on her own life in a small town in Saskatchewan, Canada. The challenges and conflicts faced by the Muslim women in the show reflect challenges experienced by her and other Muslim women in Canadian society. The positive representation of Muslim women in *LMOTP* is helping to put an end to a tradition of Oriental, stereotyped images of Muslim women. While some may feel that the show does not reflect real challenges faced by Canadian Muslims, this thesis shows that the four Muslim women in *LMOTP* portray their real life counterparts, complete with their challenges and struggles, as closely as allowed by the satirical comedic script.

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