

**THE GEOGRAPHIES OF SECOND-GENERATION MUSLIM WOMEN: IDENTITY  
FORMATION AND EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC SPACE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project is interested in the ways that second-generation Muslim women experience public space, in particular with respect to how their identities and sense of belonging are shaped through everyday encounters in public. This implicates the reactions and behaviours of strangers who they meet in public, their own bodily comportment, and the ideas and values communicated by their parents and other co-ethnics about women's place in public space, as well as the ways that religiosity may enhance or hinder everyday belonging. Through the use of qualitative, one-on-one interviews, this research seeks to investigate daily experiences within Ottawa, Canada, particularly with respect to how such interactions inform a sense of (dis)comfort and belonging in public space in Canadian society. Moreover, this project is interested in the negotiation that many second-generation Muslim women undertake between family and ethno-religious community values and those of mainstream Canadian society in urban public spaces. In order to address these topics, the study examines Muslim women's everyday experiences in public – the ways in which visibility and generational status can influence daily encounters and (dis)comfort, as well as women's ability to actively negotiate their identity and belonging through engagement with strangers and acquaintances.

## **RESUMÉ**

Cette recherche examine comment les femmes musulmanes de deuxième génération fait l'expérience des espaces publics occidentaux, particulièrement les façons dont leurs identités et sentiments d'appartenance sont formés par les rencontres quotidiennes en public. Ceci inclus les réactions et comportements des étrangers que les femmes rencontrent en public, leurs propres comportements corporels et les idées et valeurs communiquées par leurs parents et autres membres de groupes ethniques par rapport à la place des femmes dans l'espace public, ainsi que les manières dont une religiosité peut améliorer ou gêner les sentiments d'appartenance quotidiens. À travers l'utilisation d'entrevues qualitatives, ce projet cherche à examiner les expériences quotidiennes dans la ville d'Ottawa en Canada, particulièrement en ce qui concerne comment de telles interactions renseignent sur les sentiments d'(in)confort et d'appartenance. En outre, ce projet s'intéresse à la négociation que les femmes musulmanes de deuxième génération entreprennent entre les valeurs de la famille et les communautés ethniques et religieuses, et celles de la société canadienne d'opinion majoritaire dans les espaces publics urbains. Afin d'aborder ces thèmes, ce projet fournira un examen des expériences quotidiennes publiques des femmes musulmanes – les manières dont la visibilité et le statut générationnel peuvent influencer les rencontres quotidiennes et l'(in)confort, mais aussi la capacité qu'ont les femmes de négocier activement leur identité et leur appartenance par l'engagement avec des étrangers et des connaissances.

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## **FOREWORD**

It is important to note that the second-generation Muslim women interviewed are all well-educated, articulate and very confident in their identities. Although this project is interested in their uncomfortable everyday experiences, this is by no means an indication that these women are only subject to unpleasant encounters. Rather, they experience public space in a number of positive ways and, overall, lead fulfilling everyday lives. Moreover, there are a number of points in this thesis where I refer to second-generation Muslim women as ‘different’. This adjective is sometimes used to describe individuals or groups who embody religious or racial markers in western public space – Canada included – and are often perpetuated through media, popular culture, and everyday experiences. These constructions, however, are far from accurate. Just as second-generation Muslim women are proud of their immigrant descent and religion, so too they are contentedly Canadian. These multiple sources of identity and belonging will be made evident throughout the thesis.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **VISIBILITY AND (DIS)COMFORT: SECOND-GENERATION MUSLIM WOMEN AND PUBLIC SPACE**

This project examines a number of different identities, including religious, ethnic, and gender, with the intent to investigate instances of discrimination and discomfort in public space, by examining experiences in the city of Ottawa (Canada's Capital).<sup>1</sup> In particular, how do such experiences influence the everyday lives of second-generation Muslim women, a group that faces a number of daily challenges in western public space? The intersection of ethno-religious values and secular mainstream society can complicate the identity formation processes for women, who often live their everyday lives in both spheres. Second-generation women, however, are cognizant of the obstacles, as well as of the opportunities available, in their country due to growing up in a western society and being exposed to its schools, social institutions, and popular culture. In combination with their traditional networks and knowledge, this awareness may additionally allow them to manoeuvre more effectively between the two 'worlds' than was the case for their parents. Moreover, visible signs of piety, in conjunction with their ethno-cultural background, make second-generation Muslim women pronounced in western public space and this has numerous implications for everyday encounters in public space.

#### ***Being Muslim and Second Generation***

Practicing Islam on a daily basis distinguishes Muslims in western public spaces from other social groups. Muslim religious identity stands out daily through a number of particular practices – material (prayer, diet, fasting, *wudu*), sartorial (dress, veiling, robes), and behavioural (Islamic greetings, modesty) – as Muslims are called to reaffirm their faith throughout the day.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that there are some ambiguous terms used in this thesis. These terms are defined in a glossary (Appendix One), as are some italicized terms that may be unfamiliar to readers.

Muslims conduct these practices daily in environments that are not necessarily conducive to Islam, in particular following significant events such as September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Sirin and Fine 2007). Most spaces are also normatively Christian, and the secular qualities of western society permeate public space.<sup>2</sup> Both factors have implications for the ways that (visible) Muslim women experience public space – in particular, visibly ‘religious’ (i.e., non-Christian) practices become more challenging in ‘secular’ environments (Bramadat 2005: 206-7; Purkayastha 2010: 37). Moreover, they navigate public spaces where Islam has been subject to increased scrutiny – Muslims have been subject to racial profiling, their mobility has been limited (Bhandar 2008), media coverage is often unsympathetic (Caidi and MacDonald 2008; Falah 2005; Muedini 2009; Yousif 2005: 53-4; Zine 2012), and restrictive legislation has been passed in several countries, for example, anti-terrorism laws and bans on covering one’s face (Yousif 2005: 52; Zine 2012). Consequently, those who appear visibly Muslim – such as veiled women – have been targets of slurs and hostility or have been made to feel uncomfortable in public spaces (Amin 2002; Dwyer 2008; Noble 2005; Whitten and Thompson 2005).

For Muslim women who also represent the second generation,<sup>3</sup> they may face additional difficulties as racial and linguistic difference may intersect with religion, and exacerbate challenges experienced in daily encounters. Additionally, displays of religiosity among this cohort – veiling in particular – are becoming more common (Ali 2005; Hoodfar 2003; Meshal 2003), as are characterizations of the second generation as young and ethno-racially diverse (Ajrouch 2004; Bayoumi 2010; Das Gupta 1997; Eid 2003; Eid 2007; Espiritu 2001; Portes and

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<sup>2</sup> Christianity has become increasingly conflated with secularism. Some distinctly Christian practices (for example, the public celebration of Christmas and daily schedules of citizens) are perceived to be ‘non-religious’ and consequently normal to practice in (secular) western spaces (Bramadat 2005: 206-7; Purkayastha 2010: 37).

<sup>3</sup> The second-generation refers to the first generation born to immigrant parents (the 1<sup>st</sup> generation) in the country of settlement, as well as children who immigrated at a young age (i.e., before adolescence) (Das Gupta 1997: 574; Gans 1992; Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2005: 987; Zhou 1997a: 65).

Zhou 1993; Purkayastha 2010; Rajiva 2005; Williams and Vashi 2007). Each factor may intersect and influence the quality of experiences in everyday public space for second-generation Muslim women. In addition, this group faces challenges managing the expectations of their parents, as they navigate tensions around gender norms between their ethno-religious community (Khan 2000; Moghissi, Rahnama, and Goodman 2009; Mohammad 2005) and western society more generally.

The Muslim second-generation is certainly placed in a unique position in western contexts to deal with these challenges. Even as they embody discrete markers – for example, of religion, race, and gender – this group also has a number of opportunities at their disposal. These women and men are well-educated and multi-lingual – and have the capacity to move with comparative ease between multiple communities, such as their religious, ethnic, or peer groups. In many ways, they facilitate linkages between their parents’ country of origin and the country of settlement. Additionally, they navigate multiple contexts on a daily basis as they move through public space, yet continue to challenge misconceptions and demonstrate their belonging in western society. This group is also proudly Muslim, and through public displays of devotion, these women have the ability to emphasize the place of Muslim groups in western public spaces through unconscious – although sometimes purposeful – religious performances.

### *Navigating and Negotiating (Dis)Comfort in Public Space*<sup>4</sup>

This research project focuses on uncomfortable experiences in public space, as they have a significant influence on the degree to which individuals feel attachment and belonging to, and ability to participate in, Canadian society (Noble 2005). Noble (2002) describes comfort as “a

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<sup>4</sup> Using the word (dis)comfort refers to both comfort and discomfort simultaneously, without prioritizing one term over the other. This stylistic tool is also used at other points in the thesis, for example (non)veiled and (un)comfortable.

general sense of familiarity with space” (56) and this ‘familiarity’ can be impacted by experiences in which individuals are made to feel different and uncomfortable, for instance through rude stares, stereotyping, and body language (Velayutham 2009; Wise 2010). In order to examine the effect of such experiences on minority individuals, I have selected a group that, through a greater visibility in public – due in part to ethnic and religious identities – may regularly encounter more instances of discomfort if not discrimination than other citizens (Whitton and Thompson 2007).

Feelings of (dis)comfort are frequently experienced in public. As both an accessible site for protest (Cattell *et al.* 2008; Mitchell 1995: 115; Neal 2009; Staeheli, Mitchell and Nagel 2009: 634), and as a space regulated by dominant social groups (Mitchell 1995: 115; Neal 2009; Scraton and Watson 1998; Yeoh and Huang 1998: 585), public space is far from benign for second-generation Muslim women. In particular, for those who are visibly different, public space may be challenging – and potentially uncomfortable – to navigate. Even as daily public encounters may accentuate the uniqueness of various social groups, random interactions with strangers also give visible individuals opportunities for dialogue, to challenge stereotypes, and to confront strangers. Such unplanned encounters are not limited to parks and sidewalks – other semi-private sites (for example, coffee shops and workplaces) can also lead to unintentional exchanges and open up opportunities for dialogue.

### ***Research Objectives***

This research project examines how second-generation Muslim women’s identities and sense of belonging are shaped and influenced by experiences in public space, through a case study of Ottawa. This implicates the reactions and behaviours of strangers who they meet in

public, their own bodily comportment, and the ideas and values communicated by their parents and other co-ethnics about women's place in public space. The primary objective is to investigate the negotiation that many second-generation Muslim women undertake between family and ethno-religious community values and those of mainstream Canadian society in urban public spaces. The research is also focused on increased religiosity, particularly with respect to how identity and belonging are enhanced or hindered by veiling in public spaces. More broadly, the starting point is the question of how women negotiate identity and belonging on a daily basis in public space. How do these experiences in different kinds of public spaces influence a sense of belonging or discomfort? Moreover, what tactics do second-generation Muslim women develop to negotiate uncomfortable experiences? In short, the study investigates the facets of identity that these women assert in public spaces, how they perceive and experience various public spaces in terms of (dis)comfort and belonging, and how their family and community influence their experiences and viewpoints.

***Addressing the Objectives: Upbringing, (Dis)Comfort in Public Space, and Belonging***

The thesis is divided into six chapters: a literature review, discussion of methodology, three results chapters and a conclusion. The literature review – “Muslim Women: Contexts, Experiences, and Negotiations” – will place this project in a broader research context. In particular, it will address the various interpretations of public space, as well as the implications of public experiences for women who do veil, and for those who do not. This chapter will also address the many reasons that some Muslim women choose to veil, while others do not. Subsequently, discussion will turn to specific challenges faced by the second generation, particularly with respect to obstacles that influence their daily navigation of public space.

The methodology chapter – “Identifying (Dis)Comfort: Methods, Sampling, and Analysis” – will address the tools used to undertake this project. Discussion will begin with an examination of Ottawa’s Muslim and visible minority populations, using statistical data to highlight ‘Muslim’ areas of the city. Additionally, this chapter will present the qualitative methods used for data collection, as well as how the sample for this research project was constructed. Finally, the discussion will turn to how the interview data were coded and analyzed.

The fourth chapter – “Life in the City: What it Means to be a Second-Generation Woman” – discusses the participants’ everyday lives. This chapter will present the women’s current status – such as work, activities, and education – in addition to their experiences growing up. The goal of this chapter is to examine the influence that family – and expectations more generally – have on second-generation women’s everyday public experiences. Moreover, the narratives discussed in chapter four will provide context for the experiences discussed in the two subsequent chapters.

Chapter Five, entitled “Standing Out in the Crowd: Experiences in Ottawa’s Public Space”, presents participants’ everyday experiences in public. It will examine the nature of Ottawa’s public spaces for second-generation Muslim women, as well as the characteristics of particular spaces that may lead some women to feel (un)comfortable. Moreover, this chapter will address the quality of daily encounters for Muslim women – both tangible and subtle – and reflect on how these experiences influence women’s comfort as they move through public.

The sixth chapter – “Identity and Sense of Belonging: Negotiating What it Means to be Canadian” – discusses the implications of participants’ daily public experiences. In particular, the repercussions of daily public encounters on women’s sense of belonging as Canadians are addressed. Additionally, are such experiences contingent on generational status, or are they

linked to more indelible factors such as racial or religious markers? The chapter concludes by discussing the daily methods that second-generation Muslim women use to negotiate situations where they are made to feel different or distinctive. In particular, it will address the passive and active tactics used to (re)assert their Canadianness with strangers and acquaintances.

The final chapter, “Conclusions and Implications for Future Research”, will summarize the research project’s findings. Second-generation Muslim women experience and negotiate public space in a number of ways that have implications for both identity and belonging. While the project has shed light on the importance of encounters and visibility in public space, a number of opportunities for future research will be suggested.

## **CHAPTER TWO MUSLIM WOMEN: CONTEXTS, EXPERIENCES, AND NEGOTIATIONS**

Many Muslim women experience public space differently than other Canadian women and men, due to visible markers of religion and race. Specific symbols, such as the Islamic veil, may make moving through public space challenging, as they can mark Muslim women as ‘other’ and expose them to differential treatment from the rest of the population. Religious observance may also mark Muslim men as ‘others’ in Canadian society, but their experiences in public space are qualitatively different (Noble 2009a). In part this is a function of a long history in which women’s presence and visibility in public space has been problematized by institutions and men more generally (Wilson 1991). In addition, for younger Muslim women of the second-generation they must negotiate between two ‘worlds’ – that of their parents’ cultural values and those common to everyday life in Canada – which do not always align. They face these challenges in a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world, one which is more hostile toward Muslims in particular. In many ways, public space is where Muslim women learn about social norms and their own belonging in society. Yet experiences in public space are not passive encounters – Muslim women can also assert their identity and claim membership in society through movement in public. Although stigmatizing at times, signs of difference are also a means of contesting and challenging the nature of socio-cultural and political norms associated with public spaces.

This literature review will focus primarily on public space and second-generation Muslim women. The review will first address the social and political meanings associated with public space. While public spaces are often idealized as environments of collective ownership, everyday experiences can be quite different; in public space the possibility of suppression and expression

of identity and political claims exist side-by-side. Public space may teach individuals about their place and belonging in society, yet such spaces are also platforms for making claims and asserting identity. This review will subsequently address the significance of veiling as a religious and cultural practice among Muslim women. To this end, it is necessary to address literature on the Islamic veil and how it pertains to visibility and identity, as well as its significance to Muslim practitioners. This will be followed by a discussion of veiling practices and their contestation in western public spaces. Finally, this chapter will examine arguments around the second generation and their experiences in public space in terms of identity, sense of belonging, and social mobility. Each topic contributes to the central argument, that second-generation Muslim women's interactions with other individuals – both Muslim and non-Muslim – in public space are meaningful, even if encounters are superficial and fleeting. What happens in public space – particularly in social contexts in which demonstrating a Muslim identity has been politicized – has significant consequences for identity formation and a sense of belonging.

### ***Public Space and Citizenship***

Public space is defined by Zachary Neal (2009) as “areas that are open and accessible to all members of public in a society” (1). As collectively-owned spaces, they are available to all individuals within a society, providing everyday environments for ‘members’ to use as they see fit – in a myriad number of ways (Neal 2009). Likewise, public space provides opportunities to “understand our position in the social world” (Neal 2009: 1), in particular through interactions with strangers, acquaintances, and institutions. In theory, this categorization portrays the public as a welcoming locale for diverse individuals to learn about one another and engage in dialogue (Amin 2002), and sometimes to protest and resist (Mitchell 1995; Staeheli *et al.* 2009). While all

these opportunities are possible in public space, individuals are also subject to the expectations of dominant social groups that regulate what is – and is not - appropriate in public (Cresswell 1996). Using their social dominance, these powerful groups regulate the behaviour of individuals, who do not conform to social ideals, through a number of institutional and informal ways (Doan 2010; Essed 1991; Fahs 2011; Mitchell 1995; Noble 2005; Painter and Philo 1995: 115-117; Velayutham 2009). These instances of differentiation occur much more frequently for individuals who embody social difference, and have a number of implications for comfort, belonging (Noble 2005; Painter and Philo 1995: 112, 115), and identity (Ruddick 1996: 135).

Public space experiences also reflect larger social processes, in particular they reveal the ways that citizenship and belonging are reinforced or diminished everyday in public. As Painter and Philo (1995) discuss, many nations structure belonging and citizenship along particular ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, and class identities – signifiers that are used to determine who is a “true citizen” and who is not (113). Despite being born here and having all the legal rights of Canadian citizenship and residency, many Canadian individuals continue to be treated differently by dominant social groups. These everyday, social dimensions of citizenship – what scholars discuss as ‘informal citizenship’ – have a number of implications for minority social groups, particularly in terms of belonging and the degree to which they feel (accepted as) Canadian. Nevertheless, these processes are by no means passively accepted by those who are made to feel different. In fact, individuals can use encounters to challenge and negotiate with established norms.

Women’s experiences in western public spaces illustrate these different experiences of citizenship, as well as the fact that public space can be used to repress, articulate, and challenge identity categorizations. Historically women – along with numerous racial and religious

minority groups – were effectively restricted from western public spaces. Although Canadian women at the turn of the century were legally defined as citizens, they lacked many legal rights readily granted to (wealthy, white) men, such as the ability to own property, vote, and seek employment. These policies had the effect of relegating women to private places (Fenster 2005; Mitchell 2000; Painter and Philo 1995: 114; Whitton and Thompson 2007), consequently denying them a visible presence and opportunities to participate in public debates. As women became more visible in the public sphere – through consumption, employment and civic protests – women’s role in public life increased (Ryan 1997; Wilson 1991). Women now claim formal rights of citizenship and have made significant leaps forward, yet progress is still necessary in many informal aspects of citizenship, such as earning equal pay to their male counterparts (Fenster 2005: 245). Moreover, a number of spatial processes continue to affect women everyday, such as fear, beauty norms, and household obligations (Kern 2005; Mitchell 2000; Preston and Ustundag 2005; Spain 1992; Valentine 1991; Wekerle 1984).

### *Spatial Implications of the Veil*

The veil is inextricably associated with Muslims and has multiple meanings: modesty, respect of traditions, and an assertion of a religious identity (Hoodfar 2003: 10-11). The veil however predates Islam – it was used to indicate wealth and privilege when in public (Hoodfar 2003; Lewis 2007: 428), and has been used by other religions as well (for example, Christianity). The associated idea of modesty is also found in many cultures and religions (Lewis 2007: 428; Williamson and Khiabany 2010: 90). By contrast, in the west, the veil is often interpreted as a symbol of patriarchy (Bilge 2010: 14; McMichael 2002: 173) and submission (Atasoy 2006: 205; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 201; Shakeri 2000). Yet the rationales for veiling vary

significantly between cultures, countries and time periods, and this variation in itself reveals active processes of negotiation in which women reinterpret and challenge patriarchal and gendered practices both within and outside Islam (Gökariksel 2009; Hoodfar 2003: 23, 33; Siraj 2011: 716-9; Tarlo 2010).<sup>5</sup> Ultimately Islam and veiling are not static, but are subject to reinterpretation by Muslim women and men (Sirin and Fine 2008), as well as by non-Muslims.

The act of veiling is meant to imply modesty and decrease attention, yet in many western contexts it in fact does the opposite, by identifying women as Muslim and making them more pronounced in the public landscape (Franks 2010; Lewis 2007; Meshal 2003: 93; Moors 2009; Tarlo 2007; Tarlo 2010). By wearing the veil, Muslim women convey information to others in terms of their identity and values (Göle 2003: 816; Williams and Vashi 2007: 282). Several authors also discuss the veil as a 'racial' marker, as it points out an essential difference that cannot be ignored in western public spaces (Cooke 2007: 140).

Consequently, such a display of religious identity can adversely influence mobility in public spaces as the mainstream population uses it as a signifier for stereotyping, differential treatment, and discrimination (Afshar 2008; Dwyer 1999b; Falah 2005; Karlsson Minganti 2010: 117; McDonough 2003; Meshal 2003; Moors 2009; Preston and Ustundag 2005; Secor 2002; Siraj 2011: 716; Whitten and Thompson 2005). The veil may trigger reactions from strangers – such as avoidance, rude stares and, in extreme cases, physical assault from non-Muslims (Whitten and Thompson 2005) – while also preventing access to certain public spaces (Dwyer 2008: 142). As a visible symbol of Islam, the veil marks Muslim women, making their bodies a site of contestation in western societies for competing interpretations of Islam and femininity (Afshar 2008; Moors 2009; Zine 2012). This enhanced visibility in the west is also linked to

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Iran's laws around veiling have fluctuated significantly over the past century. Although banned during the Shah's reign, veiling is now enforced by the current Islamic regime. These are some of the challenges to which Iranian women continue to adapt (Hoodfar 1993: 9-13).

context and recent events that have contributed to making Muslim identity practices more visible and sometimes contentious in western public space.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that, although western contexts are predominantly non-Muslim, veiling is a fluid process and fluctuates in different city spaces – what Secor (2002) calls ‘regimes of veiling’ (Gökariksel 2012: 6; Secor 2002: 8; Siraj 2011). In some contexts – such as mosques or ethnic neighbourhoods – veiling may be the norm, while in other spaces a headscarf will mark someone as out of place. Thus, it is not the act of veiling itself that is contentious, but rather the transgression of accepted social norms – being different – indicating the importance of context, especially place, to how one is perceived (Gökariksel 2009; Lewis 2007: 427; Tarlo 2010: 134). For example, Gökariksel (2012) discusses the city of Istanbul where multiple forces – such as Islamists and secularists – shape the city’s public spaces. In some spaces, veiling is encouraged, while in others such practices are ‘maligned’. Movement between spaces means moving between being ‘in’ and ‘out of place’ for both veiled and non-veiled women in the city (Gökariksel 2012: 2). Spatial normativity, then, can vary significantly from one area to the next, just as veiling practices are dependent on context and the space one occupies (Siraj 2011).

### *(Non)Veiling Rationales*

Many of the rationales for veiling are contingent on experiences in public space, as for the most part veiling is a practice that is conducted outside of the home. Veiling can be a form of protest, a display of modesty or an assertion of a collective identity. In each case, it is far from a passive act. It indicates agency on the part of individuals, as they actively choose to be identified as Muslim in public. Even in cases where veiling is mandated, such as in Saudi Arabia

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<sup>6</sup> Some examples include the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, growing rates of veiling among the second generation (Ali 2005; Hoodfar 2003; Meshal 2003), and increased immigration from Africa, Asia and the Middle East to western countries (Ali 2005: 522)

(Lewis 2007: 427; Williamson and Khiabany 2010: 90), or discouraged (for example, in France) (Body-Gendrot 2007; Göle 2003: 809; Killian 2007), women find ways to overcome conformity by adapting veiling styles to suit individual needs (Göle 2003: 816-822; Tarlo 2010).

One of the primary reasons that Muslim women veil is that they believe it is prescribed by the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* to reflect both their Islamic identity (Hopkins 2010: 532; Siraj 2011: 719, 724; Williams and Vashi 2007) and their modesty (Ali 2005: 517-8; Hoodfar 1993: 6; Jouli 2009: 456; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 198; Read and Bartowski 2000; Siraj 2011: 717; 723).<sup>7</sup> The veil also facilitates *dawa* – the practice of informing non-Muslims about Islam (Karlsson Minganti 2010: 120; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 200) – and marks individuals as members of a collective Muslim community (Atasoy 2006: 206; Hoodfar 2003; Read and Bartowski 2000: 403-4; Tarlo 2007). Veiling then may facilitate interactions with fellow Muslims (Tarlo 2010), and such practices may be more important in a ‘non-Muslim environment’, where Islam is not prevalently expressed in public (Read and Bartowski 2000: 403; Siraj 2011: 719,724).<sup>8</sup> Consequently, these practices may facilitate the ability of Muslim women to challenge public assumptions about Islam (Al-Johar 2005; Karlsson Minganti 2010: 119-20; Jouli 2009: 465; Naber 2005: 481), allowing them opportunities to answer questions about their religion, and consequently educate non-Muslims about Islamic practices.

The *Qur'an* calls on both men and women to be modest in their clothing and behaviour (Lewis 2007: 428; Read and Bartowski 2000: 399-400; Siraj 2011: 717), yet there is a particular

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<sup>7</sup> The full Quranic passages addressing modesty have been included in the glossary under ‘Islamic Modesty’. Quranic passages indicate the need for women’s modesty (for example, by covering bosoms and ‘beauty’) in the presence of non-marriageable men (Hoodfar 1993: 6; Qur’an 24: 30-31; Siraj 2011: 717), as well as covering with ‘outer garments’ to avoid attention in public (Hoodfar 1993: 6; Qur’an 33:59; Siraj 2011: 717). Another passage mentions the Prophet’s wives speaking to men from behind a screen to facilitate modesty (Qur’an 33:53; Siraj 2011: 718), yet this verse is sometimes interpreted to also include other ‘believing women’ (Hoodfar 1993: 6; Siraj 2011: 718).

<sup>8</sup> Siraj is referring to Scotland as a ‘non-Muslim environment’, yet this term could also be applied to other western contexts.

onus on women's modesty practices. In part, the importance placed on modesty within Islam suggests that men – generally speaking – are unable to avoid sexual urges in public due to women's bodies and their behaviour. This sartorial arrangement protects women from sexual abuse, while also preventing improper thoughts in the minds of Muslim men (Read and Bartowski 2000; Siraj 2011: 717-8). Veiling in effect makes them less visually appealing to men, yet marks women as Muslim and emphasizes their religious identity in public.

Veiling is often also used as a visible public protest. Some Muslim women veil to challenge inequalities such as the treatment of Muslims post 9/11 (Afshar 2008; Ahmed 2011; Bilge 2010: 20), stereotyping (Bigelow 2008: 31; Body-Gendrot 2007: 291; Haddad 2007: 253; Hoodfar 2003: 26, 32), and western gender and beauty norms (Droogsmas 2007; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 199-200; Naber 2005: 487).<sup>9</sup> Veiling can also be used to convey agency and identity (Hoodfar 2003:28; Siraj 2011: 719), and to circumvent racial categories (Atasoy 2006: 205; Cooke 2007: 140; Karlsson Minganti 2010: 120). For example, Somali women may actively assert their Muslim identity by veiling in public, in order to distinguish themselves from other Black groups (Ajrouch and Kusow 2007; Bigelow 2008: 31; De Voe 2002: 238; Hopkins 2010: 531). Regardless of the motivation, veiling in public spaces can be a useful way to contest western normative values, and to assert one's identity in public.

Finally, veiling can be used to increase social mobility, access to educational opportunities, and mobility in spaces outside the community and family. It can also lead to an easing of parental controls (Body-Gendrot 2007: 291; Dwyer 1999b; Hoodfar 2003; Williams and Vashi 2007: 282). As veiling demonstrates one's respect for family, community and traditions (Body-Gendrot 2007: 291; Hoodfar 2003; Meshal 2003; Mohammad 2005), youth can

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<sup>9</sup> Women's behaviour in western public space is regulated by discourses that designate 'appropriate' gendered behaviour, for example that determine suitable dress, behaviour, grooming (Doan 2010; Fahs 2011; Fenster 2005; Toerien, Wilkinson, and Choi 2005), and body size (Siraj 2011: 726-7).

more easily ‘negotiate’ with parents for increased freedoms (Siraj 2022: 723). This allows for greater access to spaces outside the home (Siraj 2011: 723; Williams and Vashi 2007: 282-3), educational opportunities (Naber 2005), and marriage partner selection (Al-Johar 2005; Grewal 2009; Rozario 2011). As such, this veiling tactic is particularly useful for challenging a community’s established gender norms, which may otherwise limit women’s options and participation in public spaces (Naber 2005).

As such, veiling is very much a negotiated practice. There are many motivations for Muslim women to veil, as well as a significant overlap between rationales. Consequently, both veiling and modesty practices remain contested, particularly in public, where ‘less modest’ individuals – i.e., those who are non-veiled, have “hair visible” or “expose their necks” (Tarlo 2010: 65) – may be considered less Muslim than more conservatively-dressed women. In many ways, this creates a hierarchy of Muslimness where one’s public display of religious piety becomes an indication of religious devotion (Tarlo 2010: 122). As a result, literature on Muslim women frequently highlights veiled women (Fadil 2011: 85), yet there are a number of additional practices that demonstrate Islamic identity in public. Moreover, being Muslim also has implications for women who do not veil (both pious and secular) in western contexts. As non-veiled women are not immediately associated with an Islamic identity, they may feel the need to display their religiosity in other ways – such as through modest dress or prayer (Jouili 2009: 462) – and consequently may still be considered different in western city spaces (for example through racial markers).

### *Non-Veiling*

At times the research literature and popular media suggest that non-veiled women are

secular and not pious (Fadil 2011: 85-6). Read and Bartowski (2000), however, argue that many non-veiled women “champion religious commitment”, but their faith is “manifested through means that do not include the practice of veiling” (409). Those who choose not to veil do so for a number of reasons. Some believe that it is not Quranically prescribed (Killian 2007: 313; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 198-9; Read and Bartowski 2000: 400-1; Siraj 2011: 718) and that there are other ways to ‘be modest’, such as through clothing and behaviour (Jouili 2009: 462; Siraj 2011: 726-7). Others question the overwhelming focus on appearance and dress, while ignoring other central Islamic practices such as non-judgemental behaviour, praying, or fasting (Fadil 2011: 100; Killian 2007: 313; Siraj 2011: 726). Some interpret the veil as culturally-based (Read and Bartowski 2000: 401), submissive (Siraj 2011: 728) and that it “absolve[s] men of their responsibility to ‘lower their gaze’” (Siraj 2011: 726), while others fear the negative reactions of co-workers and the general public (Jouili 2009: 462). Finally, many believe it is a matter of personal choice and remain conflicted; some women have previously veiled (Read and Bartowski 2000: 410), while others will wear it later in life when they are ‘ready’ (Siraj 2011: 725-6; Sirin and Fine 2007: 158-9). As such, much as veiling is a negotiated practice, so too is non-veiling, as it varies significantly between individuals, context and life stage.

Research on Muslim women focuses heavily on the veil (Fadil 2011: 85). As such studies attempt to ‘normalize’ the headscarf, the unilateral focus on veiling accentuates being non-veiled as normal and ‘secular’, while constructing other forms of dress as deviant or other (Fadil 2011: 85-6). For example, Muslim women who veil, in particular, may be seen as transgressing femininity, or to be acting against what is ‘normal’, given the normative qualities of secularized womanhood in western societies (Fadil 2011: 85; Göle 2003). With this logic, non-veiling appears to conform “to prevailing European secular worldviews, whereas veiling

indicates a disruption” (Fadil 2011: 88). Such perspectives portray non-veiling as “neutral or passive” and reinforce the belief that non-veiling is “an effortless adaptation” to western norms (Fadil 2011: 89; see also Gökariksel 2009). Non-veiling, however, should not be thought of only as the natural state for women (Fadil 2011: 97), but rather as an act that can also be imbued with religious meaning (Fadil 2011: 100). Moreover, there are a number of ways that an individual can practice her Muslim identity apart from veiling – such as praying, alms, fasting, diet, behaviour. These practices, however, may be more easily accommodated in western public spaces than veiling. Consequently, for individuals who do not veil, there is more of an onus to prove one’s Muslim identity, which has a number of difficulties with respect to identity formation.

The challenges faced by those who do (not) veil can be intensified by other factors in western public spaces. Religious identity, for example, may intersect with other identity markers – such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class – to affect minority women’s mobility in public spaces (Cox, Jackson, Khatwa, and Kiwan 2009; Dwyer 2000; Fenster 2005; Ray and Rose 2000; Ruddick 1996; Valentine 2007) and to further mark them as out of place in public (Cox *et al.* 2009; Preston and Ustundag 2005: 218; Ruddick 1996; Valentine 2007). Furthermore, movement in public may necessitate a negotiation of gendered Islamic or cultural practices. For example, Muslim women may require gender-segregated facilities for activities such as exercise and sports (Green and Singleton 2005; Nakamura 2002; Whitten and Thompson 2005), and for some services (for example, beauty parlours and clothing stores) (Siraj 2011: 722). The intersection of these identities may lead to more frequent experiences of discomfort in public spaces than for other individuals. Moreover, these identities and the challenges involved in harmonizing them may be deepened for those in the second-generation who may be visibly

different in a number of ways (for example, veiled or visible minority), yet culturally quite similar to others in the population whose markers of identity are less apparent or visible.

### ***Bridging the Gap: The Second Generation***

The second generation has “identities rooted firmly in two worlds”, as this cohort strives to balance their traditional and religious identities with those of more individualistic western societies (Sirin and Fine 2008: 141). In attempting to meet expectations and be accepted, this group becomes a ‘bridge’ between their parents’ country of settlement and their parents’ country of origin (Beyer 2010: 2; Noble 2009b: 55). Although these two communities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they can promote distinctly different values, mores, and norms and negotiating between them can prove challenging (Zaal, Salah, and Fine 2007). These negotiations with expectations and identity are often played out in public space where routine and everyday interactions have an influence on sense of belonging, socio-economic status, and ultimately social mobility in immigrant-receiving societies.

Historically the second generation has been more successful in achieving upward social mobility than the parental generation, due to a better ability to access educational and employment opportunities and a stronger understanding of the ‘new’ country’s language and culture. However, the current second generation in North America is composed predominantly of visible minority youth (Portes and Zhou 1993; Rajiva 2005), many of whom have challenges in the educational system and/or entering the job market. Due to visible difference(s) evident in public encounters, they are frequently perceived to be ‘immigrants’, even when their families may have been established in the west for multiple generations (Rajiva 2005). Consequently, in the United States it is argued that some racialized minority youth may do worse socio-

economically than the parental generation and their peers overall (Portes and Zhou 1993) – in particular because racial difference can be a “barrier” to some occupations and to “social acceptance” (Portes, Fernandes-Kelly, and Haller 2005: 1006). If this is indeed happening, it would represent a significant reversal of almost universal expectations that the second generation makes significant socio-economic gains over its parents (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993). However, downward mobility is not the only possible outcome; there is evidence that through informal support networks, community and religious institutions, and kinship ties, some racialized youth are provided with a social capital base that enables them to succeed (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Portes *et al.* 2005: 1012-3; Portes and Zhou 1993).

Social capital can provide a great deal of protection and support for youth, but this safeguard seldom extends to a city’s streets, sidewalks, malls and parks. In conjunction with social capital, families frequently impose social controls that curtail youth mobility and their ability to partake in western culture (Zhou 1997a). These practices – while in part intended to preserve cultural traditions and values – are also tools used by parents to protect their children from experiences of discrimination and discomfort in public spaces (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Zhou 1997a). It is also believed that such practices facilitate children’s upward socio-economic mobility by limiting their exposure to undesirable opportunities or deviance, such as drugs, alcohol, gangs, premarital sex, or dating (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008).

### *The Second Generation: Being a Woman and Muslim*

Second-generation women and men both experience social controls on their movement and behaviour, but there are different practices used to “protect” men and women.<sup>10</sup> Women are

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<sup>10</sup> Such limitations are not isolated to immigrant communities (Espiritu 2001: 432), yet several authors discuss these practices in terms of immigrant groups (Ajrouch 2004; Das Gupta 1997; Espiritu 2001; Qin 2009; Rajiva 2006).

often seen to embody family honour and through child-rearing, they are believed to teach cultural values and traditions – the markers of community boundaries in public space. As a consequence, it can be argued that women are subject to more “rules” (such as, curfews and selection of friends) with regard to public behaviour than are men (Das Gupta 1997: 583; Espiritu 2001: 428-30; Purkayastha 2010: 35; Qin 2009). These restrictions can protect women in public spaces from experiences of discomfort and discrimination, for example by impeding their interactions with (potentially dangerous) others. Nevertheless, these parental practices can also mark second-generation women, by enforcing cultural dress, or prohibiting them from attending certain social events. Additional limitations for women may also arise from displays of non-traditional behaviour.<sup>11</sup> Although some non-traditional actions are in fact quite normal in western contexts, they may be perceived as threatening and policed by families and broader ethnic communities (Espiritu 2001: 431; Qin 2009: 47-8). The actions of parents subsequently impact the public conduct of second-generation women (Das Gupta 1997: 584; Rajiva 2006: 176-8) and may allow less flexibility for second-generation women to negotiate their identities in western society (Das Gupta 1997: 580).

Parents may try to ascribe ‘cultural’ values on their children, particularly their daughters (Das Gupta 1997; Espiritu 2001), yet through “creative interpretations, resistance, and subversion” young women can challenge their parents’ ‘traditional’ notions of cultural practices (Das Gupta 1997: 586). Second-generation women have the ability to adapt their behaviour according to the context (Qin 2009: 48-52, Zaal *et al.* 2007: 165), displaying fluid identities that are contingent on the spaces occupied. Young immigrant and second-generation women

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<sup>11</sup> In many ethnic communities, ‘non-traditional’ behaviour is conflated with ideas of ‘westernized’ or ‘bad’ behaviour. For example ‘bad’ practices – such as dating or staying out late (Ajrouch 2004: 380-2; Das Gupta 1997; Espiritu 2001: 432-3; Qin 2009: 47-8) – are often contrasted with ‘good’ behaviour (being obedient or adhering to traditional norms) (Espiritu 2001: 432-3; Qin 2009: 47-8).

challenge and negotiate parental controls and expectations, for example by rebelling through dating and lying to parents (Espiritu 2001: 438; Qin 2009: 50-2), or by marrying outside their ethnic group (Al-Johar 2005; Espiritu 2001: 434; Grewal 2009; Naber 2005: 484). Through acts of resistance and negotiation, a number of second-generation women find ways to harmonize their western and ethnic identities.

In the Muslim community, an additional tactic of rebellion may be used to circumvent parental control – displays of Islamic practices and knowledge (Al-Johar 2005; Dwyer 2000: 482; Grewal 2009; Naber 2005; Rozario 2011; Schmidt 2004: 37-8; Williams and Vashi 2007: 280, 284). Second-generation women in particular can use knowledge of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* – as well as displays of Muslim practices more generally – to challenge parental and community expectations. They can negotiate community expectations by highlighting particular passages in Islamic texts, for instances ones that accentuate the importance of marrying a good Muslim (i.e., a way to overcome pressure to marry within one's ethnic group) and of educational attainment for both genders (Dwyer 1999b: 482; Grewal 2009; Mohammad 2005; Naber 2005). An integral part of this tactic is the separation of 'culture' and 'religion' – using Quranic knowledge to highlight 'true' Islamic practices and distinguish them from culturally-bound practices (Al-Johar 2005; Grewal 2009; Karlsson Minganti 2010: 119; Macey 1999: 52; Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 203-4; Naber 2005: 485-8; Rozario 2011; Williams and Vashi 2007: 280, 284).

Muslim individuals in the West, many of them young and in the second generation are increasingly products of two cultures: one Islamic, and the other western and secular. This upbringing provides them with the tools necessary to facilitate movement between different spaces and groups (Göle 2003: 822), as both identities are key to the public performances of these individuals and influence how they interact with strangers and peers. For example, many

are better able to express themselves in English-speaking countries than their immigrant parents (Jouili 2009: 465), actively pursue education, and are outspoken about their rights (in both cultures). Many are also comfortable visibly performing a number of Muslim practices daily in public, are proud of their Islamic identity, and actively engage in dialogue and outreach with non-Muslims (Göle 2003: 822-3; Schmidt 2004: 40; Sirin and Fine 2007: 157).

### ***Negotiating Public Space: The Implications of Differential Markers and Generation***

Muslim women are at the forefront of the spatial challenges facing Islam, namely because of veiling practices. As one of the most visible facets of Islam – as well as a significant marker of difference in western society – veiled Muslim women are often criticized and homogenized by both the Muslim and general population for their modesty practices. This manner of thinking disregards the diversity of veiling styles and practices, and overlooks other ways of performing modesty in public. Moreover, it fails to account for the numerous other factors that influence experiences in public, such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and age. As the literature suggests, women choose to remain veiled or non-veiled for a number of reasons, but both choices imply individual agency and impact the ways that they experience, negotiate, and are perceived in public spaces.

For Muslim second-generation women, multiple identities may affect the ways that they navigate public spaces, and ultimately how they take advantage of opportunities in the places where they live. There are a number of factors that shape their interactions in and their perceptions of public spaces, from their families and communities, to their peers and western public mores. Second-generation Muslim women are influenced by many different power structures and groups – both in public and private – yet still manage to negotiate and adapt their

identities significantly within these constraints.

This project broadens existing literature in a number of ways, contributing in particular to research on the second generation and Muslim women. The project also builds on the available literature by discussing the experiences of non-veiled Muslim women, and by investigating the nuances and intricacies of Muslim religiosity more generally. Likewise, this research provides a multi-faceted look at the experiences of a diverse social group in public space, through an investigation of some of their experiences in Ottawa. It also provides a nuanced look at the possibilities of everyday public space by demonstrating both the challenges and the opportunities that second-generation Muslim women encounter everyday, as well as the daily tactics that women can utilize in particular places. Finally, this project provides rich empirical data, revealing the complex ways that various identities intersect, with a particular focus on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, and generation.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**IDENTIFYING (DIS)COMFORT: METHODS, SAMPLING, AND ANALYSIS**

Ottawa – in the National Capital Region of Canada – has long had a reputation as a city whose population is largely of white European descent.<sup>12</sup> Over recent decades of more varied immigration patterns, the city is becoming increasingly ethnically, racially and religiously diverse. Even as late as the 1960’s, immigrants to the city were overwhelmingly Euro-Caucasian (89.2 percent), and only 1.2 percent were from Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey (Statistics Canada 1967). Due to the influx of more varied immigrant groups in recent decades, the city’s visible minority population is growing steadily and changing Ottawa’s social landscapes. For example, between 2001 and 2006, 75 percent of incoming immigrants were visible minorities (See bold data in Table 3.1). The recent, and rather quick, diversification of immigration flows, and the ensuing ethnic, cultural and religious mix, can be challenging to harmonize. In particular, the city’s established Anglo-European population faces

**Table 3.1: Arab / West Asian Populations in Ottawa, before 1991 to 2006**

<b>OTTAWA (ONT. PART)</b>	<b>Total *</b>	<b>Non-immigrants</b>		<b>Foreign-Born Residents</b>		<b>Before 1991**</b>	<b>1991-2000</b>	<b>2001-2006</b>	
Total Population	835470	647525	77.5%	180040	21.6%	54.1%	29.4%	16.5%	<b>29740</b>
Total visible minority population	162405	53325	32.8%	103465	63.7%	40.4%	38%	21.6%	<b>22305</b>
Arab	24290	7645	31.5%	15690	64.6%	39.3%	38.5%	22.2%	3480
West Asian	6070	985	16.2%	4880	80.4%	28.2%	41.2%	30.5%	1490
<b>TOTAL Arab/West Asian Population</b>	<b>30360</b>	<b>8630</b>	<b>28.4%</b>	<b>20570</b>	<b>67.8%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>4970</b>
<i>Statistics Canada 2006a</i>	* ‘Total’ includes Non-Immigrants, Foreign-Born & Non-Permanent Residents ** Refers to which time period the foreign-born residents arrived in Canada								

<sup>12</sup> Throughout the thesis I will be referring to the City of Ottawa, as the research focus is on experiences within this particular location. My definition refers only to the Ontario side of the city and I will omit data for Ottawa-Gatineau (the metropolitan area) or Gatineau (QC), unless otherwise stated.

challenges interacting with this quickly-growing diversity, with experiences of misunderstandings and tension being a more common outcome.

The rapid influx of visible minorities is also diversifying the country’s religious landscape. In 2001 religious affiliation was queried in the Canadian census (these data are collected on a decennial basis), and the results indicate growing religious diversity. Muslim practitioners, in particular, have become more numerous; the majority arrived during the last two decades (Grim and Karim 2011: 146). Although Ottawa’s Muslims represented about five percent of the city’s population in 2001, the percentage grew significantly (140 percent) from the previous tally in 1991. The Muslim population also has one of the lowest median population ages (24.1), indicating that the city’s Muslim practitioners are comparatively younger than those of other religious groups.

**Table 3.2: Ottawa-Hull (Ontario Part) – Selected Religions (2001)**

Religion	2001	Rank by Population Size (Out of 34)	Percent Distribution (2001)	Percent Change (1991-2001)	Rank by Percent Change (Out of 35)	Median Age
Total Population	795,250	1	100.0%	14.1%	18	36.4
Roman Catholic	352,765	2	44.4%	7.5%	20	36.5
No Religion	118,260	3	14.9%	45.4	12	31.4
United Church	74,455	4	9.4%	-3.4%	24	42.3
Muslim	39,375	5	5.0%	140.0%	4	24.1
Jewish	11,170	10	1.4%	13.9%	19	42.4
<i>Statistics Canada 2001c</i>	NB All calculated data were provided by Statistics Canada.					

The Arab / West Asian population – a group strongly associated with Islam (Khan 2000: 15) – has also been growing in size. Due in part to immigration and higher fertility rates, this group’s population is expected to triple to 1.5 million in Canada by 2031 (Malenfant, Lebel, and Martel 2010: 24-5). Although Montréal’s Arab / West Asian population experienced the greatest

increase between 2001 and 2006 (from 17.3 to 19.2 percent), Ottawa’s population continues to be one of the largest. Nearly twenty percent (18.7 percent) of the visible minority population in Ottawa is of Arab or West Asian origin – one of the highest percentages out of Canada’s major Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (Statistics Canada 2006a). Ottawa’s Arab / West Asian immigrant population is also dominated by relatively recent arrivals – 63.3 percent have been in Canada for twenty years or less (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.3: Visible Minority Populations of Large Census Metropolitan Areas**

<b>Vis. Min. Pop. (2006)</b>	<b>Ottawa (ON)</b>	<b>Gatineau</b>	<b>Ott.-Gat.</b>	<b>Montréal</b>	<b>Toronto</b>	<b>Vancouver</b>
Total - Population	835470	281650	1117120	3588520	5072075	2097965
Total Visible Minority Pop.	162405	16890	179295	590380	2174065	875300
Visible Minority as % of Total Population	19.4%	6%	16.0%	16.5%	42.9%	41.7%
Visible Minority as % of Total Population (2001)	17.3%	4.3%	14.1%	13.6%	36.8%	36.9%
Total (Arab & West Asian)	30360	4325	34685	113400	128900	35585
Arab/West Asian as % of Total Visible Minority Population	18.7%	25.6%	19.4%	19.2%	5.9%	4.1%
Arab/West Asian as % of Visible Minority Pop. (2001)	18.5%	25.7%	19.0%	17.3%	5.6%	3.8%
<i>Statistics Canada 2001a &amp; 2006a</i>						

### ***Researching Ottawa’s Muslim Population***

This research examines the experiences of second-generation Muslim women in the city’s urban and culturally diverse public spaces – such as the Byward Market, Westboro, and the University of Ottawa campus – as well as in areas where the residential concentration of Muslims is high. I am interested in whether participants experience more (dis)comfort in certain spaces than in others. For example, Muslim community spaces may be perceived as less

threatening. As the city has no distinct Muslim neighbourhoods, I have identified areas of the city with high Muslim residential concentrations in order to contrast experiences in these spaces with those in other, more multi-ethnic areas.

In order to find the city's highest Muslim concentrations, I used census tract data – i.e., data aggregated at the neighbourhood level (Statistics Canada 2006d) – to identify areas where a large number of Muslims and Arab / West Asians live. As the most recent statistical data collected on religious affiliation (such as, Muslim or Protestant) dates from the 2001 census, it was necessary to enhance the analysis using the 2006 census. To do so, I included data on visible minority status, which refers to individuals by both geographic origin (West Asian, Arab) and by racial identity (Black).<sup>13</sup> The visible minority data allow me to identify Arabs and West Asians, two groups that are commonly associated with Islam. Locating areas with high concentrations of these two ethno-racial groups allows me to cross-reference with the 2001 data on religious affiliation, thereby providing a good proxy overview of where the city's Muslim populations live.<sup>14</sup>

The selection of Muslim spaces was necessary for the project, in terms of addressing how Muslim women feel when surrounded by other Muslims or by the general population, and their levels of (dis)comfort and belonging in these spaces. There is no way to concretely say that the following areas are 'Muslim' – particularly since the definition of what constitutes a 'Muslim' space differs between individuals. Additionally, by no means are these the only areas of the city with Muslim practitioners. However, the following three spaces do contain substantial Muslim

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<sup>13</sup> 'Visible minority' is defined as those who are "non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour," but excludes Aboriginals (Statistics Canada 2011).

<sup>14</sup> In order to cross-reference my data, I selected Arab and West Asian groups as indicative of a Muslim population, yet this group includes practitioners of other faiths (such as Christianity and Judaism). Moreover, this methodology excludes other ethnic minorities associated with Islam, such as the Somali community. Most Somalis would fall into the 'Black' visible minority category, which is too broad a category to be useful in identifying Muslim residential concentrations.

populations, particularly when contrasted with other Ottawa census tracts (See Figures 3.1 and 3.2, as well as Table 3.4 for more information). Identifying such spaces will facilitate examination of participants’ experiences in ‘Muslim’ areas and in more ‘mixed’ city spaces.

*Selected Census Tracts*

**Table 3.4: Highest Muslim, Arab and West Asian Populations by Census Tract**

<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Muslim as % of Total Population</b>	<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Arab &amp; West Asian as % of Total Population</b>
7.02	37.7%	7.02	31.3%
14	29.4%	122.01	18.9%
122.01	28.7%	1.07	16.7%*
138	22.4%	138	16.1%
20.01	18.0%	1.06	15.1%
<i>Statistics Canada 2001b</i>		<i>Statistics Canada 2006b</i>	
*NB Census Tract 1.07 did not exist in 2001.			

Through the cross-tabulation of census data, I have identified three Ottawa census tracts, or neighbourhoods – Heron Gate (7.02; South-East Ottawa), St. Laurent (122.01; Ottawa East) and Bayshore (138; Ottawa West) – as they demonstrated strong concentrations of Muslim and Muslim-associated populations (Arab and West Asian). To familiarize myself with these areas, I walked their streets and took pictures. Using the photos, I made an album with a section for each census tract, which was used during the interview to facilitate discussion. Not all the participants reside in the selected neighbourhoods, yet many have visited Heron Gate, St. Laurent and Bayshore over the course of their lives. Some are familiar with these areas by name, while others needed visual tools to reacquaint themselves with them. The photo album provided a visual aid and enabled the participants to better recognize the spaces and discuss their experiences there (to view album images, see pages 32-33).

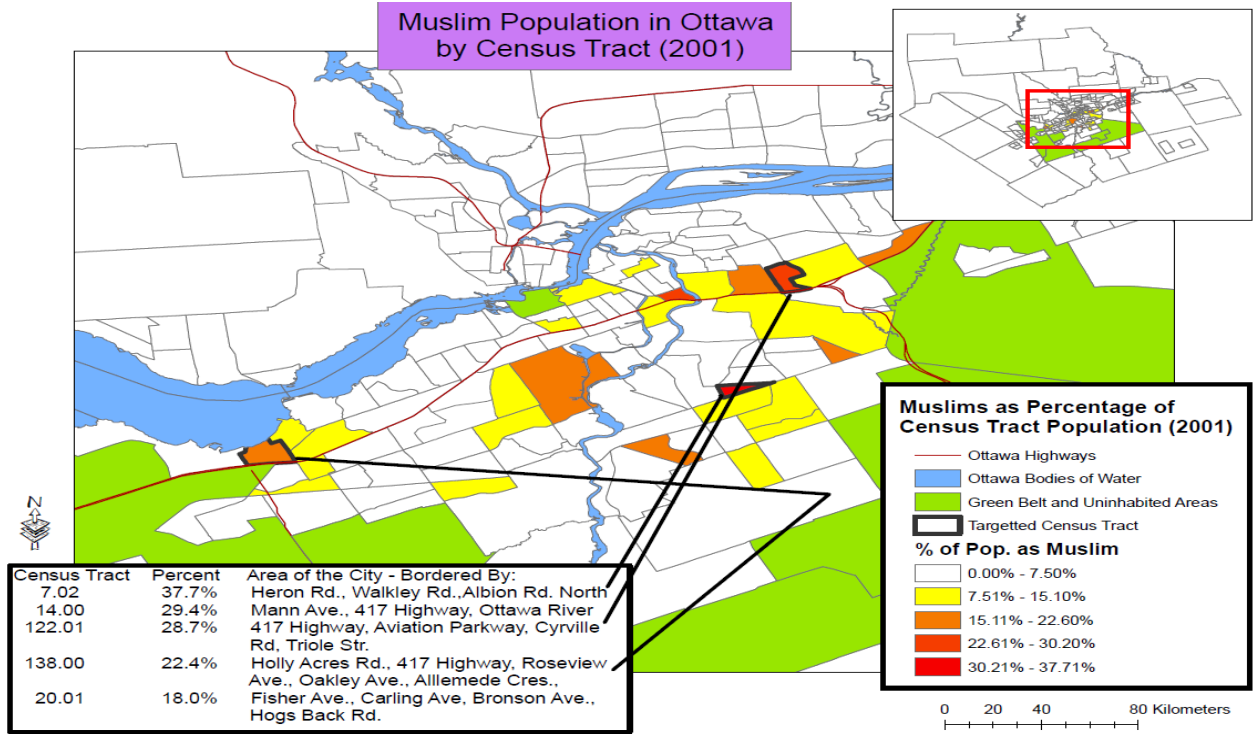


Figure 3.1: Muslim Population in Ottawa by Census Tract (2001) (Data Source: Statistics Canada 2001b)

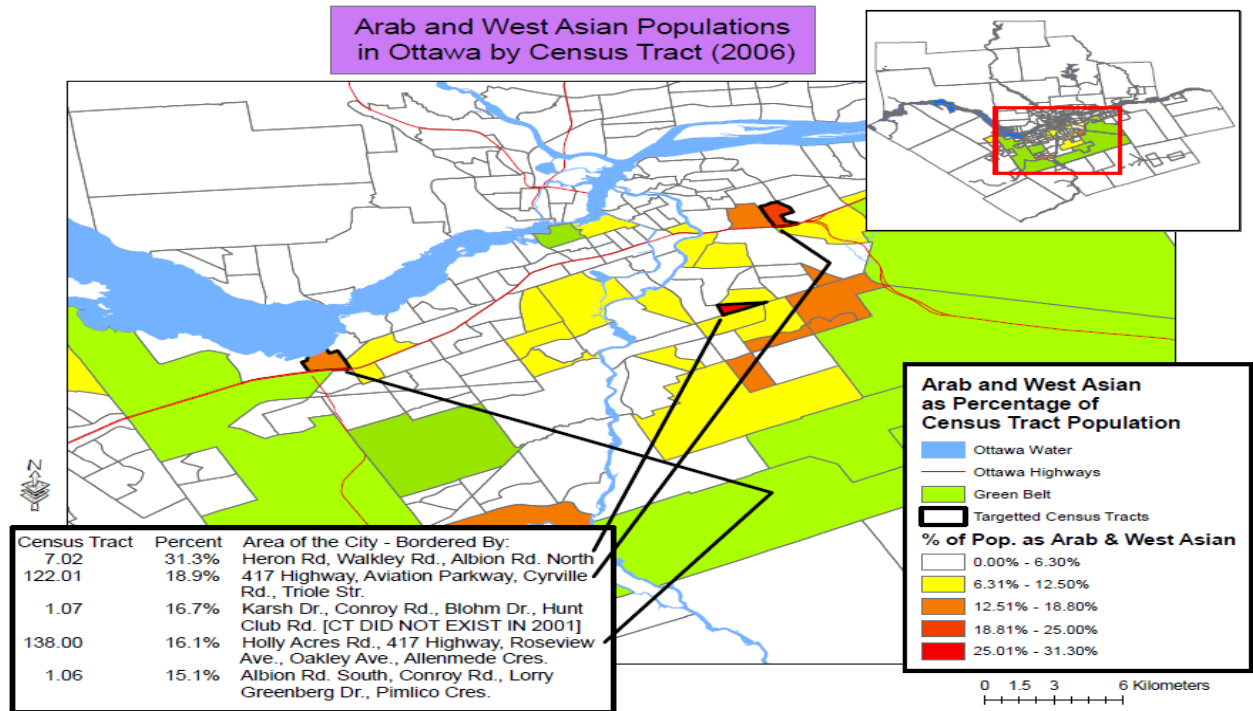


Figure 3.2: Arab and West Asian Populations by Census Tract (2006) (Data Source: Statistics Canada 2006b)

**Table 3.5: Comparison of three Ottawa Neighbourhoods**

<b>STATISTICS</b>	<b>Ott.-Gat.</b>	<b>CT 7.02</b>	<b>CT 122.01</b>	<b>CT 138</b>
Population	1,117,120	4,861	3,364	7,535
Population Density	258.7	10,923.6	3,822.7	6,244.3
Land Area	3,273.62	0.45	0.88	1.21
Median Age	38.4	25.8	28.8	31.8
Median Income	32,219	14,364	17,725	19,728
<b>Residential Characteristics</b>				
Private Occupied Dwellings	449,030	1,820	1,090	2,840
% Rented Dwellings	33.3%	94.5%	56.9%	81.3%
<b>Immigration and Language</b>				
% W/ Other Language as Mother Tongue	19.8%	57.7%	52.7%	59.1%
% Foreign-Born (Not including Non-Permanent Residents)	21.6%	50.3%	49.0%	52.7%
% Visible Minority Population	16.1%	63.2%	59.5%	55.7%
<b>Largest Visible Minority Groups (% of Total Census Tract Population)</b>				
First	Black (4%)	Arab (28.1%)	Black (17.7%)	S.A. (14.8%)
Second	Chinese (2.9%)	Black (20.6%)	Arab (10.4%)	Arab (12.7%)
Third	Arab (2.5%)	S.A. (3.4%)	W.A. (8.6%)	Black (9.4%)
		W.A. (3.3%)	S.A. (8.5%)	
<i>Statistics Canada 2006c</i> <span style="float: right;"><b>Abbreviations:</b> S.A. (South Asian); W.A. (West Asian)</span>				

Neighbourhood 7.02 – otherwise known as Heron Gate – is located in south-east Ottawa, bordered by Heron Road, Walkley Road, Finn Court and Albion Road North (See Map 3 and Figure 1). With a population of 4,861 and a land area of 0.45 kilometres squared, the area is quite densely populated. Most residents live in rented dwellings and the area is composed primarily of apartments and semi-attached town houses. The Herongate Mall is also located here and is one of the principal shopping areas for residents. This neighbourhood has a significant visible minority population, composed mostly of Arab and Black individuals. Moreover, the median age is the youngest of the three areas and is over ten years less than the Ottawa median.

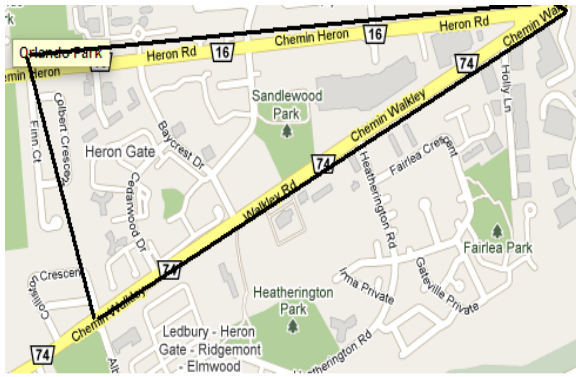


Figure 3.3: Map of Heron Gate<sup>15</sup>



Figure 3.4: Photographs from Heron Gate<sup>16</sup>

Neighbourhood 122.01 – the St. Laurent area – is located east of Ottawa’s downtown core and is also home to a shopping mall of the same name. This neighbourhood is bordered by the 417 Highway, St. Laurent Boulevard, the Aviation Parkway, Oglivie Road, Cummings Avenue, and Cyrville Road (Figures 3.3 and 3.4), and is less densely populated than both Heron Gate and Bayshore. However, the median age is low in St. Laurent, as is the annual median income. The area is diverse – visible minority residents make up approximately 60 percent of the area’s population, with representation from Black, Arab, West and South Asian groups



Figure 3.5: Map of St. Laurent



Figure 3.6: Photographs from St. Laurent

Neighbourhood 138 is located in the city’s suburban West and is known as the Bayshore

<sup>15</sup> Figures 3.3, 3.5, and 3.7 were taken from Google Maps.

<sup>16</sup> All images and tables used in this chapter were taken and created by the author, unless otherwise stated. The image at left was used as a methodological tool during the interviews – this will be discussed later in the chapter.

area. Bayshore is bordered by the 417 Highway, Holly Acres Road, Carling Avenue, Oakley Avenue, Roseview Avenue, and Allemede Crescent (See Figures 3.5 and 3.6). A focal point of this area is the Bayshore Shopping Centre. This area has the largest population of the three areas, as well as the largest land area. However, this neighbourhood has the smallest visible minority population of the three, with South Asian, Arab and Black groups being the largest groups.



*Figure 3.7: Map of Bayshore*



*Figure 3.8: Photographs from Bayshore*

It is important to note that in sampling I chose not to target Muslim women who live in these areas. Rather I chose to seek out women who live throughout Ottawa – without limiting their residential location in the city – to examine whether they were familiar with any of these three areas. In the end, five participants live in or near two of the neighbourhoods – Heron Gate (three) and St. Laurent (two) – while the other participants live in Barrhaven (three), CentrepoinTE (two) and Gatineau (three).

### ***Methodological Approach and Selection of Sample***

A qualitative approach was used to examine the ways in which Muslim women create meaning through their daily interactions in public spaces that are for the most part secular and culturally western. What processes are implicated in making a place comfortable or

exclusionary? One-on-one interviews were the primary methodological tool used. Semi-structured interviews are ideally suited to exploring feelings and experiences, and they provide flexibility to expand on pertinent topics. Likewise, interviews facilitate an examination of the ways that women interpret and give meaning to their behaviours and experiences in place.

I conducted thirteen interviews in order to attain a diversity of experiences and viewpoints, which corresponds with Morse's recommendations of at least six participants in studies examining experiences (1994). I strove for equal numbers of veiled and non-veiled second-generation women, while also trying to ensure that the respondents were ethnically and culturally diverse. As no data exist about the number of veiled and non-veiled Muslim women in Ottawa, it was impossible to select a representative sample. Moreover, as non-veiled women display no explicit signs of their religious affiliation and are difficult to identify by sight, any sample garnered through a simple convenience sampling strategy would have been biased in favour of veiled women. In the end, I interviewed nine veiled and four non-veiled participants.

Every attempt was made to ensure variety in the sample. I sought both secular and devout Muslim participants, as well as women who wear different forms of religious dress (for example, western clothing, headscarves, face veils). I strove to attract a broad group of participants in terms of ethnic diversity and religious practices, sects and degrees of adherence. The sample was also limited to women who were born into Muslim families. Muslim converts were not included, as their family likely played a very minor role in their desire to become Muslim or their degree of religiosity.

The median age of the city and province – 38.4 and 39 percent respectively – are considerably higher, relative to the median age of some visible minority groups (Statistics Canada 2007). With 44 percent of their population under the age of 25, the Arab and West Asian

groups are young (Statistics Canada 2006a) – this is partly because the parental generation only recently immigrated to Canada. Due to the relative youth of this population group, I sought women aged between eighteen and twenty-eight to participate in this project. It was also necessary to provide a broader definition of the second generation, by including those who were born in Canada to immigrant parents, or those who arrived here at a young age (i.e., under the age of ten).

**Table 3.6: Ages of Arab / West Asian Population in Ottawa-Gatineau, 2006**

<b>Arab / West Asian</b>	<b>Ottawa (ON)</b>	<b>Gatineau (QC)</b>	<b>Ottawa-Gat.</b>
Total - Age groups	100% (30360)	100% (4325)	100% (34685)
Under 15 years	24.8% (7530)	26.4% (1140)	25% (8670)
15 to 24 years	19.2% (5835)	11.8% (510)	18.3% (6345)
25 to 34 years	15.4% (4665)	18.4% (795)	15.7% (5460)
35 to 44 years	16.7% (5055)	21.5% (930)	17.3% (5985)
45 to 54 years	11.9% (3620)	11.3% (490)	11.8% (4110)
55 to 64 years	6.8% (2050)	7.1% (305)	6.8% (2355)
65 to 74 years	3.4% (1045)	2.9% (125)	3.4% (1170)
75 years and over	1.8% (545)	0.9% (40)	1.7% (585)
<i>Statistics Canada 2006a</i>			

This age – and generational – group is interesting because they are more likely to use public space than children and young teenagers (who often have very small areas of movement, usually only going to local schools and activities close to home). Moreover, young adults “are more heavily invested in defining their identities than an older age group” (Shirazi and Mishra 2010: 52) and may also be less encumbered in terms of their exploration of city spaces than are older adults who work and / or look after children.

### ***Sample Acquisition***

The sample was developed using a variety of sources.<sup>17</sup> Through volunteer work with the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) and the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), and through my own social network, a number of participants were recruited. By finding respondents through networks, and by using snowball sampling to fill my quota, women from a variety of ethnic origins, and Islamic denominations, were found. There was also a range in the degree of adherence among the women.

Snowball sampling happened in two stages: the first involved contacting friends, acquaintances and professional contacts immediately following ethical approval. I sent them an email with recruitment documents, asking them to forward my information to participants who they thought might be interested and to have these women contact me directly. The second stage involved contacting Muslim youth organizations (January – February 2012).

**Table 3.7: Interview Recruitment Contacts**

<b>FIRST ROUND</b>		<b>PARTICIPANTS FOUND</b>
<b>CAWI</b>	Coordinator (2 Contacts)	0
<b>FRIENDS / ACQUAINTANCES</b>	Contacted 25 individuals (NB Some qualified for study, others were asked to pass on material)	7
<b>OCISO</b>	Project Coordinator; Fellow Volunteer	1
<b>OTHER CONTACTS</b>	Professor at University of Ottawa	1
<b>SECOND ROUND</b>		
<b>MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS (OTTAWA-BASED)</b>	Muslim Student Associations (MSA) – Algonquin College, Carleton University, University of Ottawa (MSA and NISA)	3
	Muslims for Progressive Values	0
<b>OTHER CONTACTS</b>	Community Organizer	1

<sup>17</sup> I began sample acquisition after receiving ethical clearance from the University of Ottawa at the end of November 2011.

Many organizations were helpful and forwarded my project within their networks (Muslims for Progressive Values; NISA),<sup>18</sup> yet in many ways my own network of acquaintances and friends proved to be the most effective way to recruit participants (nine women identified in this manner). Additional participants were contacted through a University of Ottawa organization for Muslim Women (three respondents), as well as a prominent Muslim woman in the Ottawa community (one). In the end, I was contacted by twenty-two prospective participants, nine of whom did not participate for a number of reasons, mostly due to being too young or too busy, not living in the Ottawa area, or failing to respond after the initial email. The interviews were conducted from December 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 until March 28<sup>th</sup> 2012, half of which were conducted in January 2012.

I would have liked to conduct additional interviews – particularly with non-veiled women and those of other ethnic groups – yet found it challenging to find more participants. This was due to a number of reasons, but predominantly to the informality of email contact, my inability to approach people on the street (i.e., bias towards the veil; did not want to be aggressive) and the challenge of coordinating participants’ busy schedules.

### ***Selected Methodological Tools: Questionnaires and Interviews***

At the beginning of each interview, I asked participants to complete a short questionnaire to ascertain general information about their age, residential location(s) in the city, ethnic origin, education, religion and their desired pseudonyms. This allowed for a smoother interview process, as I was better able to formulate and adapt my questions to individuals and avoided wasting time in the face-to-face interview by asking demographic questions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Nisa’ is the Arabic word for women, it is also the name of a University of Ottawa campus organization.

<sup>19</sup> The full questionnaire – as well as all other methodological tools – has been included in Appendices Two to Five.

All interviews were conducted in English (although they were interspersed with French, Islamic and ethnic terms) and each took approximately one to two hours. The shortest interview was 45 minutes and the longest about 3.5 hours. The interviews were audio-recorded, with permission confirmed in advance through a signed consent form.

I had planned on making detailed notes about body language, style of dress, and various non-verbal aspects throughout the interview, yet found it challenging to do so while reflecting on the participants' responses. By focusing my attention on the respondents (as opposed to more clinical note-taking), the interviews flowed more naturally as dialogues. In order to preserve the anonymity of all respondents in my study, individuals are identified using pseudonyms. Each respondent was asked to select a pseudonym for herself.

The interviews were semi-structured and the questions open-ended. I kept the interview guide broad, so as not to limit responses or bias participants (for instance, by implying that they had negative experiences). While I used the interview guide to structure my interviews, I followed the questions very loosely. This flexibility enabled a natural dialogue and allowed me to pursue more interesting tangents. Most women felt comfortable discussing various topics with me, and they needed little encouragement to share their experiences. At times, however, it was necessary to steer our conversation back to the topic. The photo albums also facilitated recognition of the 'Muslim' neighbourhoods and discussion of their experiences in these areas.

The research is primarily interested in the degree of (dis)comfort and feelings of belonging in public spaces that each woman experiences, and how these feelings change in different areas of the city. As such, the interview guide was structured to elicit information on a number of categories, namely their area of the city, family and upbringing, ethnic and/or religious community, daily life, religiosity and knowledge of the selected neighbourhoods. I

initiated the dialogue with more straightforward questions (for example, where do you live? and what sorts of amenities are there?) in order to make the participants more comfortable answering questions, eventually proceeding to more challenging topics.

The interviews were conducted in a number of locations – usually wherever was most convenient for the participant – and were typically done in the evening or early afternoon. The interviews were often held on university or college grounds (seven), with the rest occurring at coffee shops (four), a private home (one) and a participant’s place of work (one). Regardless of the location, most participants seemed very comfortable and eager to share their stories.

### ***The Research Implications of Positionality***

Any research project has its obstacles, particularly when one has few ties to the community she wishes to study. As someone who is non-Muslim, not representative of a racial or ethnic minority, and studying a social group that has been researched and represented in a number of (not always positive) ways, there are several challenges, namely: attracting interested participants, conducting interviews, and interpreting collected data. For example, the size and breadth of this sample are bound within my own network of contacts and social institutions, as well as time and resource limitations. Although I was able to gather a diverse, well-educated group of women, it is important to acknowledge who did – and who did not – participate. As an outsider, many prospective Muslim and/or visible minority women may have been hesitant to partake in the research project. Had I attracted a greater variety of social classes, perhaps the data would tell a different story. Moreover, had I been Muslim or of an ethnic minority – or even a man – I would likely have attracted an entirely different sample of individuals interested in sharing (parts of their) stories.

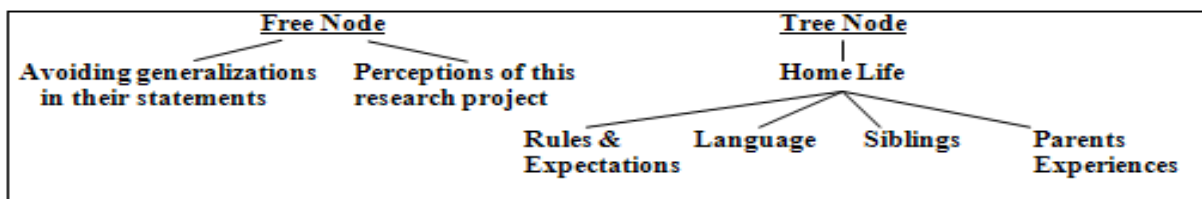
The second challenge was the interviews themselves. One reservation I had prior to conducting the interviews was that participants would question my positionality and my drive for doing this research project, given my background. Likewise, my heritage may have coloured the stories that the women shared with me – had I been from a related ethnic group and/or Muslim, I may have received distinctly different responses. In order to overcome prospective ethno-religious differences, I demonstrated my knowledge of Islamic terms and practices and discussed my motivations for doing this research. For instance, I discussed my Arabic and Islamic studies and travels to Muslim countries. Nevertheless, given the variety of women interviewed, no interviewer can ever truly be an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ – all individuals are complex and identities intersect in a number of nuanced ways. Even as I visibly appeared to be an outsider to many of the women interviewed, we share a number of similarities as young, educated, Canadian women, which I believe facilitated the interviews and the richness of the collected data. In fact, it is possible that my background may have been a benefit when interacting with participants, as they may have felt more comfortable disclosing their experiences to an individual from outside their communities than to a fellow Muslim or co-ethnic.

When it came time to analyze the data, I admit that my ‘outsider’ status gave me pause. How would my experiences – as a white, (half-Italian) Canadian woman – influence my interpretations of the women’s stories? How do my research objectives and background cloud my interpretations (Deutsch 2004)? An additional concern was how my “human relationships” with the women may have influenced my objectivity in analyzing and interpreting results (Deutsch 2004: 891), particularly with those who kept in contact with me (half of the women). In order to avoid focusing more attention on those with whom I have a more in-depth relationship, I tried to ensure that each woman received an equal opportunity to share her stories.

I also tried to keep the number of quotations from participants as balanced as possible. In order to avoid speaking for the participants, I present the women’s voices and narratives wherever possible and avoid drawing conclusions that are not there. The stories that I am telling in this project are by no means exhaustive or true to all second-generation Muslim women. They also reflect my own positionality as a researcher, particularly in terms of who I attracted to the project and the ways that I interpreted the data.

**Data Analysis**

Each interview was transcribed in full and I have used a qualitative analysis software – NVivo – to assist with the qualitative data analysis. The software was used to manually filter through the interviews and organize the information thematically, thus simplifying the data analysis process and allowing me to draw out pertinent data more efficiently for my thesis. Using NVivo’s coding system, I created both free nodes (stand-alone information) and tree nodes (thematically linked data) to conduct my analysis.



*Figure 3.9: Examples of Free Nodes and Tree Nodes*

Coding can be a challenging endeavour as it is “both systematic and flexible” (Cope 2010: 451). Attempts have been made to streamline coding (Strauss 1987), yet “it is not a clear, linear process” and one is never truly ‘done’ (Cope 2010: 445). My coding tree was initially developed before the data analysis began, using themes present in the literature, such as Islamic

practice and veiling, family life, gendered experiences, mobility constraints and experiences of inclusion / exclusion. However the bulk of the analytical codes were developed as the coding proceeded; this very much reflects coding as an “ongoing process” (Cope 2010: 448). This constant revision of the data analysis allowed me to become more familiar with my collected information and to better identify themes and linkages between participants (Cope 2010: 445).

### ***Conclusion***

This project is qualitative in nature and focuses on individual experiences when in – and moving between – places, as well as individual sense of belonging and (dis)comfort. The selection of ‘Muslim’ areas and young participants from the target group have enabled analysis of many substantive themes and topics outlined to this point. These will be discussed in the three subsequent chapters, beginning with being a second-generation Muslim woman in Ottawa.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **LIFE IN THE CITY: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SECOND-GENERATION WOMAN**

Growing up as a second-generation woman or man can be difficult. It can have a number of implications for the daily navigation of public space. Second-generation women in particular, are subject to a number of expectations from parents, ethno-religious communities, and peers – groups that do not always interact seamlessly with one another. Each community may have specific aspirations for second-generation women – for example, that they be successful (parents), or that they can attend social activities (friends). These expectations can be challenging to manoeuvre between, and may enhance, or hinder, women’s daily navigation of public space. Moreover, expected behaviours and values may signal their belonging in certain communities, yet mark them as out of place in others. As such, navigating public space proves to be a significant challenge for second-generation women due to expectations about how they should behave and appear in different contexts

This chapter will address the women’s respective backgrounds and experiences, as well as the implications of growing up in this generational cohort. The women interviewed engage in everyday activities, such as through volunteering, employment, hobbies, and education, that encourage them to navigate the city and come into contact with diverse individuals. This chapter seeks to situate women’s experiences and the ways that they give meaning to a variety of identities. How do their daily responsibilities – in addition to the implications of being in the second-generation – influence their movement within Ottawa? The women face obligations to, and expectations from, various social groups, and these may consequently influence their daily public experiences. Both their upbringing and current social lives help to contextualize their everyday encounters with strangers, and perhaps shed light on the ways that they experience and

interpret public space.

### *Everyday Life: Employment, Education, and Activities*

Over the course of the interviews, the participants discussed a number of topics, such as their family, day-to-day activities, communities, and experiences. Despite several questions inquiring directly about the everyday spaces and places where their lives occur, few women discussed these in much depth. Rather, the women placed significant emphasis on everyday relationships and experiences. This perhaps is an indication that women do not particularly privilege space and place in their narratives, or more likely that place is somewhat taken-for-granted in the women's daily lives. Space and place, however, are not simply absent – they play an implicit role in the ways that second-generation Muslim women understand and navigate the city. Likewise, women experience a diverse range of places everyday, each of which has daily implications for women's identity and belonging – even if they are not directly identified and discussed.

The women in this study represent a diverse group in terms of personalities, ethnicities, and languages (See Table 4.1 for more information). The median age of the women interviewed was 24.2, and most are single and busy with a variety of activities, education and employment (both voluntary and paid).<sup>20</sup> Most participants spend their weeks working at school or in paid employment, doing chores, and exercising (for example, doing aerobics classes or working out at a gym). On the weekends, they work at retail jobs or catch up on tasks missed during the week – errands, chores and assignments. Most women also engage in social activities on the weekends, often going to dinner, movies, coffee shops, or simply spending time with friends and family.

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<sup>20</sup> The majority (seven) of the women are employed in full-time work, while five are studying at university or college while working part-time. One woman works full-time while also attending university.

**Table 4.1: General Participant Information**

NAME <sup>i</sup>	AGE	ETHNICITY	LANGUAGE(S) <sup>ii</sup>	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	VEILED	AREA OF RESIDENCE
Amina	24	Somali	English	Master's Degree (IP) <sup>iii</sup>	Yes	Nepean
Anna	26	Pakistani	Urdu, English	PhD (IP)	No	Nepean
Candy	27	Bangladeshi	English, French, Bengali	Master's Degree	No	Nepean
Halima	24	Somali	English, Somali	Teaching Degree	Yes	Ottawa South-East <sup>iv</sup>
Lara	23	Lebanese	Arabic, English, French	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	St. Laurent
Layan	20	Lebanese	Arabic, English	Bachelor's Degree (IP)	Yes	Ottawa South-East
Lisa	26	Palestinian	English, French, Arabic, Spanish	Bachelor's Degree	No	Nepean
Muna	23	Somali	English, Somali	College Degree (IP)	Yes	Nepean
Nadia	24	Palestinian	Arabic, French, English	Bachelor's Degree (IP)	Yes	Gatineau
Sarah	25	Palestinian	Arabic, English, French	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	Gatineau
Savannah	22	Somali	English, Somali	Bachelor's Degree (IP)	Yes	St. Laurent
Serena	23	Pakistani	English, French, as well as three others <sup>v</sup>	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	Ottawa South-East
Walette	27	Moroccan	French, Arabic, English	Master's Degree	No	Gatineau

<sup>i</sup> All participants names have been changed to protect their identities.

<sup>ii</sup> Languages are included in same order as written by participants.

<sup>iii</sup> IP (In Progress) refers to degrees that had not been completed at the time of interview

<sup>iv</sup> *Ottawa South-East* refers to the area surrounding Heron Gate (i.e., Billings Bridge, Greenboro, and South Keys). All participants living in this area are within four kilometres or less of Heron Gate.

<sup>v</sup> This participant speaks a number of distinctive languages, and listing them may jeopardize her anonymity. In order to protect her anonymity, all languages spoken by Serena will not be included in the table.

They are also generous with their time – all but a few of the women have volunteered at events and with organizations, both within their ethno-religious communities and with organizations catering to the general public.<sup>21</sup> Even though most of the women (eleven) live at home with their parents and (in most cases) siblings,<sup>22</sup> all are involved in numerous activities and have roles within a number of community organizations, necessitating the everyday navigation of Ottawa’s city spaces. These daily obligations and activities bring them out of their respective neighbourhoods – sites shaped by particular people, opportunities, and values – and into a variety of (multi-ethnic) spaces. In these locales, individuals may have greater access to employment and education opportunities than would be possible in their (extended) families or city neighbourhoods (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 53). They also provide opportunities to engage with diverse social groups and beliefs – encounters that can also enhance women’s understanding of belonging within a broader society beyond their ethno-religious community.

### *The School of Life: Employment, Education, and Learning about Difference*

The beginning of post-secondary education and paid employment marked an important period for the women. These opportunities facilitated encounters with diverse groups of individuals by bringing women into new social contexts, well beyond the safety and comfort of their neighbourhoods, ethno-religious communities, and (high school) peer groups.<sup>23</sup>

Universities and workplaces are important in that they serve as social environments in which there is a much greater likelihood of meeting people who are culturally and/or socially different

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<sup>21</sup> For example, participants discuss volunteering for multiple community organizations: non-denominational (such as the Red Cross, Student Council, and Alzheimer’s Walk), religious (for example, the Muslim Canadian Congress, university-based Muslim Student Associations, the Sadaqa Food Bank, and miscellaneous Islamic festivals), and ethnic (for instance, Student Associations, or the Canadian-Palestinian Congress of Canada).

<sup>22</sup> Of the other two respondents, one lives with her husband and the other resides alone.

<sup>23</sup> The majority of the women interviewed also worked part-time during their youth (for example, tutoring, retail sales, and summer camps). These forms of employment, however, are often close to home (i.e., within proximity to women’s neighbourhoods) and do not necessarily increase the likelihood of encounters with dissimilar individuals.

(Ellis *et al.* 2004). These multi-ethnic places – what Amin (2002) coins ‘micropublics’ – are “sites where people can come to terms with ethnic difference ...” and engage in dialogue (967). It is in these ‘micropublics’ that difference is most actively negotiated and where an awareness of different social practices is almost inescapable. Consequently, simply getting to university or work brought many women into city spaces that were unfamiliar or characterized by much greater diversity than they had typically experienced to that point in their lives. This change in movement, interactions, and schedule served as an important catalyst for the women in terms of new ways of understanding themselves and of developing their identity, as well as a discovery of new places to belong.

These new experiences brought them out of the “bubble” of high school (Amina), a very particular place that most women regarded as being more homogeneous and less open to new experiences and perspectives. This lack of diversity worked both ways, however, as the women’s understanding of high school was contingent on where they went. Amina, for example, illustrates her high school as an environment dominated by specific social groups – a place where she was “only dealing with one type of person”. This meant that there were few “debates” around issues – she “never got two sides of the story” or “touched on any controversial topics”. High school provided few opportunities to engage with different perspectives, and it also meant peers were less accepting of difference. Sarah, for example, describes being one of the first veiled women at her school. This proved challenging for several of her friends to deal with and so they gradually abandoned her. Savannah (veiled, Somali) similarly regards her high school experiences as challenging. She attended Ridgemont High School in Heron Gate, where Islam and “the religious stuff is really a big deal, because ... if you don’t prescribe to so and so’s way of dressing or way of behaving, you are an outsider”. Even when women superficially appear to

belong within a place, other identities can still be used to place them on the margins. Their stories reflect high schools as sites where particular normative values dictate who does (not) belong and where women are seldom exposed to a diversity of opinions and perspectives.

Moving out into the city following high school proved to be particularly significant, as noted by six of the women. Sarah, in particular, suggests that her experiences in the city changed significantly when she began work and pursued post-secondary education:

[I]n high school, I wasn't even allowed to watch movies with my friends at the cinema, go shopping ... [but] when I started working ... [and] mak[ing] my own money, then I could leave because I didn't have to ask [my parents'] permission, right? And it was in doing CEGEP also ... that was the only time where ... I think I actually got to experiment life, because ... you can't really get [experiences] unless you're interacting with people outside [the high school] environment. So that's one little thing that for me, I found that, I've evaluated lately ... I wasn't able to do those outings ... and interactions with people at a younger age.

What is noteworthy about this change, as Sarah acknowledges, is that it brought her into contact with new experiences and individuals that she otherwise would not have had the chance to encounter in high school, with her parents, or in her ethnic community. These experiences, as she points out, gave her new understandings of herself, something also suggested by Amina. Her post-secondary experience proved to be more “of a thinking process”, and through employment and education, she became “exposed to a whole bunch of stuff”. Universities, as Amin (2002: 970) notes, serve as “a critical threshold space” where individuals are brought out of their neighbourhoods and ethno-religious communities, becoming “potentially more receptive to new influences and new friendships”. These sites do not necessarily “lead to cultural exchange” between different communities, but “the sheer contrast of the sociality of this space with that of home and neighbourhood can help” foster interactions among diverse social groups (970). Universities, colleges, and workplaces, consequently, can be places that are open to the discussion and learning about difference than other social environments.

Encountering new viewpoints also had implications for religious adherence and sometimes provided individuals with new understandings of Islam. Accessing campus and city-wide Muslim organizations gave women opportunities to engage with different Islamic perspectives, in ways that sometimes deviated from their parents' and religious community's teachings. In these religious settings, women learned diverse ways of practicing the Islamic faith, engaging more actively in Muslim events and forming friendships with fellow Muslims. Broader interpretations of Islam proved attractive to several women and one-quarter of participants discuss becoming more devout (for example, attending more Islamic functions and *halaqas* and/or praying more regularly).<sup>24</sup> Even though Muslim campus associations provided comfortable and welcoming places for a number of individuals, these sites are also subject to their own power structures and norms that sometimes exclude other Muslims. A few women – both veiled and non-veiled – describe feeling left out due to their *Quranic* interpretations and/or for the ways they dressed and behaved. These sites of learning are subject to nuanced delineations of appropriateness, despite being superficially very accessible to women who identify as Muslim,

Beginning university and employment, then, served as important milestones, providing new frameworks within which to experience and interpret everyday life. By attending university and/or beginning a new job, parental restrictions in terms of where women could be or with whom they could interact were loosened as obligations outside of the neighbourhood increased. It also decreased parents' ability to set limitations – their children no longer need to borrow money, or to have a valid excuse to be out of the house. Activities that may have previously been out of reach – such as going to watch movies with friends or travelling abroad without

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<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise stated – i.e., two-thirds of veiled participants – the number of participants that agreed with a particular idea is rounded to the nearest fraction. For example, if three (of thirteen) women say that the veil is 'visible', it would be summarized as one-quarter of participants, whereas four women would be one-third.

family – were now possible. These life changes also meant increased opportunities to learn about themselves outside the expectations and norms of their ethno-religious communities and families. Yet it also led to women being subjected to different social hierarchies and relationships in various Ottawa sites, experiences that shape women’s understanding of belonging and identity. Notably, these places expose women to new ways of perceiving themselves and differ considerably from women’s previous experiences with parents, ethno-religious communities, and high school peers.

### ***“It’s Kind of a Double-Edged Sword” – Meeting Everyday Expectations***

The location of one’s home shapes the everyday realities of the second generation in a number of ways. Their neighbourhoods are positioned within particular geographic locations with their own schools, institutions, and employment opportunities (Ellis *et al.* 2004: 622; Kasinitz *et al.* 2008). Moreover, residential environments are shaped by particular social and ethno-religious networks that influence parents’ understanding of life in the city. In neighbourhoods parents develop expectations for their children in Canada. Through neighbourhoods, parents develop expectations about ‘appropriate’ behaviour and activities, which are in turn passed on to their children. In neighbourhoods, families develop strategies to keep children safe and to foster upward social mobility for their daughters and sons (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 55; 116-8).

Neighbourhoods and communities are significant sites of understanding for immigrant parents. When they move to Canada, they are subject to a number of unfamiliar activities, particularly as their children age and develop friendships in school. Many ‘common’ activities, such as sleepovers and dances, are very much a part of the everyday experiences of being a

teenager in Canada, yet are unusual for immigrant parents. In addition, some parents may have left behind their country of birth for economic reasons or fear of violence. As a consequence, some parents may regard the common activities of Canadian teenagers as being frivolous, dangerous, or distractions, and instead emphasize that their children must not squander opportunities. Many (first-generation) parents emphasize academic excellence (Rajiva 2013), language fluency, or targeting a career, in addition to continuing ethno-cultural traditions (for example, some parents may expect their children to marry within an ethnic or religious group).

These parenting practices have the effect of regulating their children's experiences, keeping them within 'safe' (social) spaces where they (may) have fewer opportunities to engage directly with other social groups and practices. This can have a significant bearing on the ways that immigrant parents monitor their children, and can have more pronounced implications/consequences for daughters (Das Gupta 1997; Dwyer 2000: 477; Espiritu 2001; Purkayastha 2010; Qin 2009). It may mark second-generation women as different from their peers, specifically when they are unable to participate in the same activities as their friends.

These experiences may foster a sense of being unable to fully participate in Canadian society, particularly when other visible markers of identity (such as race or religion) are highlighted in encounters with peers. Growing up in an immigrant household then may have a number of implications – and distinct challenges – for the everyday experiences of second-generation women, even in adulthood. In particular, they are subject to a number of expectations that can be challenging to navigate – from Canadian society, their parents, and their peers within various communities. Three challenges in particular were addressed in this part of the study: what was necessary to be successful (for example, being well-educated), permitted activities, and the role played by gender and age in heightening or reducing these expectations.

*Under Pressure: How to Succeed in the Second Generation*

What motivates many of these expectations is parents' desire for their children's success (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005) – whether it be mastering the language, getting an education, or finding a career or a husband. This desire becomes particularly salient after immigrating to a new country, as immigrant parents may find it challenging to deal with all the adjustments. To ensure that their children do not face similar challenges in navigating Canadian life, such as finding employment, speaking English, and navigating public institutions, parents use specific strategies that give the next generation greater opportunities for achieving upward social mobility. By emphasizing the importance of (academic and religious) education and language fluency in English and/or French, parents promote their children's development into well-educated and articulate adults who could comfortably manoeuvre and meet the demands of life in Ottawa and in Canada.

As several women mention, the drive towards academic excellence was very much encouraged by their parents. Consequently, all of the participants are well-educated – they have either acquired university and college degrees, or are in the process of attaining them. An additional one-third indicate receiving Islamic education as youth, although the nature of Islamic studies varied considerably between households. In many cases, the women engaged in religious classes with fellow co-ethnics, whether it was instruction by their father in their own home, a weekend *Qur'an* class, or a week-long Islamic school.<sup>25</sup> These experiences of Islam were very tied to an ethno-religious community and cultural interpretations of the faith. Although these 'lessons' familiarized women with Islam, they also reinforced ties with their ethnic community. This was not the case in all households, however – one-quarter suggest that their parents focused

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<sup>25</sup> Daily Islamic education was not an option for every family. Muna's family lived near an Islamic school, yet there are only a handful in Ottawa. Due to geographic location, other women may have had no choice but to attend secular public schools.

their attention on other communities and their respective activities rather than on religious practices.

An additional way that parents fostered the success of their children was through encouraging fluency in English and French, in addition to understanding their ancestral language. A few women attended language classes to learn their parents' mother tongue(s), and half speak a language other than English or French at home to maintain fluency. Rather than implement their mother tongue around the home however, the majority of parents were flexible with their children, and emphasized the importance of proficiency in English and French over other languages. Halima's mother, for instance:

[D]ecided that it was more important [to focus on English], because she only saw us for a certain number of hours during the day, [and] she was going to spend time just kind of reading to us and hanging out. So she's very confident in her decision. She doesn't regret it even though our Somali's terrible now ... she figured why try and push the Somali thing and make that the focus?

Halima's mother, as well as other parents, did this in part to help their children excel in Canada, as speaking Arabic or Somali at home may have been confusing for their children when interacting with other institutions. Parents perceived that English and French fluency would enhance their children's opportunities for success, findings that have also been suggested for the American second generation (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 247).

This strategy gave the women aptitude in a number of languages – a skill that is valuable, especially in Ottawa-Gatineau. Half of the women are bilingual, speaking both of Canada's official languages. Fluency in English and/or French is a “good asset to have”, as it is “recognized” around the world and functions as a “shield” in social situations (Layan), a position seconded by Muna.<sup>26</sup> As these two veiled women suggest, being fluent in English can be

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, Muna (veiled) describes it as a “shield” when visiting Saudi Arabia. On her *hajj* pilgrimage, she was periodically accosted by strange men, in which case she used speaking in English to deflect attention.

invaluable in challenging unambiguous negative comments made by others about their gender, religion, ethnicity, and/or race. Similarly, Nadia describes her Quebecois vernacular as a useful tool in encounters with strangers. As a veiled, Palestinian woman, a localized accent “might make us more accepted in the society” because it demonstrates that they “share... the same slang [and] the same culture...” with their fellow Quebecers. In these illustrations, speaking the language becomes more than a communication tool. It functions as a marker of belonging and citizenship – a means to demonstrate one’s Canadianness in public.

The focus on English or French sometimes means a lack of proficiency in their parents’ mother tongues. For some women, this had the effect of placing them on the margins of other communities. For instance, Sarah discusses feeling uneasy at Palestinian community events because of her lack of Arabic-language skills. At community gatherings, the focus is often on first-generation Palestinians – those who speak “Arabic really fluently” and are more immediately familiar with their country of origin:

[F]or us, who [grew up] here in Canada ... it was a little bit difficult for us to get a relationship going with [other Palestinians] ... because, even them they would snob us ... So we were here in Canada, within our own community, you know as second generation, we thought that we were [ignored], you [know] what I mean? Sometimes they were these girls that just immigrated from Kuwait or Qatar ... [The recent immigrants] were the ones who were chosen to do [activities] ... [It is frustrating because] you want to be involved with your community, but at the same time your community’s kind of shutting you [out]...

Sarah and her second-generation siblings were often overlooked due to the presence of more fluent and culturally-knowledgeable Palestinians. Although fluency in English and/or French is useful in much of Ottawa, it can also reduce opportunities for participation in ethno-religious communities where the markers of citizenship and belonging may differ considerably from the everyday norm.

Language and education are important tools in immigrant communities and facilitate

upward social mobility for the second generation. The weight of upward mobility, however, can be a heavy burden, particularly as determinants of success are fluid and vary between and within communities. Although parents want their children to be educated and have careers, they may also expect their daughters to continue ethno-religious traditions (for example, taking care of family, or marrying within one's ethnic group). This is illustrated in particular by two participants, as they reflect on their experiences within their ethnic communities. For example, Anna shares:

I think that's where it comes into the clash of like the East and West. Not the clash, the combination. It's like my parents always wanted me to have, be both. So you know the quintessential Pakistani daughter, but at the same time, like the independent Canadian woman ... how many things can a person do you know? ... I get the whole idea of being an independent woman, and ... everyday I feel like I'm trying to prove a point. ... I'm very thankful for all the opportunities I have, but I think alternatively, it's put a whole extra amount of pressure, and if I was still in Pakistan, or if I had parents who were a little bit more traditional, maybe I wouldn't have continued on higher in education. Maybe I wouldn't, it's not that they forced me, but they've instilled in me the value of education you know, and they've instilled in me the importance of not being dependent and stuff, so it's kind of a double-edged sword.

Muna similarly highlights the numerous expectations felt by the second generation:

... I guess it's on the second generation to kind of focus on this and fix [issues within the Somali community]. It's funny because we have so much on our shoulders. We've got to fix back home, we've got to fix the politics here and ... we just want to be normal, you know? We just want to have our own lives, buy our house, a car, you know, have our normal jobs, but you're kind of drawn into this, where you know you have to be the voice for communities. ... It's funny because they say for Muslim women, your generation ... are like the Susan B. Anthony's, you know? Where you guys have to be the ones that are going to fight and negotiate for the rights of the future generation. And it's funny because I'm like – I didn't sign up for that.

The identity intersections of being young, second-generation, Muslim women can make the attainment of 'success' exhausting, particularly when the expectations of each community do not always overlap seamlessly. Being educated and articulate second-generation Muslim women, it seems, can have less positive repercussions, as many women are still expected to carry out ethno-religious roles while also having a successful career.

Expectations can be a significant challenge for second-generation youth growing up, and generally, they devote a considerable amount of time in meeting numerous sets of aspirations. Parents employ place strategically to encourage upward mobility (for example, encouraging university and/or by enforcing restrictions) but the women also aspire to experience a broad range of social environments and encounters in order to make the most out of being in Canada. As will be discussed in the subsequent section, while women are grateful for their educational and linguistic achievements, there are also other activities that are important to life while growing up in Canada – activities that were not necessarily encouraged, or even permitted.

#### *Limitations: Negotiating With Peer Group and Parental Expectations*

Typically, parental expectations revolve around activities that encourage success: education, language fluency, employment, and self-sustainability (for example, being able to cook). At the same time, parents foster their children's success in another way – by discouraging undesirable activities. A number of non-permitted places were discussed by seven women. Although diverse activities were highlighted, what links the anecdotes is an overall sense among the women that they had missed out on some activities in which their peers could easily participate.<sup>27</sup> It was generally agreed that parents limited these activities for two reasons that overlap in significant ways: the activities were unfamiliar to parents and a desire to protect their daughters.

Several scholars discuss parental limitations influencing second-generation youth (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Zhou 1997a), and emphasize that daughters are often subject to more supervision and concern than sons (Das Gupta 1997; Espiritu 2001; Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 56, 154;

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, sleepovers at friends' houses (four), school dances (two), parties (three), television (one), wearing makeup (two), travelling without family (three), more lenient curfews (three), and talking to boys and dating (one).

Purkayastha 2010; Qin 2009). By relegating their children to places that are more easily monitored, parents are better able to keep them safe and can limit potentially ‘damaging’ influences such as from peer groups (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 53). Likewise, the more contentious activities were often conducted outside the home in unsupervised places, as is illustrated by Anna’s experiences. Her “protective” parents prohibited a number of the above-mentioned activities and enforced strict curfews, restricting her access to youth experiences outside of the home. Her parents, however, “encouraged” her to have friends over whenever, and as late as, she wished. When hanging out at home, Anna’s parents could better keep a watchful eye and protect her from potentially dangerous encounters. As is the case for many parents, activities outside the home and community are often perceived to be dangerous, believing that some activities could escalate to other, more harmful practices when youth are unsupervised (for instance, drug and alcohol abuse, or sex).

These parental restrictions were also a product of unfamiliarity. Many youth activities considered ‘common’ in Canada were unusual to women’s parents, as in many cases, they were not customary in their ethnic community. As Candy points out:

I think if I was raised in Bangladesh, where my parents were originally from ... I think they would understand, and I think they would be more accepting of everything. ... Did my parents go through that? Did my parents want to sleep over at other people’s house when they were in Bangladesh? Did they want to go to dances? I don’t think so, because those things don’t exist in Bangladesh. It’s not a part of our culture. It’s not a part of our society. I don’t think that they would even think about those things, right?

Common youth practices differ significantly between regions, and parents can be reticent to permit their children to engage in activities with which they have little experience. Despite not being able to fully engage in all the experiences offered to them as Canadian youth, Nadia acknowledges that “teen years can be scary for any parent”, and overall, many women reflected positively on their parents’ jobs in raising them.

A few women describe little tension between their parents and themselves when it came to doing as they wished in their youth, and this freedom of choice comes out particularly when the women described their experiences with veiling and dress. The majority of the women were able to dress as they saw fit, and several women highlighted this in the interviews. Perhaps in response to critiques levelled against Muslims in dominant western discourses, one-third of participants' narratives highlighted their decision about veiling. Despite the occasional criticism from extended family or ethnic community members, the decision to veil or not was non-negotiable for most women – all were adamant that they had decided themselves to (not) wear it. For instance, Lara's family was generally supportive when she began wearing *hijab*, although she experienced some backlash from her extended family:

I have some aunts that [were] shocked and [said] are you sure you're ready for this? Did you think of your job? Did you think of this? And it's like yeah and it's not a big deal, whatever happens, happens. This is not something – I would never make this a way to limit me from what I can be, you know? ... I never planned on being a body-builder, I never planned on doing that so, [*Laughs*] what am I limiting myself to? ... even now some of them kind of have a hard time but they're trying to be supportive ... and I had [the] complete opposite, people that I thought for sure were going to think I'm gone off the wagon, are closest to me now and they [told] me stuff that made me weep.

Lara, confident in her veiled self, continued to wear *hijab* despite some unsupportive remarks. Other women emphasized their parents' trust in them to choose how to dress. They contrasted themselves with friends who were "forced" (Layan) and did not "have a choice" of wearing the veil or not (Candy). By and large, however, dress did not come across as a point of contention in women's households, at least not to the degree of other youth activities.

Unfamiliar youth practices, however, unusual for parents, were often seen as points of contention by the second-generation Muslim women when they were growing up, even though they are in many ways considered 'normal' practices for youth in North America. While at the time of their interview, many women were very understanding of their parents' restrictions, they

admit that the rules were harder to deal with in their youth. Several, in fact, discuss doing activities without their parents' permission in order to engage with their peers, such as travelling abroad, wearing makeup, and/or attending dances. They accomplished this through a number of means – rebelling, lying, and/or finding excuses to be out of the home. Some women, however, acknowledge that being drawn between parents and peer' experiences was a challenging element of growing up. For example, Serena mentions that:

[T]here was a lot of internal conflict ... I knew my parents had certain expectations and I know that some things they just won't understand. ... high school was tough for me, because you know I wanted to satisfy them and make them happy, but at the same time, I wanted to explore and my friends were doing stuff. I wanted to do that stuff, but I'm not allowed to do it, so I'd have to do it without telling my parents ...

As Serena suggest, negotiating between parents and friends was seldom easy. Indeed, Anna eventually gave up trying to please parents and peers when her high school friends “got sick of [her parents'] rules” and she found herself fighting with both. She consequently decided she would “rather not fight with [her] parents”, and gradually disengaged from her high school friends.

These choices were challenging to negotiate, and a number of women had to choose between pleasing their parents and embracing the Canadian youth experience. This is particularly challenging given that second-generation youth growing up in North America are exposed to peer, school, and media influences that heavily influence their life expectations (Zhou 1997b: 980). Growing up in Canada means that many youth expect to fully participate in adolescent activities in the same ways as their peers. By restricting 'common' Canadian pastimes, parents may perhaps protect their children from dangerous influences. Other identities, such as gender or being the oldest child, sometimes exacerbated parental restrictions as they intersected with ethno-religious identity. Nevertheless, not permitting their children to engage in

harmless activities may have implications for how ‘Canadian’ the second generation feels.

*What it Means to be a Girl: Dealing With Sibling Hierarchy and Gender*

Expectations of success and limitations on specific activities very much come down to other factors: age and gender. Gendered expectations, in communities and households, were mentioned by six participants. Women’s gendered narratives typically detailed having a more challenging time doing certain activities (such as travelling, using the car, or hanging out with peers) (three), or that they were subject to different, or more, expectations within their family or community (in terms of gender roles, chores, and behaviours) (four). Even as they shared stories about gendered household and community practices, many women also reiterated that their parents treated all their children equally. Although some parental practices had the effect of distinguishing between daughters and sons, gendered experiences were not very pronounced in their narratives.

What proved interesting, however, is that one-third of the women noted being treated differently based on when they were born, rather than their gender. Being the eldest proved to be more challenging than being a woman for some respondents. This is due in part to the role played by the eldest child in a family – in many ways, they are the bridge between their parents and Canadian society. Parents consequently experience the country of settlement – as well as a number of unfamiliar practices – through their children. One-third of the women highlighted that their parents placed significantly more restrictions on the eldest children than those who followed. Women typically attributed this treatment to their parents’ unfamiliarity with life in Canada and with children more generally. Their first-born child functioned as a “guide” (Nadia), and was subject to expectations about chores, rules (such as, around wearing make-up or going

out with friends), and being a role model for younger siblings. Due to these limitations, the women interviewed had to “constantly break barriers” with their parents (Sarah). Their parents’ unfamiliarity and discomfort with Canadian practices diminished as younger brothers and sisters went through similar life stages.

Gender and age also sometimes intersected in the women’s stories. Anna and Sarah both felt that being a “girl”, in addition to being the eldest, may have exacerbated the obstacles they faced with their parents. They point out that their limitations decreased as they aged, as parents become “more comfortable” with them (Nadia). These differentiations, in terms of rules and prohibited activities, are in many ways challenges specific to the second-generation. It is unlikely that such rules and regulations will be repeated with subsequent generations (i.e., the women’s children and grandchildren), as the second-generation is familiar with western activities.

### ***Reflecting on the Second-Generation Life***

What do these implications mean for the participants’ experiences in public, and for their sense of belonging in Canada? Subjecting the eldest child to strict limitations or prohibiting unfamiliar practices is a common practice for many parents. In this way, second-generation Muslim women are very similar to their peers. What differentiates this cohort, however, is that these parental inclinations may be intensified for immigrant parents, who may have practices and expectations in Canada that differ significantly from their children’s. Had their parents grown up here, they may have more clearly understood how these ‘common’ Canadian practices are in large part harmless and serve as important rites of passage for life in Canada.

These restrictions certainly influenced the women, so much so that several state that they

will do some things differently with their own children. In particular, they mention that they will be more familiar with and “have a better understanding” (Muna) of activities not permitted to them as youth. The women may consequently be more flexible with their children’s upbringing, and will most likely permit them to engage in many of these activities. It is very likely that future generations will have a very different understanding of the spaces of childhood and social interactions with peers than do their parents or grandparents.

The second-generation Muslim women who participated in this study are very educated and mobile, moving throughout the city. This means a number of things for their everyday experiences and how they understand them. In particular, according to Kasinitz *et al.* (2008), the educated second-generation is likely to be exposed to many opportunities outside of their neighbourhood and ethno-religious communities. They may quite often have well-paid careers and socialize with diverse social groups as they move through education, employment, and socialize in higher-class places (such as restaurants). This brings them into many more interactions with ‘white’ individuals, as well as into occasions to be treated poorly by them. As they may not necessarily correspond to the national ‘ideals’ of what it means to be Canadian, second-generation Muslim women may be perceived as immigrants in these encounters and consequently be treated differently (Rajiva 2005). Even as second-generation Muslim women may stand out due to visible markers of identity such as race, religion, and gender, being educated may provide a greater ability to negotiate with instances of differential treatment (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008: 329).

The participants’ ethno-religious background in many ways play a crucial role in how women interpret their daily lives in Ottawa and how they may understand particular places. As second-generation Muslim women, a number of identities intersect and construct their daily

experiences in Ottawa's public spaces. Their identity intersections have different meanings within particular places and social groups, colouring the ways that women understand themselves and their position in Canada. These expectations often have the effect of making young women choose between different communities, sometimes placing them at the margins and/or causing (dis)comfort in the course of everyday life (Chapter Five). Additionally, everyday activities may influence the women's sense of belonging as well as their daily negotiations and performances of identity (Chapter Six).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **STANDING OUT IN THE CROWD: EXPERIENCES IN OTTAWA'S PUBLIC SPACES**

Experiences in public space are contingent on a number of factors, and a critical aspect of interactions between strangers often begins with appearances. Standing out – due to visible factors such as ethnicity, religion, dress and gender – can make the navigation of public spaces challenging, particularly for second-generation Muslim women who display multiple different identities. In many ways, how one looks influences interactions with strangers who use visible markers, such as the Islamic veil, to ascribe attributes to individuals and groups. These encounters – where social and religious identities are often highlighted – can prove challenging for women's comfort in public. In particular, everyday experiences with strangers inform individuals' perceptions of where and whether they belong, and can make some feel welcomed, or out of place, in public space. What makes space comfortable or uncomfortable, however, is far from self-evident. As will be discussed, some spaces, especially those dominated by an individual's ethnic or religious group, are not necessarily easier or more comfortable environments to navigate.

This chapter examines how participants experience public space in Ottawa, and the particular qualities or experiences that stand out for women, and structure daily encounters. In particular, what makes a space (un)comfortable for participants, and how can an individual's difference be accentuated in interactions with strangers? In what ways do the social values and particular encounters within a space facilitate or hinder individual comfort? The chapter will also examine places where co-ethnics or individuals who practice the same religion are numerous. Are such environments in Ottawa necessarily more welcoming for Muslim women?

### ***Moving Through Space: How Religion, Modesty, and Race Structure Public Encounters***

A number of factors influence how one is perceived in public. In the case of second-generation Muslim women, visible markers – such as religion, race, gender, and dress style – may play a role in how they experience public space. Visibility, particularly Islamic symbols like the veil, can influence how they are treated by strangers and treatment can vary significantly from place to place. Why do participants continue to veil or not, particularly if the absence or addition of the Islamic veil can make experiences in public space easier?

The Muslim veil is a visible symbol in western societies, something acknowledged by the majority of participants. Women who wear the veil are immediately recognizable as Muslim and frequently a set of both positive and negative social and religious values – and stereotypes – are associated with these practices, in turn influencing public encounters. According to participants, in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, veiled women may be interpreted as more pious or conservative (one-third), as oppressed (Amina) or as submissive (Nadia), in addition to being defined by particular behaviours or clothing – i.e., by “put[ting themselves] in a box” (Walette). Moreover, veiling, along with the rest of their clothing, may bring women under scrutiny for the opposite as well – not being modest enough within religious communities (one-third). Publicly marking oneself as Muslim may open them up to comments from fellow Muslims on the (lack of) modesty of their dress, for example that their clothing is too tight and/or revealing.

Nine participants veil, and they began wearing it at different stages of their young lives – during childhood (one-third), adolescence (one-third) and as young adults (one-third). They have chosen to wear *hijab* for a variety of reasons. All, however, indicated that the choice to veil was their own, typically to coincide with religious beliefs and to demonstrate their relationship with *Allah*.<sup>28</sup> Veiling however is not always an easy practice. For many of the women it has

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<sup>28</sup> For instance, some began veiling because: it was normal in their family (this was the case for three-quarters of

been – and for some still is – very much a negotiated process. For the three women who began veiling later in life, they acknowledge that it was something they considered for several years before finally committing to wearing the *hijab*. Some had concerns about veiling because it might limit certain activities (for example, swimming or working out at the gym), or they were apprehensive about the reactions from strangers and acquaintances. The change to wearing the headscarf consequently happened very gradually for many women, yet they are very happy with their decision. In particular, Lara and Halima acknowledge that veiling made daily dressing easier because, as Lara suggests, “you’re not comparing yourself anymore” to other women. For some the process takes a while. Anna and Candy both believe that the veil is required for Muslims, yet acknowledge that they are not ready to make the change, in part because it is a “process” (Candy). Making the decision to veil then is very much a negotiated and conscious practice.

The decision to veil, however, is not static. A number of challenges remain that cause women to negotiate, or reconsider, wearing *hijab*. Some experience instances that make them question why they wear it, something discussed by one-quarter of the women. Savannah, for instance, wonders sometimes whether she is:

[S]trong enough as a person to deal with [people’s assumptions] for the rest of my life or however long people remain this way ... for the most part, when I put [the *hijab*] on in the morning, I’m not thinking of that, but as soon as I exit [the house] ... you’re bombarded by all of this ... it’s negative and it’s positive.

Although Savannah experiences “moments of weakness” where she does not “even want to” veil anymore, she continues to do so as veiling is an important part of her everyday dress and of her Islamic identity. However, for one participant the pressure of “scrutiny from non-Muslims or

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Somali participants who began veiling as children) (one-quarter); they read more Islamic literature and attended Muslim events (such as, *halaqas* and Islamic classes) (one-quarter); they worried about misrepresenting their religion (by not veiling) (one); and it is a way to negotiate with Canadian beauty standards (one).

Muslims”, in addition to ‘doubts’ on the “necessity of wearing it”, led her to remove the veil. Walette “really liked” the *hijab* and what it stands for, yet remains firm in her decision to stop wearing it. Serena similarly discusses her fluctuations in veiling. As a child in elementary school she used to wear *hijab* at school to appease her “very strict” *Qur’an* teacher, but stopped wearing it after a short time. In university, she became interested in veiling again, yet she:

... went about [it] differently this time, in the sense that I really focused on my internal state before I focused on the external. So I started praying, I started reading up ... [and] getting close to religion until ... I just needed that little push and I was ready to do it.

Veiling is very much a fluid and contextual practice, and the decision to veil or not is rarely static or the same for all Muslim women. Rather, the decision is contingent on a number of factors that influence women’s everyday decisions around dress.

Veiling can also be contentious for those who do not visibly mark themselves as Muslim. For non-veiled participants, not wearing *hijab* can sometimes translate to being perceived as less ‘religious’, a comment made by both veiled and non-veiled participants (four).<sup>29</sup> Candy, in particular, notes that:

[Y]ou can’t just pick your Muslim woman in your head and expect them to wear *hijab* because we come in various sizes and shapes, and morals and values, and different experiences, which have made us who we are, right? It’s an experience right, and you know that’s kind of what I want to express ... women that wear *hijab*, I respect them greatly, because it takes a tremendous amount of courage to put [it] on, and I’m not even there yet ... You have to be extremely devoted to God, you know, and I am, but at the same time, I’m not there yet ... it doesn’t make me a bad Muslim, it doesn’t make me a great one but ... I just want people to understand that there’s different types of Muslims out there, and just because you’re one way doesn’t make you better than the other...<sup>30</sup>

Candy has experienced frustrations with the way that non-veiled Muslim women like herself are perceived, as have Lisa and Anna. They acknowledge sometimes receiving less respect from both Muslim and non-Muslim strangers and acquaintances than their veiled counterparts –

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, Muna acknowledges that some Muslims question the necessity of her non-veiled friend following other Islamic practices, such as a halal diet, if she does not veil.

<sup>30</sup> Candy’s response came up during a discussion of *The All-American Muslim*, an American television show.

double standards that several women feel strongly about. They point out that some veiled women engage in less ‘respectable’ practices, such as dating or wearing revealing clothing with their veil, yet are considered “more religious [and] better” (Lisa). Additionally, non-veiled women may be perceived as non-Muslim and part of the (secular) mainstream majority in a variety of places (Fadil 2011), such as universities, workplaces, and everyday public space. This may consequently subject them to criticisms from strangers and acquaintances aimed at Muslims, or their ethnic group, from individuals who are oblivious to their religious affiliations.

Visible Islamic practices are interconnected with normative gender roles and modesty practices, and play a role in the quality of participants’ experiences in public. Norms around modesty and gender behaviour structure daily encounters, as social ideals are reinforced everyday through women’s bodies (Fahs 2011). Visible intersections of gender and dress with religious identity can further open women up to scrutiny in public, as those who veil are sometimes perceived to be transgressing against femininity norms and appropriate gender behaviour (Fadil 2011: 85; Göle 2003). Women, consequently, are conscious of their dress styles and the way that they convey their identities to others, due to their interpretations of Islam and personal preference. They consider themselves to be modest, yet the definition of ‘modesty’ and appropriate dress is perpetually contested by strangers – both non-Muslim and Muslim and often fluctuates between different places. Four veiled women acknowledge others’ awareness of their dress, in particular that it may not be modest enough relative to what others (presumably Muslim) would prefer. As both non-Muslims and Muslims become “hyper-aware of how you look”, Halima thinks more carefully about her clothing and the image she conveys in public:

I err on the side of more modest, because I feel like a role model ... [and] you have to hold yourself to a higher standard ... So if I’m setting the standard lax for myself, then I don’t know what kind of message I’m sending [to younger women]. So I really would rather have a very high standard in terms of how I dress ... making sure that I’m dressed

well, which sounds silly but, a lot of girls don't wear *hijab* because ... they feel ugly, or they'll feel like I can't look nice if I wear *hijab*, so I make sure that my clothes are nice and that they're clean and like ironed ... I make sure that I'm not sloppy. And I make sure that I am maybe a little more modest than I would be in my like everyday life ... because people are staring at me all day...

The veil opens women up to criticism about their sartorial choices because they are so easily identifiable as Muslim, just as it may make them role models for others. Wearing *hijab*, incidentally, can have implications within, and reactions from, both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Women not visibly marked as Muslim do not experience these kinds of modesty critiques, except in situations where their Muslim identity is evident. In 'religious' spaces, other visible markers may set women apart; for instance, Walette does not veil and sometimes may not be immediately perceived as Muslim, except when in Islamic contexts. In fact, she notes sometimes attracting attention in mosques with her less 'modest' clothing, dress standards that are highly contextual. What remains consistent then is that there is considerable disagreement about what constitutes modesty – and the veil is only one dimension of this (i.e., others include clothing and behaviour). Moreover, (not) wearing the veil does not necessarily foster or hinder comfort in all situations. Rather, an individual sense of belonging is very much contingent on the normative values within a particular place.

'Race' also structures participants' experiences in public areas. Over half of the women discussed 'race', and interspersed their narratives by describing themselves as 'brown', 'black', and/or "not white".<sup>31</sup> Race proved particularly salient in the narratives of Somali participants – all of whom veil. This is perhaps an indication that the intersection between race, religion, and gender may be more pronounced for certain ethno-racial groups. Savannah, for example, witnesses the implications of race and ethnic identity in her current neighbourhood, St. Laurent. She notes that the police often target individuals in this area of the city, a fact she attributes to

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<sup>31</sup> White is described in the interviews as more than simply race – it was also used to connote values and culture.

racial stereotyping. Halima, similarly, notes that being ‘black’ “had a much bigger influence on [her] identity growing up than being Muslim”. As she began veiling later in life, her visible signifier growing up was often race, which she describes as challenging dimension of her identity within multiple communities. With multi-ethnic groups, peers highlighted the way that she spoke and the texture of her hair, while in the black (Somali) community she was told that she was too “brainy” and spoke “English too well”. These experiences left Halima feeling uncomfortable and out of place, as different facets of her identity – race, language, and education – were used to place her at the margins in various communities. Race and ethnicity then may also have implications for second-generation Muslim women as they move through public space, and may enhance the challenges faced by women who veil.

Race and ethnicity, in addition to religion, can impact movement through public space, and as a consequence some women find aspects of public space – whether marked by a Muslim identity or not – as being uncomfortable. For both veiled and non-veiled second-generation Muslim women, a multiplicity of markers – such as religion, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and dress – play a role in shaping their experiences of public space, as well as the ways that they navigate and understand daily life in Ottawa. Even as they may accentuate one identity over another in particular contexts, these identities are very much intertwined as the women experience public space everyday.

### *Comfortable Spaces*

Participants make decisions on a daily basis – they choose to navigate places where they feel comfortable and welcome, and that align with their values. Comfort is described as a “general sense of familiarity with space” (Noble 2002: 56), as well as feeling that one is ‘in

place' and belongs. Visible factors play a significant role in how 'comfortable' one feels as they navigate public space. Religion, dress, race, gender, and ethnicity each come into play daily in public for the women interviewed, making some places more comfortable than others. However, when it came to identifying 'comfortable' spaces, participants had difficulty pinpointing the public areas where they felt particularly at ease – perhaps an indication that these women feel comfortable, and safe, in most city spaces. Women highlighted a variety of general areas where they can hang out and feel at ease: coffee shops, restaurants, gyms, private homes and Islamic events (such as classes or *halaqas*). These places are all quite common in the everyday lives of Canadians, and are sites where women mix easily with diverse social groups. Although they faced challenging encounters occasionally, negative or uncomfortable experiences by and large did not deter them from going to different areas of the city.

Despite research findings that will be discussed later in the chapter, wearing *hijab* can also enhance comfort in public. One-quarter discussed a benefit in public to veiling – it can lead to encounters with both Muslims and non-Muslims where they are made to feel welcome and comfortable. Those experiences were believed not to be possible without visible religious markers. For instance, some participants have experienced thoughtful acts from peers and strangers because of their veil, such as colleagues pointing out prayer spaces in the workplace (Nadia), more smiles and kindness from strangers, exchanging greetings with fellow Muslims (Lara), or fast-food restaurant workers taking care to meet Islamic *halal* needs (Serena).<sup>32</sup> These encounters make the navigation of public significantly more comfortable, and make women feel more “welcome”. Such experiences likely would not occur without the women’s outward display of religious belief, as in these interactions strangers and acquaintances use visible religious symbols to facilitate engagement.

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<sup>32</sup> For example, by changing their gloves and knives to prevent any pork products from touching her food.

This widespread comfort is perhaps a reflection that second-generation Muslim women feel a sense of ownership within much of Ottawa's public space. Noble and Poynting (2010: 502) point out that "[e]ffective citizenship requires access to and comfort in a multitude of spaces", and the women interviewed appear to have both. Despite some everyday challenges navigating public space (as will be discussed in subsequent sections), their experiences in the city have facilitated strong, confident individuals who fail to be deterred by some uncomfortable encounters. Through interactions in social institutions, schools, various communities, and their families, these women feel comfortable in much of the city.

### *The Nature of Discomfort*

Most individuals, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, feel uncomfortable at some point or another in daily life. However, as Noble (2005) argues, "the capacity to be comfortable is unevenly distributed amongst the population" (107-8). Namely, the dominant population often feels more at ease in public space – as their practices (such as holidays) may be considered more normal than those of individuals who embody ethnic or religious difference (Noble 2005). The tension between 'Canadian' practices and those of minority groups – at least in the eyes of the dominant population – can make spaces uncomfortable for those who appear different. For some individuals, discomfort is experienced through unpleasant situations, both overt and oblique. For others however, discomfort does not stem from tangible experiences but rather from the social values and meanings associated with a particular place.

When discussing discomfort in spaces – whether actual or imagined – four women mention feeling different from other individuals in public. As Nadia mentions, the veil 'stands out', indicating "from miles away [that] she's a Muslim girl". While not necessarily a source of

tension in interactions with strangers, their visible Muslim identity is often at the back of participants' minds as they move through public space. They acknowledge, however, not knowing specifically what strangers think of them. For example, Walette (non-veiled) "assume[s] that [strangers] don't like me or they don't like difference", but acknowledges that attention could be for other reasons such as the way she is dressed. Even though strangers' thoughts about Muslims or veiling are not frequently articulated to the women – at least in a manner that confirms participant concerns – such thoughts do have everyday implications for them. These anecdotes also reveal the ways that second-generation Muslim women's daily lives and experiences are structured by multiple facets of their identity that may distinguish them in public space, in particular religion, ethnicity, race, gender, dress, and language.

Feeling different does not necessarily limit participants' mobility, but it can structure their identity and sense of comfort when in public. Consequently, four veiled participants acknowledge some public discomfort due to the *hijab* – in particular due to the way it is perceived, and sometimes reacted to, by strangers. For instance, Sarah "get[s] looks" when working out at the gym, but is never sure if they are "because [she is] veiled, or if it's because [she is] working out". Amina similarly remains "vigilant" in public, due to fears of strangers' behaviour (such as pulling her *hijab* off). Participants did not always suggest particular instances where they were subtly made to feel different by strangers, yet did highlight that these thoughts are often on their mind. In many ways, however, these subtle instances of discomfort are more challenging to deal with, as women often have little recourse to address strangers' behaviour and stares.

This discomfort stems in part from both Muslim and non-Muslim "expectations" around veiling (Walette). In particular, veiled women may in many ways be perceived as experts or

“ambassadors” of all Muslims (Walette), and may be asked for their opinions on almost any issue pertaining to Islam. As visible, expert Muslims, “people assume where you stand on issues” (Savannah). They also “always ask you your opinion on stuff and then they expect you to almost form an opinion” (Amina). Inherent in this behaviour is an implicit assumption on the part of non-Muslims that veiled Muslim women are all quite equally knowledgeable and passionate about any issue affecting their religion. Speaking about his research on Arab Muslims in Australia, Noble describes this “reduction to a category” as “both the removal of the capacity to be acknowledged as ‘fully human’ ... or the capacity to be legitimate citizens” (2005: 116). When the focus in interactions becomes women’s ethno-religious difference, their ability to be perceived as complex social actors is diminished (Noble 2005: 116). This, of course, ignores the fact that there are many differences between Muslims – in terms of ethnicity, age, degree of adherence, language, personality, and interest about a given issue or controversy. Consequently, stereotyping and homogenization by strangers – both Muslim and non-Muslim – can exacerbate discomfort when moving through public spaces.

Public prayer is also a practice that can leave some women feeling uncomfortable, a factor mentioned by one-third of the women. In particular, Nadia and Sarah feel uneasy about praying in their workplaces because, as Sarah indicates, it “might be startling for other people” in that environment. Candy, on the other hand, lacks time during the day to pray, and is concerned that such breaks may give her employers the wrong idea about her work ethic. What unites these two scenarios is that prayer can also serve as an uncomfortable aspect of daily public experiences. Social hierarchies are at play in professional employment sectors (Amin 2002; Ellis *et al.* 2004) and shape the ways that women perform identities within their workplace (McDowell 1995). Although women have not been told explicitly that religious practices are

uncomfortable for co-workers, participants have the impression that such behaviour would not be well-received. Notably, this discomfort may change with time. Serena used to find public prayer ‘mortifying’ and would pray in shopping mall change rooms to avoid attention. However, it “doesn’t bug [her] now” and she is quite comfortable praying publicly. Prayer, regardless, remains a complicated element of some women’s everyday experiences. While Islamic practices such as prayer only factor into select parts of each participant’s day, they can still make some spaces uncomfortable – particularly as they are made to choose between faith and fitting into a broader social context.

*“I Wouldn’t Venture There” : Uncomfortable Social Relations*

Other places become uncomfortable not because of markers of Islamic faith or culture, but due to the nature of social relations in these environments. This is particularly true in relation to Islamic values. The consumption of alcohol is problematic for a number of women – both veiled and non-veiled. The majority of participants – with the exception of Lisa – discuss feeling uneasy in places like bars, pubs and restaurants where alcohol is served and actively consumed, particularly in the evening where excessive drinking can be commonplace. This discomfort is not necessarily due to the presence of alcohol per se, but also the behaviours that accompany drinking (such as violence and sexual encounters). Bars, for example, are places more prone to sexual and physical violence – as well as excessive alcohol consumption (Parks *et al.* 1998: 702). The social relations and behaviours that occur in these sites are decidedly uncomfortable for some women, particularly as many Muslims do not partake in such activities.

The degree of discomfort in bars, however, varies among participants. Even restaurants with a large alcohol selection on offer tend to feel “morally ambiguous” and “uncomfortable” for

Halima (veiled). On the other hand, one-quarter of women – both veiled and non-veiled – felt that certain places of alcohol consumption such as restaurants and pubs only needed to be avoided at night. In the evening, the use of many of these places changes as different types of social relations occur at night compared to the day. Nadia highlights the change in convention:

I was working ... [and my colleagues said] “let’s go for a drink”. I was like okay whatever, I’ll go and I’ll grab like some fruit drink or whatever. I wouldn’t mind going to Blue Cactus, like a restaurant bar, but then we went to Pier 21. I was like oh great. But I went with them. I felt slightly uncomfortable, but I knew I wasn’t going to stay there for like long and it was sixish, the sun was still out so it wasn’t too crowded. So I felt slightly uncomfortable, but other than that – I mean I wouldn’t have stayed with them. After a while ... I told them I was going to leave and they were still I’m guessing bar-hopping, so I ... [said] I’m just going to go home, you know I’m tired. I didn’t tell them I can’t drink, I don’t like being – I was just like no, I’m tired. It’s fine. ... [I prefer] places that are mostly like restaurant-ish and not so pub-ish. And it depends on the times of the day as well. Like I would stay away from Pier 21 at twelve, at midnight on St Patty’s day, you know. Like I wouldn’t venture there.

Night, for instance, may bring increased alcohol consumption, crude behaviour, and a “meat market” environment, features that do not necessarily conform to Muslim values (Walette).

Women’s discomfort in these places stems from perceived social relations – the possibility for sexual or physical victimization, as well as the feeling that just being in such places puts their religious values in question.

Shisha bars are also regarded by many women as somewhat uncomfortable places, often because they are interpreted as being strongly masculine. In shisha bars, one can smoke a water pipe, and typically tea rather than alcohol is served. Shisha bars were mentioned in two-thirds of the interviews, and were discussed in several different ways. A number of participants enjoy them as social places, while others actively avoid them. Candy and Sarah, for example, enjoy going for shisha and have tried a number of locations, several of which (such as, Bab El-Hara and Sindbad) are located near Heron Gate. Others do it less frequently, or smoke shisha “with [their] friends at home” (Layan). For the women who actively avoid shisha bars, they do so for a

number of reasons. One that stands out, however, is that shisha bars can prove to be male-dominated and sexualized spaces. Such environments are quite often full of men who can create a “meat market” feeling (Halima), and some places just feel “creepy” for women (Sarah).<sup>33</sup> This wording on the part of women reveals how gender divisions can be perpetuated by men through subtle stares and comments. By making women uncomfortable, men serve “to police the gendered nature of public/private boundaries” of particular places (Noble 2005: 117). At the same time, these reactions from men can work in conjunction with ethno-religious community norms around ‘appropriate’ behaviour. Layan, for example, has been warned by her brothers never to go to shisha bars because “bad girls go there to pick up guys and guys pick up girls”. These domestic constructions of ‘bad’ behaviour can be used to reproduce community norms around proper and deviant behaviour for women (i.e., that they should not go to shisha bars and fraternize with strange men), structuring women’s understanding and navigation of particular places. The sexualized nature of shisha bars, consequently, makes a number of the women uncomfortable, particularly in terms of the gender relations and ethno-religious community norms that play out within these places.

Shisha bars have something of an ambiguous status. In many ways, these places should serve as comfortable environments for Muslim women – no alcohol is served and they are places to socialize with fellow Muslims and co-ethnics. Yet such places are regarded as being quite masculine, and this set of social meanings effectively limits many women’s access and creates discomfort through unwanted stares from men. Even as women may belong in these places because of their ethno-religious identities, their gendered identities may set them apart.

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<sup>33</sup> Prior to conducting this research project, I also visited the Sindbad shisha bar, near Heron Gate, and can attest to these women’s experiences. The place was full almost entirely of men and it made me, and the women with whom I was with, feel decidedly uncomfortable.

Shisha bars can also become uncomfortable locales because of their association with the Arab community. In some ways, these environments come to be regulated by the social values of the Arabic community, something that may make non-Arabs, or those who avoid Arabic spaces, uncomfortable. Even as these shisha bars are superficially accessible to a wide range of ethno-religious groups, they are also subject to normative values created by particular social groups. This sometimes has the consequence of regulating the access and comfort of individuals who enter, such as women and other [non-Arab] ethno-racial groups.

Other ethnic spaces – areas strongly populated by co-ethnics – are also identified by several women as being potentially uncomfortable. One-quarter of participants discuss the challenges of navigating ethnic spaces. Some women – in particular Lisa (non-veiled Palestinian) and Layan (veiled Lebanese) – note avoiding areas where there were numerous fellow Arabs because they felt they were being ‘stared at’. As Layan says:

[S]ometimes me and my friend, we want to go to certain places [such as] restaurants and whatnot, and then [we think] ‘that place has too many Arabs, we don’t want to go there’. Basically, you probably know, since you’ve been to Arab countries that they stare too much ... especially if they know you. ... we like to steer away from all that, so we like to go places that don’t have too many Arabs [*Laugh*].

Arab-heavy spaces then can be uncomfortable for some women. They are environments where “[y]ou can’t be yourself, you’re always judged” and gossiped about (Lisa), which may be due to Lisa’s belief that “Arabs tend to be somewhat conservative”.<sup>34</sup> When prompted for particular spaces where their ethnic group was prevalent, Lisa and Layan mentioned an assortment of retail spaces – yet not ones immediately associated with Arabs.<sup>35</sup> Lisa and Layan avoid these sites because their behaviour does not necessarily conform to prevailing expectations in their ethnic

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<sup>34</sup> Anna – a non-veiled Pakistani participant – also discussed feeling uncomfortable in certain areas of Toronto because of “stereotypical Indian-Pakistani guys” who “have a habit of creeping you out”.

<sup>35</sup> Places suggested by Lisa and Layan were consumption spaces such as restaurants (Hard Rock Cafe, Lone Star; particular Tim Hortons locations) and shopping centres (Rideau Centre, St. Laurent).

group. Layan feels uncomfortable in such spaces as she typically visits with male friends – a practice that is not necessarily condoned in the Arabic community. Lisa similarly feels that her behaviour is judged by fellow Arabs; she provides examples such as speaking with men, drinking, smoking, or clubbing as taboo behaviour for Arab women. Such experiences are strongly linked to normative gender ‘expectations’ within Arabic communities that women should not meet with unrelated men or indulge in alcohol. Identity intersections reveal the complex negotiations that second-generation Muslim women must undertake everyday between communities, particularly given that social relationships with men are somewhat inevitable when living in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

Extended family and community acquaintances also cause some women to feel out of place. Serena often felt uncomfortable at ethnic community events after she began wearing the *hijab*, in part due to the newness of veiling:

What looks good, what style is good, what style is that? I didn't know ... what's comfortable ... I mean I had just started wearing it, and with our clothing, it's even more awkward because ... there's a *dupatta*, so then I didn't like the idea of wearing the separate hijab, because I felt like it looked weird. So I wanted to use *dupatta*, but I wasn't comfortable wrapping it, and it was just very awkward, so I find that I was a lot more comfortable in western clothing wearing it, then I was in our own clothes. That was a big factor. But I felt like, when I started wearing it, and I remember going to my first wedding and getting so many dirty looks, getting so many comments like, 'you used to be so pretty', 'why are you being extreme?' ... I was really upset. It was really really hard for me. It was not a good time at all.

Serena's membership in the Pakistani community had previously been unchallenged, yet when her religious and “western” identities became more pronounced through dress, her belonging within the community was called into question. Serena's example clearly illustrates the difficulties for some women in balancing different facets of identity, and the ways that these

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<sup>36</sup> This feeling of not fitting in was also discussed by Somali participants, yet was not as salient for them as for the Arab participants described above. They mention not feeling Somali enough because they are not as familiar with the language and customs as are other Somalis. These feelings have caused them some discomfort in Somali circles.

intersections are manifested in clothing. Even though she superficially appeared to belong among fellow co-ethnics, her choice of dress set her apart from other co-ethnics and transgressed community norms around ‘appropriate’ displays of religiosity and dress. Because Serena’s piety did not necessarily correlate with the position taken by others in her ethnic group, a number of uncomfortable encounters occurred. Serena saw these reactions from co-ethnics as “defence mechanisms” because they assumed she was “projecting the belief [of wearing *hijab*] on them”. Other women also discuss varying degrees of discomfort among co-ethnics. A few Somali and Arab women discuss feeling out of place within their ethnic community due to a lack of familiarity with the language, cultural traditions, and their parents’ country of origin more generally. In these narratives, the women discuss feeling like outsiders with respect to meeting the community’s normative values. For some women, religious values placed them on the margins, for others language does. In each case, community spaces could be rendered uncomfortable, while at the same time superficially appearing to be the most accessible.

In many of these, gender and ethno-religious visibility and the social meanings associated with certain places can make participants uncomfortable by placing them on the margins. The discomfort that many women note, however, is more linked to normative values within particular places or to how one looks, rather than to specific tangible experiences. For example, the sexual nature of bars can cause discomfort, but so too can the gendered relations and emphasis on particular identities that occur in ethnic spaces and shisha bars. In the latter places in particular, women’s ethno-religious appearance seems to mark membership, but gendered and Canadian identities can still set them apart.

Strangers and acquaintances, then, have significant power in shaping women’s everyday experiences in public, in particular, the degree to which they are (un)comfortable. As Noble

(2005) highlights, discomfort “has implications for understanding forms of national and social belonging” more broadly (117) and reflect the ways that individual citizenship is influenced and experienced daily within various places. It also reveals how (dis)comfort structures second-generation Muslim women’s performance of their various identities, particularly as many uncomfortable encounters are subtle and challenging to address. Yet discomfort can also arise from negative experiences in which being made to feel out of place is far from an oblique or subtle experience.

### ***“You Can’t Express it” – Subtle and Overt Experiences of Discrimination***

Experiences of differential treatment can be manifest in overt ways, such as confrontation or rude comments, and these most definitely affect participants’ comfort in public space. Fortunately, many of the women interviewed experienced very few blatant experiences of discrimination by other Canadians. Negative reactions to difference, however, can also be conveyed in subtle ways – actions that are harder for participants to identify and describe.<sup>37</sup> As Essed (1991) suggests, oblique experiences often go unchallenged by minority individuals, even if they are more common in everyday life. She, along with Noble (2005) and Velayutham (2009), propose that these types of experiences in public are not evenly distributed, rather they occur much more frequently in the lives of minority individuals. This discrepancy in treatment – between who is made to feel comfortable, and who is not – reflects constructions of national citizenship and belonging. This, in turn, reveals the ways that public space “is coded ... for certain categories of people rather than for others” and is shaped around certain identities such as ethnicity, culture, religion, and language (Painter and Philo 1995: 116).

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<sup>37</sup> I have drawn distinctions here between subtle and overt forms of differential treatment, yet there is significant overlap between the two categories, and interpretation is contingent on the individual.

Over the course of the interviews, participants identified a number of subtle, daily ways that strangers can make them feel different. Oblique acts – such as commenting on ethnicity or religion, stereotyping, snubbing, or staring – tended to be less memorable to participants. Nevertheless nine women mentioned such experiences at least once or twice during the interviews. The nature of subtle experiences varied considerably between veiled and non-veiled participants. Women who visibly identify themselves as Muslim often experience more challenges – from both Muslim and non-Muslim communities – than do non-veiled women.

Stares and snubs of non-Muslims proved to be particularly consequential for veiled participants. Such subtle experiences are not necessarily meant to cause offence, yet they often leave participants feeling marginalized. Amina’s undergraduate convocation illustrates an instance where her Islamic difference was made evident:

I wish I never went. It’s terrible. ... they were shaking everyone’s hand and I guess I went up to the stage and there was no hand. ... I ended up sticking my hand out and [the University President] eventually [shook] it ... But I was like well why don’t I get – I don’t understand, right? You shook everyone else’s hand ... Do you just hate me or something? I don’t get it. I think it was because of my veil.

In this case, university officials made an assumption about Amina and her values – that as a veiled woman, she would not want to shake hands with a man.<sup>38</sup> While such practices may be followed by some Muslims, many – particularly in the west – do not abstain from shaking hands. Yet such stereotypes are pervasive and, in Amina’s case, impact the quality of her interactions with strangers. Notably, this experience occurred within a university, a place that should (ideally) be more reflective of challenging stereotypes and diversity. In some of Serena’s retail experiences – for example where store greeters will talk to everyone but her – being a veiled woman seems to structure interactions. However, she prefers the “same treatment” – just as

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<sup>38</sup> Some Muslim practitioners do not believe in touching members of the opposite sex – aside from close family – and practices such as hand-shaking are not used. For more information, see Fadil 2009.

Amina does – and does not want to be made out to be “different or better”. In both instances, strangers are able to highlight the women’s difference through small subtle reactions like refusing to greet them, or shake their hand.

A number of Sarah and Walette’s experiences stem from their workplaces, and both illustrate ways that difference is subtly articulated in encounters. Their co-workers try to demonstrate that they are open to other religious practices and attempt to be politically correct. For example, some ask the same questions about Islam multiple times (Sarah) or frequently comment on how “cute” their *hijab* is (Walette). Although the women’s co-workers have attempted to show interest in Islamic practices, “this does not necessarily translate to a respect for difference or signal any shift in private attitudes to otherness” (Wise and Velayutham 2009: 6). The border-crossing actions of co-workers do not always come across as ‘welcoming’, and both Sarah and Walette admit to frustration with these types of experiences in a workplace. Some authors describe the workplace as a key site to negotiate racial and religious differences (Amin 2002; Ellis *et al.* 2004: 621). These interactions, however, are still structured by social hierarchies, particularly in the professional environments where these two women work. It is also suggested by Kasinitz *et al.* (2008) that highly-educated second-generation individuals – such as Sarah and Walette – are better able to discern discrimination and are often more likely to be put into more contexts where they are an ethnic and/or religious minority (329).

Acts, however, do not necessarily have to be directed at participants to make them feel uncomfortable. Several non-veiled participants also discussed the implications of visibility, noting that in their case a lack of discrete religious symbols – like the veil – may allow them to escape personal attacks. Fadil (2011: 85-9), in fact, suggests that non-veiling is often perceived to be a ‘secular’ or ‘neutral’ act in western contexts. As their Muslim identity is not readily

visible, it means “not being discriminated against by other people” (Lisa). Nevertheless, the three women contend that they are subject to differential treatment, albeit indirectly. For instance, because she does not appear ‘Arab’ or Muslim, Lisa explains that “you see how racist people really are because they’ll confide in me”. Consequently, she has overheard strangers criticizing women who wear a face veil, and other Arabs. Anna similarly discusses how her lack of visibility as Muslim has opened her up to criticisms against Islam. For example, a colleague in her workplace:

[P]assed comments [about a visibly Muslim colleague], not judging her, but to me saying, I don’t get why they have to pray in there ... [R: Did she know that you pray?] No, I don’t think she did. She knows that I’m Muslim, but ... people make the assumption because you don’t wear *hijab*, you’re not really that religious. And sometimes it’s true. I mean I’m definitely not as religious as the girl who’s in my lab. She, she’s very focused on studying her religion, but ... [the co-worker] didn’t realize to a certain extent how religious I am ... and I kind of just brush it off ...

While her co-worker knows that Anna is also Muslim, she feels “comfortable” making such comments to Anna because her faith is not as apparent as that of their veiled colleague. As their Muslim identity is not readily visible in public encounters, non-veiled women may experience the full brunt of criticisms against Muslims – comments that would normally be held back in order to maintain political correctness.

Racial discrimination was also brought up, primarily by Somali women, as a cause for discomfort in some public encounters. Halima, in particular, noted that during childhood her peers highlighted her racial otherness. Some would touch her hair without permission or ask questions like “why do you talk like that”? While her peers’ behaviour was not meant to be offensive, her race “made [her] feel different or other”. Even as Halima shares many similarities with her fellow Canadians, markers of identity such as language and (racial) appearance are used in these interactions to make her uncomfortable and feel outside of the normative Canadian ideal. In many ways, such daily encounters can naturalize the racial superiority of particular groups and

highlight “underlying relations of power between dominant and minority racial/ethnic groups” (Velayutham 2009: 262). Moreover, these encounters convey the ways that dominant social groups can convey belonging and citizenship through everyday interactions, practices that are seldom possible for (ethno-religious) minorities (Noble 2005; Painter and Philo 1995). The articulation of difference – whether racial or religious – can have long-term consequences for participants, and cause them to question their place in Canadian society.

Subtle encounters weigh heavily on the mind, and – as Savannah mentions – are challenging to “express”. Although “not tangible”, Savannah still interprets such encounters as discrimination, and she notes that it is far from easy to use such situations to challenge or educate individuals. For example, when Savannah gets “rude comments” and “the looks” – “things that you can’t call people out on” – she finds there is little recourse for response. Walette similarly discusses that subtle experiences provide few opportunities to break stereotypes as “no one ever confronts you”.<sup>39</sup> The difficulty then with such interactions is that participants still experience discomfort, yet they are unable to (easily) confront and challenge the perpetrators of subtle acts. Moreover, these experiences in public reveal much about citizenship and belonging more broadly. As Painter and Philo suggest (1995):

If people cannot be present in public spaces ... without feeling uncomfortable, victimized and basically out of place, then it must be questionable whether or not these people can be regarded as citizens at all; or at least, whether they will regard themselves as full citizens of their host community able to exist on an equal footing with other people who seems perfectly ‘at home’ when moving about in public spaces (115).

These subtle, everyday experiences then have significant implications for ethno-religious minorities, particularly in terms of belonging, citizenship, and identity. These challenges are in many ways exacerbated for second-generation Muslim women, as these experiences are also

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<sup>39</sup> This is something that Walette attributes predominantly to experiences in Ottawa. In Québec – Montreal and Gatineau specifically – strangers and acquaintances express their feelings more directly.

highly gendered (Noble 2005: 117).

*“She Made a Point to Say That to me”: Tangible Encounters*

Overt insinuations of difference or discrimination can be challenging to endure, but some women do use these encounters to challenge strangers and their perceptions. Whether instances happened to them directly – or to a friend or family member – all but one participant has experienced at least one negative encounter, such as being yelled or sworn at, or told to “go home” (Table 5.1). The nature of the interactions and comments differed, yet many of the encounters occurred in public spaces that the individuals navigate frequently. It must be emphasized that the comments did not subsequently limit their movement in the city.

In many of the participants’ more negative interactions, they were made to feel less ‘Canadian’ as strangers highlighted their racial or religious difference. Anna (non-veiled, Pakistani), for instance, recalls that when she worked retail, an older woman came to her cash station and before Anna could even greet her, the customer said: “It’s Merry Christmas, not Happy Holidays”. Here the customer is deliberately making statements about Anna’s identity: first, that Christmas – and by extension Christianity – should be celebrated publicly in Canada (i.e., to the neglect of other religious celebrations). Secondly, she is emphasizing that Anna – due to her race – does not celebrate Christmas, thereby placing her on the margins of one of Canada’s most popular festivals. The comment did not go unnoticed by Anna: “[the lady] made a point to say that to me ... it’s not a coincidence”. In this encounter, the customer makes assumptions about Anna’s place in Canadian society, due to race, culture, and language. As Noble and Poynting (2010) suggests these kinds of daily interactions “reproduce larger structures of power” (493) and this exchange is no exception, revealing underlying assumptions of

**Table 5.1: Differential Treatment – Participant Experiences in Ottawa**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DIRECT INCIDENT</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>INDIRECT INCIDENT<sup>i</sup></b>	
Amina (V <sup>ii</sup> )	Told to “go back to her country” (S) <sup>iii</sup>	Amina (V)	Treated poorly by a male colleague (P)	
	Convocation - hand not shaken by university president (S)		Veiled friend yelled at to “take off your <i>hijab</i> ” (S)	
Anna (NV)	Working retail, told “It’s Christmas, not Happy Holidays” (S)		Co-worker told “she doesn't have to wear the veil” (P)	
	Iranian colleague mocked Islam and its practices (P)	Friend and co-worker (one veiled, one Somali) dealing with customer who asked to “speak to a Canadian” (S)		
Halima (NV <sup>iv</sup> )	Teased/questioned due to race (for example, style of talking; hair texture, “too brainy”) (P)	Anna (NV)	Overheard criticisms against Muslim colleagues (P)	
Nadia (V)	Yelled at with friend and told she was “going to get shot” (S)	Lara (V)	A friend wanted to veil and chose to consult her employers first. Employers told her not to wear hijab, because they “had a certain image to keep” (P)	
Sarah (V)	Co-worker repeatedly asked: “Why are you wearing that on your head”?; and telling her she was “oppressed” (P)			
Savannah (V)	Ignored by fellow students in university program (S)	Layan (V)	Veiled sister told to “take towel off head” and “go back home” (S)	
	Told racist comments at movie theatre (S)	Lisa (NV)	(Veiled) sister “harassed” on the streets (S)	
	Told by Muslim strangers that she “shouldn't be wearing that” (S)		Overheard rude comments about a woman in <i>niqab</i> (face veil) on the bus (S)	
Serena (V)	Asked by ethnic community members why she was being “extreme”?; “you used to be so pretty” (E)		Bus drivers wouldn't stop for (veiled) sister (S)	
Walette (V <sup>iv</sup> )	Told “why are you wearing that”?; “It's a free country” (S)	Muna (V)	Overheard discriminatory comments against Arab youth (S)	
	Getting a health card - in both cases clerks implied she was a foreign citizen (S)		Veiled friend called a “terrorist” following 9/11	
<p><sup>i</sup> Indirect incidents refer to two types of experiences, those that: 1) participants interpreted as ‘subtle’, or 2) happened to participants’ friends and family (i.e., not to respondents directly).</p> <p><sup>ii</sup> V (Veiled) and NV (Non-Veiled) refer to the participants’ Muslim visibility at time of incident.</p> <p><sup>iii</sup> Incident instigated by: S: Strangers; P: Peers/Co-workers; E: Ethnic Community Members</p> <p><sup>iv</sup> Participant currently (non-)veiled.</p> <p>NB Candy did not share any incidents in the interviews.</p>		Nadia (V)	Asked in different situations if she is “from here” (such as at a blood clinic and a bus stop) (S)	
				Sister criticized by Moroccan boss – asked “why are you wearing the veil”? Told “that’s stupid” (P)
			Sarah (V)	Often asked questions by co-workers about veiling and Islam, yet “they ask it more than once, so you realize that they’re not really listening, they just want to say it”.
			Serena (V)	Ignored by greeters at retail stores (S)
				Dirty looks by ethnic community when began veiling (E)
		Walette (V <sup>iv</sup> )	Co-worker repeatedly commented on her veil and would frequently “make a point that she’s accommodating [her]” Stares in public (S)	

appropriate practice within Canadian society.

For some women, ethno-racial visibility is inescapable and influences everyday encounters, whether they do or do not veil. Amina, for example, describes an encounter in which both being veiled and a woman of colour are used to place her and other Muslim women on the margins of Canadian society. In the incident, a friend and a colleague were working at a retail store in Westboro. The veiled colleague was dealing with a challenging customer who after an exchange asked to see the manager, who was Amina's non-veiled, Somali friend. Upon dealing with Amina's friend, the customer then asked to "speak to a Canadian", a reaction that outraged both women. As in Anna's example, the customer was implying that individuals can be less Canadian due to racial and religious difference. Walette also experienced this when getting a provincial health card at a government institution. In one instance she veiled, while in the other she did not. In both cases Walette felt that the clerks believed her to be foreign-born due to her race and – in the first instance – her religious values. Both encounters left Walette feeling out of place and that "little things" like "what you look [like] or your name" can mark people as 'non-Canadian' in a multicultural society. Such is the power that the dominant population has over minority individuals – they have the ability to identify who is "Canadian" and who is different. Visible ethno-racial markers, whether an individual veils or not, can distinguish women from fellow Canadians.

These encounters, predicated on ethno-racial or religious values, leave participants feeling uneasy about their Canadian identity. They also illustrate the ways that being 'Canadian' can be contested and used to marginalize individuals in public on a daily basis. Participants are conscious of pervasive stereotypes in Canadian society, and how resistant these are to change, even in the most benign of public encounters. Likewise, these experiences have implications for

citizenship, belonging, and identity on a larger scale. They reveal the many ways that public space can be coded – used to make minority individuals feel out of place (Essed 1991; Noble 2005; Painter and Philo 1995; Velayutham 2009) and on the margins of Canadian society.

### *Life in the Tracts: Heron Gate, St. Laurent and Bayshore*

Due to these experiences, one might assume that Muslim women may feel more comfortable in areas where Islamic values are more common. In order to find ‘Muslim’ areas of the city – as discussed in the third chapter – three Ottawa census tracts were highlighted due to their large Muslim, Arab, and West Asian populations.<sup>40</sup> A number of the women live in or near two of the selected areas – Heron Gate and St. Laurent – or have previously lived there, and these participants had the most to share about these neighbourhoods.<sup>41</sup> For participants who do not reside in these areas, they visit mainly for social (for example, shisha bars or movie theatres) and retail activities (such as shopping malls, or grocery stores), and for restaurants. These places were mentioned most prevalently when discussing the neighbourhoods. Heron Gate is the most accessible and familiar for participants – only Amina had never been there. St. Laurent and Bayshore are also frequented by participants, yet some find the areas to be distant from their homes. Describing the areas was fairly straightforward for participants, yet characterizing these neighbourhoods as religious – or as more comfortable – proved to be more challenging.

### *A Religious – or Ethnic – Space?*

When asked whether any of the neighbourhoods would be considered Muslim, there were

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<sup>40</sup> During the interviews, another ‘Muslim’ area emerged – a number of participants suggested Barrhaven as an area that is comfortable or welcoming to Muslims.

<sup>41</sup> Layan, Halima and Serena live within five kilometres of Heron Gate, while Savannah attended a neighbourhood high school and Lisa grew up there. Lara and Savannah reside in St. Laurent.

a range of responses from participants. For several women, a Muslim space – or an area that was comfortable for Muslims – often was described as a mosque, or places where Islamic values were recognized and easily maintained (for instance, fast food restaurants where staff change gloves for a Muslim client, or did not serve alcohol or pork). Another factor indicating the ‘Muslim’ identity of a space is the visibility of those residing there – namely the presence of other veiled women. This defining quality was mentioned by four women.<sup>42</sup> These women point out that a large presence of visible Muslim women may indicate a place where Islamic values and practices are more socially accepted. There are other visible facets that may mark these sites as more comfortable for Muslims – shops selling *halal* food and Islamic clothing or books. Anna gives the example of the Mona Lisa – an Islamic clothing store in Heron Gate – that makes the space more ‘Muslim’ for her. The religious values of a neighbourhood are often designated by visible signs – places of worship, retail spaces and practitioners.

Religious characteristics are not so clear-cut. A few women pointed out the challenge of identifying a place as Muslim, as religious values often overlap with ethnic identity. Likewise, interpretations of Islamic practices and teachings can vary considerably between ethnic groups. Due to this intersection, Nadia is careful to distinguish between the two, noting that “a Muslim neighbourhood can also be a Somali neighbourhood” or “a Bengali neighbourhood”. Lisa is also hesitant to identify any of the neighbourhoods as Muslim “[b]ecause it’s a mix of the two” and Arab identity is also embedded in these spaces, perhaps more so than religious values. Aside from spaces that serve a specific religious purpose, these ‘Muslim’ areas in fact become more linked to resident ethnic identities – categories that frequently overlap and intersect. Religion is not easily attributable to public space, and participant comfort or discomfort in such areas is

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<sup>42</sup> Lisa adds that Heron Gate is “probably 98 percent Muslim”, due to visible Islamic practices: “[t]he way they acted, what they believed” and that “a lot of women used to wear the *hijabs*” when she lived there. Similarly, Amina and Nadia point out the prevalence of veiled women in the Bayshore area as a suggestion of Muslim identity.

linked more to the behaviours of the dominant ethnic group than to religious ideals. Places, as Noble (2002) proposes, are often shaped by aesthetic markers that reflect the values of the population living within it, and these three neighbourhoods reveal the intersection of multiple identities – ethnicity, race, religion, and gender.

Ethnicity then becomes the important factor in defining such spaces – and participants’ sense of (dis)comfort in these areas was more often linked to ethnicity than to religion. As much as participants assert that such places may be comfortable for Muslims, a number of participants feel that the neighbourhoods are more defined by the ethnic identity of residents. Heron Gate in particular was often defined in terms of its Somali and Arabic residents, while Bayshore and St. Laurent were described as more ‘Arabic’ spaces.<sup>43</sup> Heron Gate elicits the most responses from participants in regard to ethnic identity, yet in general women feel more confident describing all three areas in terms of ethnicity, rather than religious values. This reveals the complex ways that identities intersect. Although these neighbourhoods are shaped by religious values with which most of the women are comfortable, ethno-racial and gender identities also structure their understanding of these places.

### *To be or not to be Comfortable*

It is believed by some that “...people tend to interact more often with people they understand and who are just like them” (Peters and de Haan 2011: 174). With that logic, one would presume that Muslim women – in particular those of Arab or Somali descent – would feel comfortable in the three neighbourhoods due to the prevalence of their ethnic group. However, such spaces do not necessarily prove to be more comfortable for participants. In fact, due to the

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<sup>43</sup> *Heron Gate*: Arabic presence mentioned by five women, while Somali presence mentioned by two. *St. Laurent*: Arabic presence suggested by four participants. *Bayshore*: Arabic presence mentioned by three women.

[Arabic] ethnic composition of these neighbourhoods, Lisa moves carefully through such spaces where she has “[a] lot less anonymity” as “there are a ton of Arabs there”. This is particularly the case in the south and east of Ottawa (i.e., Heron Gate and St. Laurent).<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Layan avoids a number of places in St. Laurent in order to evade her ethnic group and actively searches for places where there are few Arabs. Both strive for more anonymous – and multi-ethnic – areas, where their behaviour (such as hanging out with men) does not attract attention. The women present an interesting and complex set of responses: they are comfortable in Heron Gate because it is familiar and they have many (Arabic) friends in the area. In general, however, they prefer places where their ethnic group is not prevalent. Lisa, for instance, notes that she does not go to all places in Heron Gate “because [she] know[s] it’s going to be a lot more Arabs [and] Muslim there”. Gender, ethno-racial and Canadian identities structure women’s encounters in these areas, making the experience unpleasant for some.

Savannah also avoids her neighbourhood – St. Laurent – which she describes as being “monitored” and “police-dominated”. She attributes the police presence to the area’s religious and ethnic composition – people who “look like they’re going to be doing something”.<sup>45</sup> Lara reflects positively on living in the same area, yet Savannah’s experiences speak differently – perhaps due to racial differences (Lara is Lebanese, while Savannah is Somali). For Savannah, perceived racism has negatively impacted her sense of comfort in the place where she lives. Layan also notes that her veiled sister was told to “go back to her country” and to “take that towel off [her] head” while outside the St. Laurent shopping mall. Islamic markers and values then can certainly enhance an individual’s comfort in a particular neighbourhood. However, in

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<sup>44</sup> She provides the example of the St. Laurent Mall, the Tim Hortons at Walkley and Conroy Roads, and the Shawarma Palace on Rideau Street as places she avoids.

<sup>45</sup> She elaborates on this comment by stating that individuals within St. Laurent attract attention due to their race and to “being out at certain times” of the day. The latter comment refers particularly to young, Black males in her neighbourhood who are often targeted by police when they are out late at night.

areas where the dominant population is more likely to come into contact with minority individuals and groups, veiling can also exacerbate prejudices and lead to negative and uncomfortable experiences (Peters and de Haan 2011: 174).

In discussing these three neighbourhoods, the women saw each in fairly positive ways. Such neighbourhoods proved comfortable – but no more so than other city spaces. This reflects in part the nature of the second generation – a group that is capable of bridging differences between social groups. In Noble’s (2009b) work on second-generation youth in Australia, he came to the conclusion that this group moves relatively easily between different social groups – western, ethnic, and religious, among others (47-8; 55). The same can be said for the women interviewed in this study. They have certainly experienced some challenges in Ottawa’s public spaces, yet on the whole they remain comfortable moving through most spaces – whether they be multi-ethnic or predominantly Muslim or associated with one ethnic group.

### ***Conclusion***

Visibility, in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and dress, plays a significant role in shaping the quality of public experiences. In some places, choice of dress marks women as different – and may increase the likelihood of prejudicial treatment – while in others it helps individuals blend in. However the boundaries of where participants do or do not fit in are not quite so straightforward. Ethnic and religious spaces – such as the selected neighbourhoods – may be uncomfortable, just as spaces where one is a minority may also be. Many of these environments have the potential to cause discomfort, as well as lead to experiences that subtly and tangibly demarcate difference. Although participants could perhaps feel more of a sense of belonging or acceptance in these areas due to shared identities, it seems that they find other

strategies to overcome negative experiences when moving around Ottawa. This idea will be discussed in the next chapter, as will the challenges – and long-term impacts – of crossing social borders for second-generation Muslim women.

The common thread in the narratives discussed in this chapter is that strangers have the power to distinguish who belongs, and who does not. These encounters in public space place Muslim women at the margins of Canadian society by accentuating their difference – whether by racial, religious, ethnic, and/or gender markers. These illustrations of everyday informal citizenship are:

“wrapped up in questions about who is accepted as a worthy, valuable and responsible member of an everyday community of living and working. It is hence the relationship between individuals and their immediate communities that swims into focus, and in consequence we must begin to take seriously the much more informal rules and norms shared by ‘local majorities’, which undoubtedly create a sense of who can be included and who cannot” (Painter and Philo 1995: 115).

These encounters in many ways reinforce power relations in public space, in particular the ways that minority individuals are made to feel uncomfortable or out of place by fellow Canadians everyday. This builds on informal definitions of citizenship – as individuals are placed on the margins, their belonging and membership are being called into question, leaving many feeling uneasy about their Canadian identity and citizenship. These narratives also reveal the ways that small, everyday encounters reflect on broader, structural processes that perpetuate or reinforce unequal public experiences and different classes of citizenship (Essed 1991; Noble 2005; Noble and Poynting 2010; Painter and Philo 1995).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING: NEGOTIATING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN**

Overall the experiences of second-generation Muslim women have been positive. They have supportive peer groups, are engaged in a variety of activities, and lead fulfilling lives. However, their days are not necessarily devoid of challenges. Many women have experienced instances that leave them feeling marginalized due to the visibility of their Muslim identity in Ottawa's public spaces. In addition, for women of colour, racial difference has also influenced their level of (dis)comfort in Canada. Consequently, such identity intersections lead some second-generation Muslim women to question whether they can be considered Canadian. The intent of this chapter is to discuss the repercussions of women's uncomfortable experiences in public, as it is these encounters that often stand out and influence individual belonging and identity in Canadian society.

In order to examine the effects of everyday experiences on sense of belonging, this chapter will address two questions. To begin, what implications do unpleasant encounters have on this group's sense of belonging? Additionally, for those who are made to feel less Canadian in public, how can they use daily tactics to challenge feelings and insinuations of difference? This chapter will subsequently examine the ways that second-generation Muslim women use spatial tactics to negotiate identity and stereotypes with strangers and acquaintances. In particular, it will address how daily public encounters can be used to foster belonging. Through everyday interactions, these women have opportunities to renegotiate what it means to be Canadian, as well as to challenge stereotypes affecting their respective religious and ethnic communities.

### *The Implications of Everyday Experiences for Participants*

During the interviews, many anecdotes about challenges and negative encounters were discussed, but overall participants' narratives were positive. In particular, many second-generation women point to benefits that they have as Canadians, namely access to educational and occupational opportunities, proficiency in English and/or French, and supportive networks of families, friends and acquaintances. Being in this group, however, is not without its challenges. One issue that stands out among most women interviewed is that it can be difficult finding places to belong, both in Canada and in their parents' country of origin. These women are shaped by multiple identities – such as gender, religion, ethnicity, race, and language – that intersect in a number of ways, shaping their daily encounters in various communities.

Belonging – or lack thereof – was a recurring theme in participants' narratives. An absence of belonging to a particular group was mentioned by the majority of the women interviewed, yet varied in terms of the communities to which each felt a lack of belonging. Visiting one's ancestral homeland proved challenging for some participants. One-quarter addressed the challenges of visiting their parents' country of origin – environments where they felt decidedly out of place.<sup>46</sup> This lack of belonging is often attributed by participants to a lack of familiarity with the local culture, the language, and/or “cultural references” (Nadia), such as popular music, films and television shows. Little knowledge of these reference points in many ways reinforces the outsider status of second-generation women when they return to their parents' homeland. Although in these countries participants are racially – and oftentimes religiously – similar to most other people, they are unfamiliar with other signifiers of ‘Somali’ or ‘Palestinian’ identity, and consequently find it challenging to belong in such environments.

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<sup>46</sup> Not all participants have visited their parents' country of origin. Other participants – Halima, Muna and Amina in particular – discuss not always fitting into Somali culture in Canada and would most likely experience similar feelings of not belonging if they were to visit Somalia.

Visible markers of ethno-racial or religious identity, then, do not always guarantee membership in one's country of ancestry. Other facets of identity, such as language and cultural knowledge, are also necessary to signify belonging within a community.

In Ottawa, everyday encounters in public space made several participants feel a lack of acceptance – an idea articulated by half of the women interviewed (representing several ethno-racial groups, and including both veiled and non-veiled). For example, growing up as a “visible [racial] minority”, Halima wondered if she is “really Canadian enough”. This idea was seconded by Nadia, who asserted that strangers “think you're not from here because [of] the way you look and your last name”. Exhibiting racial or religious difference then often leads individuals to be interpreted by strangers and acquaintances as ‘immigrants’ or ‘non-citizens’. However, feeling as if one does not belong may also be, according to Lisa, a function of not feeling like you “fit in with the white culture completely”. Lisa is referring here to specific ethno-cultural practices enforced by her parents that set her apart from her (white) peers, such as a lack of ability to date, or attend sleepovers. An inability to partake in peer group activities may also foster feelings of not belonging, making it more challenging for participants to find their social niches. Working in conjunction with an individual's visible difference, certain ethno-cultural practices may further challenge women's ability to belong in Ottawa, and Canada. Not belonging, then, is often a by-product of multiple experiences and identities, but particularly due to race, religion, ethnicity, and generation.

Notably communities where participants should be more likely to feel at ease, for example among their ethnic or religious peers, do not always prove to be more accepting. Over half of the women expressed challenges in at least one of their multiple communities – Muslim and/or ethnic.<sup>47</sup> Diminished belonging in these communities is typically framed by a lack of

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<sup>47</sup> One-half discuss difficulties belonging to their ethnic community, while one-quarter discuss similar challenges

familiarity with established practices, traditions, or *Quranic* knowledge. Participants' behaviour (such as, dress, activities, or dating) and opinions (for example, interpretations of the *Qur'an*), in addition to the behaviour of co-ethnics, also made such communities challenging to navigate. Despite a visible affinity to religious and ethnic communities, a number of participants do not always feel a sense of belonging with these groups, as the particular qualities of these places sometimes set second-generation Muslim women apart.

Key to these anecdotes is that places where they should be comfortable or welcomed – such as, Canada (i.e., where they grew up) or their parents' country of origin (i.e., where they share history and are ethno-racially similar) – often prove not to be. The common thread between these narratives of not belonging is that daily encounters and visible identities have the ability to make second-generation Muslim women feel different and out of place, whether with Canadian, Muslim, or co-ethnic communities in Canada and their country of ancestry. They perform their similarities with fellow citizens (for instance through culture, work, and activities) on a daily basis, yet they still may sometimes be singled out in situations as being less Canadian, such as when asked where they are from, or if they speak English and/or French. As Noble and Poynting (2010) suggest, belonging is “grounded in movement in and through specific places”, and is shaped by a number of identities (490). As a result, “the pleasures and powers [belonging] confers are not distributed evenly but linked to relations of inequality and practices of social exclusion” (490). Belonging, citizenship, and experiences in public are closely intertwined. All are contingent on particular markers of identity – language, ethnicity, and race, for example. These identities can be highlighted by dominant social groups within particular spaces, placing different individuals outside of the national narrative (Painter and Philo 1995; Noble and Poynting 2010) and reinforcing the borders of belonging in everyday Canadian space.

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within the Muslim community.

Despite the diverse range of participants interviewed for this project – in terms of religiosity, ethnicity, and race – some commonalities were found. For example, although there are significant differences between Lisa (non-veiled, Palestinian) and Savannah (veiled, Somali), both state that they do not really feel “accepted anywhere”. This may indicate that individuals face significant challenges – regardless of visible religion and race – simply by virtue of being in the second-generation. This group may lack cultural reference points or ‘appropriate’ values in one community, while in another, they stand out due to dress and behaviour. These realities are also intensified by participants’ intersections of generation with gender, ethnicity, race, and religion. Several women are consequently left wondering if they can belong and claim membership in Canada, particularly as these challenges in public do not seem to be limited to generational status, but rather are predicated on visibility as an ethnic and/or religious other. As Rajiva (2005) suggests, many in the Canadian second-generation “have to wrestle with being seen as ‘racially’ different in a national context, where Canadianness is automatically conflated with Whiteness” (27). Their identities and experiences, subsequently, may leave them feeling ‘in-between’ communities, necessitating the development of hybrid identities (Dwyer 2000; Mishra and Shirazi 2010; Tarlo 2010).

### ***Will it Ever Change?: Generational Versus Racial***

Some participants feel that the challenges of not fitting in are not unique to the second generation, but rather to individuals who appear different. Many women have experienced encounters where their appearance (for example, race or the veil) or name has led to interactions where their difference is highlighted. Due to unpleasant encounters, one-third of participants (both veiled and non-veiled) believe that they may never be considered to be fully Canadian.

Even though successive generations will be born in Canada and be more strongly entrenched in Canadian culture (i.e., through their parents and grandparents), they may still face daily insinuations that leave them feeling on the margins. These experiences suggest that constructions of difference are heavily rooted in daily public space. It is here that visible individuals are often distinguished by dominant social groups in order to reproduce the borders of citizenship (Painter and Philo 1995).

Lisa, in contrast, believes that generational challenges are unique to her cohort, and that subsequent generations will face fewer obstacles engaging in similar practices as their peers because they will be “fully integrated”. Yet this reflects Lisa’s experiences of being in the second-generation – the challenges she faced were often within her own family and (ethno-religious) communities. As she is frequently mistaken for being of European ancestry, she has not experienced demarcations of difference in the same way that darker-skinned or veiled participants (may) have. Many scholars have discussed the implications of race in the experiences of the “new” second generation. The current second generation in Canada and the United States – in contrast with the previous, ‘white’ and European immigrant children – experience public space very differently due to ethno-racial markers (Beyer 2005; Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Peek 2005; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997b).

The reality then for second-generation Muslim women is that visible religious and racial identities continue to shape their everyday experiences in public. In this way, everyday encounters can create identity formation challenges. Women demonstrate their similarities with fellow Canadians daily (for instance, through knowledge of popular culture, work, activities, and common experiences), yet they still are occasionally marked in certain situations as less Canadian, or presumed to be immigrants. Being singled out due to visible difference is

something that is not contingent on generational status; rather, it may remain a challenge for subsequent generations. These factors have broader implications for second-generation Muslim women. If Canadian citizens can be made to feel (uncomfortable and) out of place in their own country, what does this say about the quality of everyday life in Ottawa (and Canada) for minority individuals?

Even as their experiences can sometimes set them apart, there are also significant advantages for these women. As Kasinitz *et al.* (2008) suggest, the second generation's "in-betweenness" allows them to "negotiate among the different combinations of immigrant and native advantages and disadvantages to choose the best combination for themselves" (20). By performing their identities strategically in space, women have ways to negotiate and/or challenge others in instances where they are made to feel out of place. Through the use of everyday tactics – for example, by downplaying, or by highlighting identities – women can enhance their belonging in public space and assert their Canadianness in daily encounters.

### ***Everyday Tactics – Facilitating the Daily Navigation of Public Space***

Second-generation Muslim women evidently face challenges when navigating public spaces. In particular, they encounter situations where strangers perceive and treat them differently. Nevertheless, women do not simply accept encounters where their difference seems to be accentuated or an "issue". They have a number of daily spatial tactics at their disposal, employing place and identity strategically to negotiate with differential treatment and to reshape existing power structures that construct second-generation Muslim women as different in Canadian public space. By utilizing everyday opportunities to contest public experiences, women can enhance their belonging and assert their identity within places. Other scholars have

highlighted the use of tactics, in particular how they are used to negotiate with daily strategies and structures of power in public space (de Certeau 1984; Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster 2012).

The participants engage in a number of effective tactics to facilitate belonging in public space, yet they take two decidedly different forms. On the one hand, the women interviewed may perform their difference subtly in order to ‘fit’ in. Usually this is accomplished by downplaying identity traits that may distinguish them from their peers or strangers. Some individuals, for instance, may avoid discussing particular topics relating to ethno-religious identities, while others may simply shun situations where their difference may be made evident or accentuated. These ‘subtle’ tactics may sometimes involve “avoidance of actions or surrender to strategies of power” that regulate public space (Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster 2012: 206). There are a number of variations on ‘subtle’ tactics, yet what remains consistent is that they effectively deemphasize individual uniqueness, and may make the navigation of public space easier for women.

On the other hand, second-generation Muslim women may turn to more ‘overt’ means of performing identity in public space. Overt tactics involve a more pre-emptive approach that uses public encounters to engage in dialogue, and perhaps change strangers’ perceptions. Moreover, overt tactics may accentuate an individual’s social identity and difference, yet women do so while negotiating and performing that difference strategically with strangers. By actively negotiating with what makes them different, second-generation Muslim women may facilitate their own experiences in public by making strangers and acquaintances more familiar with Islamic practices (for example, by answering questions). This may challenge social stereotypes and misconceptions, and may lead to fewer instances of discomfort for Muslim women as they move through public spaces.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> These tactics were categorized by the author. There is significant overlap between tactics.

These two tactics are not clear-cut by any means. They overlap in significant ways – women can perform both subtly and overtly simultaneously. Tactics also reveal complex spatial strategies on the part of second-generation Muslim women, as they choose to highlight or subdue particular identities within different places. Performance and behaviour is, in large part, contingent on the nature of the place itself. Women’s identities and everyday lives, accordingly, are structured by environment – what renders someone visible and “active” in one space, may mark them as invisible in another.

### ***Subtle Tactics – Adapting and Fitting In***

Over half of the participants discussed using some form of subtle daily tactics. Although practices differ, two techniques were noted over the course of the interviews: avoiding uncomfortable encounters altogether, and adapting behaviour to downplay difference in interactions with others. What unifies these tactics is that they effectively de-emphasize aspects of individual difference, and may make the navigation of public space easier. However, they fail to directly engage with difference, and useful opportunities to educate strangers are missed. Nevertheless, these reactions on the part of second-generation Muslim women are understandable given the rude reactions and behaviour of strangers and acquaintances, and sometimes the best course of action is to perform identity more subtly. Challenging differential treatment everyday can be arduous, and these tactics may be necessary for women to more comfortably manoeuvre public space and enhance daily claims to citizenship and belonging.

### ***Avoiding Difference***

Avoiding encounters – and places – where differences are highlighted can be an effective

tactic for not being placed in uncomfortable situations. Seven participants discussed bypassing some areas in order to evade members of their ethnic or religious group(s). They do so to avoid certain situations in which normative values of the community leave them feeling marginalized. For instance, Lisa and Layan avoid Arabic areas because these spaces often leave them feeling uncomfortable (see Chapter Five). Likewise, a quarter of the women discuss the importance of having friendships with like-minded individuals from the second generation. Spending time with other individuals from this cohort is often seen as easier because other second-generation women may relate to (unpleasant) experiences in Ottawa's public space. As Lisa suggests:

I only noticed this this year, but most of my friends are of second generation, like immigrants. They could be, whether they're Indian or whatever, it's always the second generation, cause we have more in common. We can understand each other's parents and backgrounds, and frustrations that come from that, but we also know that we don't really fit in back home either.

Other second-generation individuals can better relate to Lisa's experiences growing up in Canada. Accordingly, remaining with, or avoiding, particular groups of people then can prove to be more comfortable, and oftentimes easier, for second-generation Muslim women.<sup>49</sup>

Simply avoiding uncomfortable encounters with certain places, groups, and individuals, however, do little to negotiate participants' diverse identity intersections in public. Consequently, this tactic may in fact cause more harm than good, as individuals circumvent opportunities and places that could be used to enhance their navigation of public space in the future, or foster belonging with other individuals. Failure to engage in negotiations with other perspectives and individuals does little to improve the quality of everyday public space, yet avoidance may sometimes be the least stressful way to navigate the city.

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<sup>49</sup> This, however, is not the case for all participants. Even as a number of women feel an affinity with fellow second-generation individuals, many acknowledge having friends from multiple different ethnic, religious, and generational groups.

### *Downplaying Difference*

Avoiding uncomfortable encounters is challenging for Muslim women living in Ottawa, and in other urban Canadian centres. They interact daily with diverse groups of individuals in the workplace, at school, and through everyday activities. Consequently, simply dodging unpleasant encounters is not always an option for women whose daily activities take them into many different places and social interactions. Participants however, have ways of performing identity strategically in encounters by adapting their behaviour. Adaptations take numerous forms – such as ignoring rude comments, making excuses, or altering practices and conduct – and may ease a participant’s experiences in public. At the same time, such tactics may involve actions or behaviours with which women are not entirely comfortable – including those that conceal important aspects of their identity.

This is best illustrated by remaining silent in unpleasant exchanges. When confronted with negative treatment, at times it is easiest for participants to simply ignore what is being said or done. Half of the participants have remained silent on at least one occasion when an interaction was unpleasant. By not reacting to rude comments, women attract less attention to themselves. This is perhaps because in public space it may be more socially acceptable to criticize minority (religious and racial) identities, whereas defending them may be perceived as less conventional. Ignoring strangers’ rudeness may reduce attention, and potential discomfort, but not responding essentially silences the individual who is the target of rude comments or discriminatory practices. They may be torn between not wanting to attract attention, and wishing to defend their religious or ethnic community, or sense of identity.

Anna’s anecdote demonstrates this tension. An Iranian colleague frequently has criticized Islam and its practices in front of her in their workplace, despite knowing her religious

orientation. Anna feels frustrated by her colleague's behaviour, yet she continues to remain silent for a number of reasons. On the one hand, she does not feel knowledgeable enough about Islamic practices or *Quranic* passages to defend her religion. She also notes that it often feels like it is "almost politically correct to be negative about Islam" in Canada, and defending Islam consequently "draws attention" and seems to quickly lead her to being "grouped with the fanatics". Such is the dichotomy that some women navigate when it comes to faith – walking a fine line between criticizing certain practices conducted in the name of Islam (for example, terrorism), while also defending other Muslim practices and representing Islam positively. This need to defend Islam has become particularly salient for (visible) Muslims in Canada and the United States following the events of 9/11 (Ali 2005: 524-5; Hussain 2004; Peek 2005; Sirin and Fine 2007; Yousif 2005; Zaal *et al.* 2007). Notably, however, these types of exchanges may be more common in particular places, such as work, universities and everyday public space – sites often infused with narrow understandings of Islam. In these places, some women may feel less comfortable voicing their opinions, particularly if they feel that it may not align with the perspectives of the majority. As a consequence, for some women the best course of action is to keep silent and ignore comments.

Silence, however, is not the only way women can simplify uncomfortable situations – excuses also prove useful in structuring public experiences. About one-quarter of the women mention trying to rationalize strangers' behaviour, usually by attributing unpleasant encounters to the ignorance of a social group and not everyone in a society.<sup>50</sup> For instance, a passerby yelled at Nadia while she was walking through a shopping mall:

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<sup>50</sup> This may in part be linked to a belief within Islam (discussed in the *Hadith*) that Muslims are encouraged to give 'seventy' excuses for strangers' undesirable and/or unpleasant behaviour, i.e., provide "alternative explanations" for situations where others – both strangers and acquaintances – cause offence (Thomas and Ashraf 2011: 187).

I have a lot of negative [experiences], definitely, for sure. ... I try – like the instance in the Rideau Centre this morning, I was [thinking] is this guy seriously yelling at us, pointing, [saying] you're going to get shot, or I'm going to shoot you. But he was a loony bin, obviously you know? So I didn't pay much attention to it, but I tell myself not to pay attention to it, right because I try to see the good in other people.

This encounter is disturbing to say the least, yet she reacted by thinking that the man who made the comment was crazy or drunk. Moreover, except in cases where a negative interaction is “concrete”, such as when someone tells her directly that “the veil is bothering [him/her]”, Nadia attributes the discomfort she experiences to the other's bad behaviour, as opposed to treatment predicated on veiling or race. In this way, women may more comfortably structure encounters in public space, believing that unpleasant behaviours are by-products of a specific age group or that individuals simply do not know any better, rather than a manifestation of widespread societal discrimination. This tactic downplays negative encounters and structures them as “normal”, in the sense that they could happen to anyone. These types of experiences, however, do not necessarily happen to everyone in public space. Certain individuals are more likely to be targeted due to visible signifiers such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, and sexuality (Painter and Philo 1995).

Some women may also choose to adapt their behaviour in order to simplify public exchanges – a practice that six women acknowledge doing. Many women's adaptations involve compromises with respect to daily prayers and diet. For instance, four participants mention avoiding prayer in the workplace because they are too busy to fit prayers into their workday, or because they are concerned that their performance of a pious identity may cause annoyance to their colleagues. They subsequently make up their prayers in the morning or evening, or simply skip them altogether. Although this adaptation seems to be a simple solution to the rigours of a busy work schedule, it is a compromise that remains uncomfortable for some. Consequently, while this tactic certainly facilitates interactions with non-Muslims – by downplaying difference

– it remains a contested practice for Muslim women, as they are made to choose between their work and religious life.

Subtle tactics are united by the fact that they sidestep opportunities to confront or change the stereotypes that demarcate religious or racial difference in public space. By performing identity purposefully, these tactics may enhance an individual's sense of belonging as unpleasant comments may be directed elsewhere (for example, at more outspoken, or visible individuals). Ignoring or deflecting pejorative encounters that serve to 'normalize' such behaviours, however, may perpetuate rude or discriminatory actions in western public spaces. Even as subtle tactics simplify public interactions for second-generation Muslim women, they do no favours for themselves, peers, and subsequent generations who may continue to be treated differently by strangers.

Reacting to unpleasant encounters is not by any means a simple act. There are a number of reasonable explanations for why second-generation Muslim women do not react to particular situations. Women may perceive that responding in blatantly rude – or simply uncomfortable – situations may not be supported by their peers, or could lead to verbal harassment or physical violence. Silence or concealment may also be in response to women's perceptions of a power differential in public space (for example, as Anna says, that it is "politically correct" to criticize Islam), or to a feeling of constantly being monitored by various social groups (Zaal *et al.* 2007: 172-3). Additionally, always having to "fight and negotiate for the rights of the future generation" (Muna) can be an arduous, and somewhat stressful, addition to daily encounters. Not appearing to react may, in many ways, be the simplest – and most logical – option for second-generation Muslim women. Identity performance, then, is a complex process for women and is one that is heavily rooted in space. In particular, the hierarchical quality of many places

necessitates subduing or emphasizing certain facets of identity over the course of daily life.<sup>51</sup>

There are consequently numerous reasons why some women choose not to react in uncomfortable situations, yet sometimes situations warrant more overt responses.

### ***“Breaking Stereotypes” and Challenging Difference – Overt Tactics***

Overt tactics can be useful, although the risks are greater. Overt techniques embrace what makes women visibly different in public encounters, rather than shy away from markers like religion and race. By strategically performing multiple identities – displaying both their differences and similarities simultaneously – women can open up spaces of engagement and perhaps modify stereotypes and social prejudices. For example, by engaging in (non-religious) volunteer work or by discussing cultural references such as television or music, visibly religious women may challenge stereotypes about Muslims and/or visible minorities. Although overt tactics may sometimes be challenging, all the women interviewed have used them at one point or another. These tactics may facilitate their daily experiences in public by making strangers and acquaintances – within multiple communities – more familiar with ethno-religious practices, and may lead to fewer instances of discomfort for Muslim women as they move through public space. Three categories of overt tactics stand out in their stories: challenges through display, direct confrontation, and engaging in dialogue.

### *Demonstrating “They’re Just Like Everyone Else”*

Sometimes challenging stereotypes is as simple as performing a small visible act. Visibly Muslim women in particular face a number of perceptions about how they should appear and behave, as well as what they signify for the Muslim community more generally. For instance,

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<sup>51</sup> This is well illustrated by McDowell (1995) in her research on gender performance in merchant banking.

within Canada women felt that dominant stereotypes indicate that Muslim women are submissive (three), only hang out with other Muslims (two), and are all quite similar (i.e., limited to only a few social roles) (five). Likewise, the participants discuss representations they face within the Muslim community, in particular that veiled women are held to different standards than those who do not veil. Fellow Muslims ascribe particular behaviours to visible Muslim women (six), namely, that they are expected to behave and dress ‘properly’, for example by not swearing (Amina) or by having their arms and legs covered in loose clothing. This may consequently construct veiled women as more devoutly Muslim (four), overlooking that there are diverse ways to be Muslim and to embody Islam in daily encounters – a reality evidenced throughout women’s narratives on prayer, diet, behaviour, and dress.

Through overt display – simply by being in a public location and doing something unexpected for “Muslim” women – participants can open spaces for engagement and for contestation of stereotypes. Seven participants describe these kinds of tactics, although they are not always performed consciously. Performing non-stereotypical practices come naturally to several of the women, and, in many cases, may be very much a part of their everyday routines. For example, Muna’s sister – a black, veiled woman – enjoys a quintessential Canadian pastime – ice skating in public arenas. Muna enjoys “people’s reactions” to her sister:

[S]eeing a Muslim *hijabi* who’s also black, skating is kind of a new thing, they’ve never seen it before. But right when she goes on the ice and she starts skating ... there’s always people asking her, [for example] you have the young boys playing hockey [who ask] where did you learn how to skate? You know you’re pretty good. ... And so it’s funny how when people look at her [skating] ... one guy [said] “you probably were born in Canada I’m guessing?”

Although skating is something she has done since childhood, she receives a number of surprised reactions from strangers when she gets on the ice. As Muna points out, when “people look at her ...there’s always that image” of the stereotypical Muslim woman. However, her sister’s actions

demonstrate that she is “just like everyone else” and not necessarily an embodiment of stereotypes portrayed in the media, for example that Muslim women do not engage in Canadian practices as other youth do. In such encounters – using a quintessentially Canadian cultural activity – participants have the opportunity to renegotiate stereotypes affecting their ethno-religious communities. By performing Canadian, racial and Muslim identities simultaneously, Muna’s sister effectively represents the diverse possibilities for veiled, black women.

Other women may more consciously perform their Muslim identity as they navigate the city. Two examples illustrate this well. Lara, for instance, suggests that:

I’m the only Muslim working there, [and] only Arab ... so it was fine. There’s no [problems] – if anything I think it just makes them more realize that you know what the media shows [of Muslim women] isn’t always true. I hope anyways.

By being veiled in her workplace, Lara believes she may help co-workers overcome stereotypes, in particular that Muslim women engage in employment and socialize in the same ways as their non-Muslim peers. Moreover, displays of religiosity in workplaces may also inspire other Muslim women to find employment, something that Layan illustrates:

I’ve never been discriminated against, *al-hamdullilah*, thank God, and like I said, right now [being veiled] really does me good at work ... I’m the only one there and ... for some people, they could think that it’s a drawback, but for me it’s a good thing because then it kind of [says] ‘look at me, I can survive’ in this kind of environment. Especially retail, you know. A lot of people would be intimidated to apply to different jobs just because ‘oh, they’re hijabis, they’re Muslim’ and stuff like that, but I don’t see that at all.

By working in retail as a veiled woman, Layan demonstrates to other Muslims – as well as strangers – that veiled women can “survive” in a work environment. Both women’s anecdotes acknowledge that they are the only visibly Muslim women in their workplace, yet this is something that they perceive to be an advantage. Their workplace performances demonstrate the ways that being Muslim and Canadian can effortlessly intersect in place. By displaying similarities – for instance that Muslim women skate or work in a variety of environments – may

diminish shyness on the part of non-Muslims to ask questions or engage in dialogue, practices that may help to reduce inaccurate stereotypes of Muslim women. Likewise, these displays may also contest stereotypes held within the Muslim community itself.

The daily performances of Muslim women then may challenge stereotypes and misperceptions within several communities (Sirin and Fine 2007: 160; Zaal *et al.* 2007). Women are subject to expectations from a variety of social groups and through daily displays, they renegotiate and transform what it means to be Muslim, a second-generation individual, and a woman living in Canada, and in interactions with a number of communities and peer groups. Notably, these interactions are generally neither confrontational nor verbal, and may be less challenging for participants to engage in than more bluntly confronting strangers and acquaintances. However, by performing differently than expected in public space – while at the same time engaging in activities that are fairly routine in society – enables women to open up space for engagement. As Hermansen (2004) proposes, it is “non-verbal” aspects of performance, like dress and behaviour, through which “one creates and transforms an imaginary space” (392). As the quote suggests, simply by displaying difference in public, women can effectively negotiate strangers’ perceptions of Muslim, or visible minority, communities.

### *Confrontation*

Occasionally changing people’s perceptions involves confrontation – i.e., verbally disagreeing with or challenging strangers and acquaintances. Most women generally avoid confrontation, yet some recalled spatial encounters that demanded a strong reaction. Six women cited instances where they confronted strangers and acquaintances, situations which were not

always enjoyable for women. In general, these encounters were with the dominant (white) population, however two women's narratives involved interactions with Muslim peers.

Strong responses can be important, particularly as silence may communicate agreement with offensive comments. Anna, for example, recalls her experiences with a campus 'Hijab Day' where women were encouraged to wear the veil for a day. She was surprised to see:

... that a man organized it ... and his description ... kind of bugged me. And so I told my friends and they're like, oh he's doing something good, he's just giving girls who want to try hijab an opportunity. I was like, you know what, I'm still going to email him. So I messaged him, and I gave him a few points. I said, you know, first of all, I don't understand your event, like, why – and I think he said something in there about hijabis being Muslims and I was like, you know, does that mean [that] as a non-hijabi I shouldn't come out that day or something? ... [H]e basically responded to me with 'you are not a Muslim if you don't wear hijab' and like all these segments of the *Qur'an* and saying like the devil is trying to sway me ... so my intuition was exactly right about this guy. He's basically pushing hijab onto women ... It would be one thing for a woman to organize this event ... and say in a welcoming way, this is a day for *sisters* to get support for wanting to try this out. But it sounded more of like an enforcing...

In his attempt to create a campus space for Islamic representation, the man effectively sought to regulate who could be considered 'Muslim'. Anna's confrontation was necessary to broaden his limited categorizations of Muslimness. Savannah, similarly, feels the need to speak up in her university classes when her peers generalize and make insensitive comments about racial groups:

[S]ometimes people say some really ignorant crap ... if I had a choice, I would never talk in class – that's not really my thing, right? But sometimes you're forced to expose your vulnerabilities, expose how you feel on certain things, because I can't sit here and have person X spew this stuff that isn't true and by virtue of sitting there, it kind of proclaims that I agree with it to the rest of the group ... I feel like I have to dispel [stereotypes] ... because there's nobody else who's going to – and nobody else ever has.

Debating with classmates is sometimes necessitated, yet Savannah acknowledges that confrontation is not a simple undertaking, and is something that she would often rather avoid. Moreover, criticizing behaviours of strangers can be made more challenging, particularly if their unpleasant behaviours or actions are oblique. In such cases, strangers may not perceive that they have caused offence, something that Savannah has experienced a number of times from both

Muslims and non-Muslims. Confrontation then may exacerbate an already uncomfortable situation, making both the stranger and the women feel uneasy. Micropublic engagements are sometimes little more than superficial interactions, yet these encounters are not possible in all environments (Amin 2002; Takim 2004). The university setting provides a place for both Anna and Savannah's voices – opportunities that may not be possible in other city spaces.

Muslim women may additionally be concerned with perpetuating stereotypes affecting the Muslim community,<sup>52</sup> in addition to dealing with intra-group perceptions around non-veiling as a 'secular' act (Fadil 2011; Tarlo 2010). When confronting ignorant behaviour, women may in some ways reinforce certain stereotypes, such as that they are defensive or demand special treatment. As a consequence, a few women may see this as a vicious circle that ends with reinforcing negative perceptions of Muslims. Engaging in a less confrontational manner through dialogue may prove more effective as an approach for addressing these issues, as women can better set the terms and the location of discussion.

### *Overtly Engaging in Dialogue*

The most common – and perhaps effective – tactic involves dialogue with strangers and acquaintances. Hermansen (2004) describes dialogue as the discussion of shared issues in order “to explore diverse practices reflecting common human experiences, provoking knowledge and empathy with the other” (389). Non-confrontational yet effective, this tactic was mentioned by nine of the women interviewed. Through conversation, even if it is uncomfortable, participants can begin to broaden the parameters of belonging and citizenship in Canadian society, and within

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<sup>52</sup> A number of scholars discuss stereotypes of Muslim communities that permeate western societies (Fatima 2011: 345-6; Takim 2004: 344; Tarlo 2010; Yousif 2005). For instance, that the Muslim community requires accommodation in the west, in terms of religious practices (diet, fasting), schedule (time for prayer, Muslim holidays), and beliefs (relations between women and men).

ethno-religious communities. Many women prefer to use dialogue in daily encounters to illustrate their Canadianness, and often illustrate a sense of belonging by using slang, or discussing aspects of popular culture. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of engaging in outreach – for instance through volunteering and Islam Awareness Week – to foster understanding about Islam in non-Muslim communities (for example, by answering questions).<sup>53</sup> These techniques share in common an attempt to overcome stereotypes through performance and dialogue, by demonstrating participants' Canadian identity in exchanges with strangers and acquaintances, and by clarifying misconceptions through discussion of Islamic and/or ethnocultural practices.

Muslim women subsequently can use daily encounters to overcome stereotypes by using dialogue to convey similarities to Canadian peers. Participants can break down stereotypes that may paint Muslim women as culturally apart from Canadian society. Six of the women discuss overtly conveying their similarities with others in everyday encounters by bringing up similar cultural references and activities with peers, such as going to the gym or out for coffee. Such dialogue, although in many cases superficial, can be effective at fostering relationships – breaking down barriers with co-workers, peers, and strangers on a daily basis through discussion of everyday practices. Additionally, about one-quarter of respondents use language to mark their Canadianness. In situations where they are made to feel dissimilar – for instance, it is implied that they are immigrants, or that they do not speak English or French – they use language to challenge such assertions. Responding in these situations using English or French, in addition to local slang, women accentuate their belonging as Canadian citizens. As Nadia suggests, this indication of belonging along linguistic, and cultural, lines may make second-generation Muslim

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<sup>53</sup> Typically a week held annually on university campuses, in order to share information about Islam and Muslims.

women more “accepted in the society”.<sup>54</sup>

Of the nine participants who noted engaging in dialogue, all participate engage in practices and activities that enhance an understanding of Islam in Ottawa. For example, half of women participate in Islam Awareness Week and other (visibly) Muslim events. These events give Muslim women opportunities to interact with fellow Muslims and make friendships, but also to interact with non-Muslims. As Layan suggests:

I feel like the Muslim community here [at university] is different than others [Muslim organizations], because like I said, they’re more friendly ... I feel like they’re a bit more open-minded than others, and they kind of do outreach. For example, the Muslim Student Association on campus, they, when they do Islamic Awareness Week, they kind of try to gather up all the Muslim people, all the Muslim students so they can get them involved, so that these people will make friends, you know and make connections and stuff. And that’s how I met lot’s of my friends, from that.

Layan’s narrative highlights personal benefits from these events (i.e., “making friends”), yet she also points out an additional outcome of these (often) public events: “outreach” both within Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Additionally, by answering daily questions about Islam from strangers and acquaintances, individuals create places where inter-faith dialogue is possible and work to clarify misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims. By engaging in discussion, and performing as articulate and knowledgeable women, they transcend stereotypes of passivity that may be directed at Muslim women.

These tactics provide them with a number of means to demonstrate their citizenship and belonging, particularly when publicly engaging with strangers on the streets, at school, or at work. Displays of sameness – in conjunction with visible difference – may in many ways challenge public conceptions of Muslim women. Performance of a Canadian identity, notably, may come more easily to the second generation as they are often more familiar with negotiating

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<sup>54</sup> Although I have focused here on dialogue with non-Muslims, this tactic is no doubt also used within Muslim communities. Muna, for example, details a number of advocacy projects around women’s rights and ethno-cultural identity she engages in in Muslim and Somali communities.

tools in Canadian society than their parents. By setting the terms of engagement and dialogue with non-Muslims (for example during Islam Awareness Week), individuals have a degree of control in the performance of their identity (Hermansen 2004) and of the representation of their communities more generally. In this way, Islamic events can function as sites of positive representation for Muslims – as places where minority groups can reshape dominant social values and norms (Mitchell 1995; Staeheli *et al.* 2009). Consequently, confronting stereotypes and constructions of public space may in the long run enable more comfortable interactions in public space, as strangers and acquaintances can be made more understanding of, and comfortable with, Muslims and Islamic practices.

### ***The Importance of Visibility***

Overt and subtle tactics aim to make the daily navigation of public space more comfortable, by emphasizing the Canadianness of individuals with visible ethno-religious identities. Both tactics suggest agency and (identity) negotiation on the part of second-generation Muslim women, who make decisions everyday – choosing to subtly blend in or to overtly stand out when the situation calls for it, and may strengthen a sense of belonging at the individual level. By performing particular identities within a given place, second-generation Muslim women ease the daily navigation of public space. Overt tactics, in particular, have the potential to open up dialogue, and in turn broaden the social meanings associated with specific places. When participants and strangers engage in discussion, the possibility exists to enhance understanding between social groups, and to improve Muslim women's sense that they are Canadians and belong to Canada.

What remains central to these tactics is the use of visibility and representation in public

space to make claims to identity and presence in society. As Mitchell (1995) and Staeheli *et al.* (2009) suggest, visibility within a social space is important when making membership and citizenship claims and “foster[s] a sense of legitimacy in broader publics” (Staeheli *et al.* 2009: 645). Likewise, discussion within one’s particular social group(s) is not always a simple task, and at times visibly belonging to the community can go a long way to enable debate. Muna, for instance, recounts her desire not to be seen as an “Islamic-basher” when she tries “to break down the stereotypes ... within the Muslim community”. In order to engage in discussion with fellow Muslims on issues within the community, she tries to “mention [her] background” in order to show that she is not an outsider criticizing Islam. Muna adds that wearing the *hijab* gives her a degree of legitimacy in these discussions: “there’s a little aspect of wearing it for political reasons, to show that you know, here I am, a Muslim woman”. Wearing the veil and visibly identifying oneself as Muslim may make women appear more authentic, and may consequently facilitate discussion within their own communities.

Conversely, Muslim women who are “considered Canadian” – i.e., do not appear racially or religiously different – in some ways have fewer opportunities to contest stereotypes and misconceptions and to engage in dialogue about difference. This does not mean that non-visible women are immune to feeling a lack of belonging. They can be made to feel out of place as a function of popular culture (i.e., lack of representation of their ethnic or religious group), parental practices that differentiate them from their peers, and media critiques levelled against immigrants, youth, or Muslims (Muedini 2009). Before Lara began wearing *hijab* in university, for example, she was often not perceived to be Muslim. When people learned about her religious orientation following the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001:

They'd be like 'oh, I didn't think you were Muslim'. ... And it's two things: one I was happy that they saw that Muslims don't ... [act] this way, but then I was sad, because I felt I was misrepresenting my religion by people not knowing, you know?

A lack of visibility can weigh heavily on individuals, particularly if they feel that they are “misrepresenting” important facets of their identity. Non-veiling, in contrast, can render some women invisible in certain places. Lisa, for instance, is the only woman interviewed who does not consider herself to be visibly different. She is non-veiled and racially similar to her Canadian peers, and has fewer daily opportunities to challenge strangers' stereotypes and opinions. For Lisa, not veiling can sometimes mean:

[N]ot being discriminated against by other people. Most people don't think I'm Arab ... They'll just think I'm Canadian or French-Canadian ... and then you see how racist people really are because they'll confide in me, not thinking that I'm Arab and it's like dude, I am too ... Even on a bus you overhear people, or people will talk to me and be like, oh my God I can't stand Arabs and I'll be like, you know where I'm from? Aren't you from Ontario? Ottawa? No, actually I'm from the Middle East, thank you.

When Lisa overhears negative or discriminatory comments directed towards Muslims or Arabs – for example, strangers criticizing a woman wearing a face veil, or Arabs – she confronts strangers and acquaintances. Lisa uses such incidents to underline her Arab and Muslim identity and contest strangers' stereotypes about how a Muslim woman is supposed to look and act. Although these exchanges are with members of the dominant population, Lisa's employs a similar approach within the Muslim community. Despite not immediately appearing to perform their Muslim identity, non-veiled women like Lisa utilize their Muslim identity when the situation calls for it. Such encounters, however, are less common for non-visible women, and consequently, in many ways donning the veil can sometimes be a more direct way for second-generation Muslim women to challenge stereotypes and prejudices in public space.

Tactics, nevertheless, are rooted in representation and performance of particular Muslim identities (i.e., veiled women). Even as these encounters facilitate familiarity with Islam, they

only scratch the surface, and are often dominated by majority Islamic views (Fatima 2011; Takim 2004). It is important to not construct veiling and non-veiling as contradictory performances. Either decision can render a woman visible or invisible in specific place, and neither can be considered passive or neutral. Both are pious acts in their own right, and intersect with a number of other practices and identities that are highly contextual.

Similarly, living in Ottawa may provide fewer opportunities for dialogue than in bigger cities where the Muslim population is larger. Walette believes that English Canadians are “politically correct” and their behaviour is subtle when perpetuating stereotypes – “they could hate you, but they won’t show it [directly]”. She contrasts this with experiences she has had in Quebec where she acknowledges getting stares and comments. Walette feels that white Quebecers are more “straightforward” – they “make sure that they know that you exist and it could be sometimes negative”. If Quebecois individuals have issues with how women dress:

... [T]hey would say okay but why are you wearing it? What’s the point you know? Common things you hear is [for example] we’re in a free country, you don’t have to put up with anything ... but they would tell you, and then you have the opportunity to break the stereotype. Whereas I think in Anglophone communities, at least in Ottawa from my experience, is that you don’t have the opportunity because no one confronts you ever.

Walette notes that these encounters can be unpleasant, but that they at least give opportunities to address misperceptions. In contrast, when interacting with Anglophones in Ottawa, opportunities to challenge stereotypes rarely occur. Thus political correctness may make encounters between strangers and acquaintances more challenging in Ottawa. The ‘polite’ discrimination of strangers has a number of implications for daily encounters in public space. As uncomfortable behaviours continue to occur subtly – i.e., in ways that are difficult to contest or criticize – Essed (1991) suggests that these practices become routine for dominant social groups and are consequently reinforced through everyday encounters in public (Essed 1991: 50; Velayutham 2009: 262).

## ***Conclusion***

As discussed in this thesis, the second generation has significant “bridging capital” (Noble 2009b: 48) between their parents’ culture and Canadian norms and values. As such, participants have the tools to move relatively easily between various social groups, as in many ways, women are familiar with the social practices of their peer, ethnic, and religious groups. In particular, they often utilize “Canadian” language or cultural references and practices as ways to challenge stereotypes and confront, sometimes subtly, sometimes directly, discriminatory comments or practices. Women’s experiences, however, are contingent on multiple identities and the complex ways that they overlap in public. Likewise, identity intersections play out differently for each woman – their experiences and backgrounds overlap in diverse ways, despite their affinity as second-generation Muslim women. Nevertheless, visibly religious markers and/or ethno-racial appearance may continue to mark women’s minority status in public. These signifiers may emphasize participants as being less ‘Canadian’, leaving them with few places to belong and with questions about their place and citizenship within Canada.

Opportunities to negotiate with negative or unwanted treatment, however, are abundant in public space – in particular through encounters with strangers and acquaintances. Muslim women consequently have a number of tactics at their disposal that they use to engage with stereotypes and misperceptions within several communities. Through these performances, second-generation Muslim women demonstrate that – far from passively being affected through encounters in public – they actively use everyday interactions to emphasize their belonging in Canada. These daily encounters may have more significant implications. By transforming strangers’ and acquaintances minds everyday, Muslim women may effectively renegotiate stereotypes and the normative values of public space.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Encounters in public space can influence one's feeling of belonging within a society (Ruddick 1996; Wise 2010), and the degree to which these interactions foster sentiments of inclusion or exclusion can play a significant role in one's level of social integration and participation (Noble 2005). As a group that may face greater adversity and varying degrees of (dis)comfort in public spaces – due to their religion, gender, race, and ethnicity – second-generation Muslim women's sense of belonging in Canadian society can be influenced significantly by their daily experiences in public space, where encounters with social diversity are inescapable. This project emphasizes the significance of displays of religiosity and other identity intersections, the values of families and co-ethnics, and the ways in which women give meaning to encounters in public space in order to understand emergent forms of identity in one of Canada's fastest growing religious communities.

Second-generation Muslim women are often aware of the implications of their multiple identities, and acknowledge experiencing public space in different ways than other Canadians. They are cognizant that being Muslim, or a visible minority, influences the ways that they interact with strangers. Whether they experience considerable discrimination – or very little – what remains consistent in their narratives is that Islamic practices in many ways stand out in Ottawa's public space. These identity signifiers mean different things depending on context and the disposition of other social groups. Likewise, 'race' and ethnicity have significance for women, and may continue to influence the public experiences of subsequent generations in Canada.

## *Findings*

This project has examined some of the implications of being a second-generation Muslim woman in Ottawa, as well as the importance of Canadian public space in the development of identity, a sense of belonging, and citizenship. For Muslim women, understandings of veiling and modesty differ significantly across social contexts, and this has implications for Muslims as they navigate public space on a daily basis. Moreover, for women of the second generation, their everyday experiences may be made more pronounced by visible minority status, and they may routinely be asked where they are from. Even as second-generation Muslim women embody various styles of dress, ethnicities, races, personalities, and ways of being, parallels remain. What unites these women is the reality that they are subject to many, and oftentimes differing, interpretations and expectations from both Muslims and non-Muslims.

What proves particularly striking is that it is not clear-cut where second-generation Muslim women feel a sense of belonging. They are comfortable in the vast majority of city spaces, that much is clear. Women frequent a number of different places everyday such as university, work, and malls. Each space is imbued with social norms and expectations and provides opportunities for women to engage and to learn about themselves and their place in Canadian society in the process. Places where women should feel comfortable, such as within their ethnic or religious community, or particular social spaces, often proved not to be overly welcoming. Similarities with co-ethnics – such as cultural references, appearances, or dress – do not necessarily signify attachment to, or belonging within, a particular community. Belonging and membership, then, are significantly more nuanced than they would seem at first glance and specific challenges influence the daily experiences of second-generation Muslim women. In particular, some believe that specific qualities (i.e., race, ethnicity, and religion) will continue to

differentiate subsequent generations in public space.

Despite everyday obstacles, second-generation Muslim women have a number of tools at their disposal to negotiate with different degrees of comfort, feelings of belonging, and questions around citizenship. Their parents fostered academic excellence and language fluency as youth, facilitating daily encounters and cultivating ways that women convey their Canadian identity everyday. Moreover, involvement in multiple communities brings women into contact with many social groups. This can facilitate mutual understanding between second-generation Muslim women and the individuals that they encounter everyday. Through active engagement and outreach with acquaintances and strangers alike, they convey their similarities with fellow Canadians. Women use unexceptional everyday encounters to educate strangers and acquaintances on Islamic and cultural practices – decreasing misunderstandings of Islam within the dominant population and cementing Muslim women’s place in Canadian society. At the same time, they may also utilize daily interactions to foster change within their ethno-religious communities. By doing so, women have the capacity to remake public space, refashioning it to include individuals who embody signs of minority religions and races, consequently expanding the definition of what it means to be Canadian.

The women’s narratives are not meant to suggest that women are emphatically included or excluded in particular communities. Rather, they demonstrate that places are subject to norms and ideals that govern the experiences of those who enter. These norms are highly contextual – visibly confirming membership in one place can signify an outsider status in another. Such is the importance of place – in particular the ways that it reflects larger social processes and constructions of belonging. Moreover, navigating public space, and manoeuvring from place to place, calls for diverse performances and practices, accentuating identities in some places and

contexts, while downplaying them in others.

### *Contributions and Limitations*

This research does have limitations. The project is small-scale and not representative, which reduces the wider applicability of the results and does not allow me to (easily) extend my results into other contexts. Secondly, the research methods attracted a very specific cohort of second-generation Muslim women – those who are highly educated. A broader sample across a range of social classes may have yielded significantly different results. Finally, as a non-Muslim and non-visible minority, my interpretation of the data may differ considerably from researchers whose positionality may be quite different than mine.

That being said, this case study has been used to deepen understanding of the social relations that are played out in Ottawa's public spaces from the perspective of second-generation Muslim women. This research contributes to increased understandings of the ways that space and place are regulated by specific social groups, such that visible manifestations of difference – in the form of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender – can foster discomfort or a sense of belonging for minority individuals. Moreover, these identities intersect in the lives of second-generation Muslim women and influence their experiences in particular places. This project has likewise given a voice to women who are sometimes homogenized in western public discourse; individuals who represent numerous, and oftentimes divergent, perspectives and realities about what it means to be a Muslim woman. This study conveys the diversity that exists amongst these women, their many experiences in the city's public spaces, and how these experiences are contingent on family, friends, religious observance, and the reactions of strangers.

This project was able to investigate the everyday experiences of a visible and well-educated group of individuals and examine how they experience Ottawa's public spaces. Although the participants reside in Ottawa, the collected data also contribute to literature on public space and representation more generally. Such research elaborates on the importance of daily encounters in public space, particularly as they inform an individual's sense of belonging within a society and give opportunities to negotiate one's social position. Small-scale, local encounters then have far-reaching implications, as the nature of cities and belonging are produced – or reproduced – everyday in and through public space. Moreover, everyday encounters have implications for public space more generally, as "... by considering how social differences are experienced and managed on an everyday basis, we can gain insights into social collisions on a larger scale" (Peters and de Haan 2011: 187).

Being a second-generation Muslim and a visible minority have implications for women and consequently they may experience Canadian public space differently than do other social groups. Although each woman's experiences are certainly filtered through life histories and are subjective, they point to some worrisome trends in Canadian society. If women who display minority racial, ethnic, or religious identities feel a diminished sense of belonging in Canada due to their daily interactions in public spaces, the multicultural experience is at best diminished and questions should be raised about equity and fairness of treatment in a pluralistic democracy. Likewise, what implications does this have for a sense of belonging in subsequent generations (i.e., third and fourth) of visible minority groups, for example, in terms of ethno-racial and/or religious signifiers? If some visibly different individuals feel uncomfortable or that they are treated differently, this will have a number of implications for social cohesion within the country. As Canada continues to diversify due to immigration and natural increase in visible minority

communities, these questions become more pressing.

Finally, this project also highlights the importance of dialogue and engagement between different social groups, particularly as it facilitates greater understanding and helps to make space more navigable for many minority individuals and social groups. There are a number of implications for social policy. Evidently, stereotypes persist within and between communities, yet through daily interactions such conceptions can be challenged and perhaps transformed. Governments at all levels may need to examine ways to facilitate engagement between various social groups, in particular between dominant and ethno-religious minority groups. Likewise, additional funding to organizations that foster these interactions, such as settlement organizations, community centres and inter-faith events, may go a long way to make Canada more inclusive.

### ***Opportunities for Future Research***

There are a number of opportunities for future research stemming from this project. This study is small-scale, yet it shows that there are significant insights to be gained by examining daily encounters. Public space is where identity can be very much supported and critiqued, and future studies on the nature of social life in multi-ethnic Canadian cities should examine experiences constructed in the spaces of everyday life. In particular, the second generation has a great deal to teach Canadians about life in this society given their strong familiarity with its institutions and many aspects of popular culture.

### ***Being Visibly Religious***

Visible religious affiliation warrants further inspection, in particular the way that

religious observance and associated cultural practices structure everyday encounters between strangers and social groups. A multi-city comparison would prove interesting for future research – perhaps contrasting displays of religiosity in Ottawa, a city where visible minorities are relatively recent additions to the city’s social composition, with larger more diverse Canadian cities where religious difference may be more commonplace (for example, Montréal or Toronto). Montréal is especially interesting given that it is a strongly secular society that in general regards religious observance with a degree of suspicion (Bouchard and Taylor 2008).

Likewise, public displays by non-Muslim religions deserve investigation. Is it the visibility of practicing religion in public that proves to be uncomfortable for the dominant Canadian population, or is it practitioners of Islam specifically? A study contrasting devout religious groups with visible dress – for example, Christians (Jehovah’s Witnesses, nuns), Jews (Hassidic), and Sikhs – may help to clarify what in particular makes strangers feel uncomfortable with religion in everyday spaces of encounter.

### *Race, Generation, and Age*

The intersection of generational status, ethnicity, and race also bears further investigation. In many ways, visible ethno-racial difference proves to be the most salient feature that signals an individual’s lack of belonging in public space, an attribute that may stand out regardless of religious signifiers. It may be useful to contrast the experiences of two racially-different groups – i.e., one considered ‘white’ and another that is not (for example, Lebanese and Somali individuals) – in order to investigate how the intersection of race and generational status may influence encounters. This would expand on the work of Ajrouch and Kusow (2007), who compared the experiences of Lebanese in the United States with the Somali community in

Toronto, but in the social context and spaces of a particular city. Building on the work of numerous scholars investigating the second-generation (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rajiva 2005; Zhou 1997a), such a study would shed light on the degree to which race, ethnicity, and generational status intersect in structuring experiences in public space among young adults.

A subject that came up briefly in the women's narratives also bears further investigation: the ways that men and women embody their ethno-cultural identity in everyday encounters. In particular, within the Somali community – a large visible minority community in Canada – men and women embody their Somali identities differently in public. Veiled Somali women, for example, are immediately recognizable as being Muslim and of Somali descent. Conversely, Somali men may be mistaken for being Caribbean or simply 'African' or 'black', as they may not mark their Muslim and ethnic identity in visibly-pronounced ways. Lack of visibility may lead to misperceptions of Somali men, in turn marginalizing their identity. The intersections within this community – between gender, second generation, ethnicity, race, and religion – certainly bear further investigation.

Similarly, an investigation of the experiences of Muslim men and women may prove useful. Do both genders experience public spaces in the same way? Moreover, do their appearances – and consequently the reactions from strangers – differ in any significant ways?

Future examination of Canadian youth – in conjunction with visible difference – may also be significant. How much does one's stage in life influence how encounters with strangers are perceived and interpreted? A contrast of adolescents (thirteen to nineteen) and young adults (for example, aged between 25 and 32) may prove particularly interesting.

Finally, this thesis has shed very little light on the perspectives of dominant social groups,

even though they have considerable social power. Are encounters where they signal the difference of visible others a conscious practice, or rather a reflection of society, media, and the everyday behaviours that are deemed acceptable within Canada? How do they feel about changes occurring in their everyday social spaces that they may have used for years? Such topics have already been addressed in other countries (Wise 2010), yet more investigation is necessary in Canada.

### *Final Thoughts*

Public space is an environment where multiple – and sometimes overlapping – realities are possible, and where individuals and social groups can both resist and reproduce social norms. The qualities of public space reflect the social values of a city, and sometimes by extension a society. Being different or a minority in public space poses challenges, and highlights the unspoken normative qualities of everyday public space. Visibility is important for minority groups and ultimately being “seen” is integral to developing a sense of belonging in western public spaces and society at large. By being “visible”, young, second-generation Muslim women are actively engaged in a process of remaking their city and perhaps, by extension, even the country.

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## **APPENDIX ONE – GLOSSARY**

- **7.02 (Heron Gate) – Ottawa Census Tract — See Heron Gate**
- **122.01 (St. Laurent) – Ottawa Census Tract — See St. Laurent**
- **138 (Bayshore) – Ottawa Census Tract — See Bayshore**
- **Allah**
  - The Islamic name for God; derived from the Arabic language.
- **Assalamu Alaykum**
  - An Arabic expression meaning “peace be upon you”. Often used as a greeting between Muslims.
- **Bayshore (138) – Ottawa Census Tract**
  - Located in south-east Ottawa, bordered by the 417 Highway, Holly Acres Road, Carling Avenue, Oakley Avenue, Roseview Avenue, and Alameda Crescent. For more information see Chapter Three, pages 30 to 32.
- **(Sense of) Belonging**
  - An individual’s capacity to feel accepted and welcomed within a particular group, or to a particular space.
- **Branches of Islam**
  - There are a number of branches within Islam. The three predominant branches include Sunni, Shia, and Sufi. These branches vary based on beliefs and practices, and each contains different schools.
- **Census Tract**
  - Small areas in large urban centres, with populations typically ranging between 2,500 and 8,000 residents (Statistics Canada 2006d).
- **Dawa**
  - The “religious duty to inform about Islam” (Karlsson Minganti 2010: 120); also written as *da’wa* or *dawah*.
- **Discomfort**
  - Discomfort is contrasted with comfort, which is defined as a “general sense of familiarity with space” (Noble 2002: 56). Discomfort can be caused by everyday experiences where individuals are made to feel different and unwelcome, for example through body language, rude stares and ignoring (Wise 2010).
- **Dominant (Population)**
  - In the context of this research project, ‘dominant’ refers to those who make the decisions for a city and form a significant part of the population. This dominance can be due to class,

race, ethnic origin, and religion, among others, and follows Cresswell's (1996) assertion that "in given contexts we can make value judgments concerning who has power over whom" (15).

○ ***Eid***

- Eid is the Arabic word for holiday, but also connotes Islamic celebrations. The two most commonly celebrated Islamic Eids are:
  - Eid al-Fitr, which celebrates "the end of the month of fasting" (Ramadan) (Hussain 2004: 367), and
  - Eid al-Adha, which celebrates "the sacrifice of Abraham" (Hussain 2004: 367).

○ ***Ethnic Spaces***

- In the context of this thesis, ethnic space refers to neighbourhoods largely populated by a particular ethnic group.

○ ***Everyday Racism***

- A term coined by Philomena Essed (1991) that discusses the impacts of daily encounters where difference is highlighted – for instance, through name-calling, jokes about ethnicity and snubbing. Through such encounters, power relations between minority and dominant groups are reinforced in favour of the latter (Velayutham 2009; See also Noble 2005).

○ ***First Generation***

- Immigrants who arrive as adults or teenagers in a country of settlement.

○ ***Hadith***

- Stories and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded by his followers (Haddad and Lummis 1987: 16).

○ ***Halal***

- An Arabic word meaning 'permissible' that is typically used to describe dietary choices. It is contrasted with the word *haram* which means forbidden.
- Food that prescribes to beliefs laid out in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*:
  - 1) Killed in an Islamic way (i.e., throat is slit, blood is "completely drained", and "in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate" is uttered when the animal is killed (Haddad and Lummis 1987: 116).
  - 2) No pork or alcohol (Haddad and Lummis 1987: 20, 117; Valentine, Holloway and Jayne 2010), or anything "that causes a bad effect on the mind, body, or spirit" (such as drugs) (Eliasi and Dwyer 2002: 912).
  - There is significant flexibility to these interpretations. Some Muslims simply avoid pork and alcohol, while others avoid any animals not killed in a *halal* manner and restaurants where pork may have touched other foods.
- The term is sometimes extended to other practices, such as finances (for example, no interest is incurred), cosmetics and entertainment (Ismaeel and Blaim 2012: 1094).

- **Halaqa**
  - Islamic discussion groups where Muslims get together to discuss various topics relating to Islam, such as passages from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.
- **(Al)Hamdullilah**
  - An Islamic expression meaning ‘thanks be to God’.
- **Haram** — **See Halal**
  - An Arabic word meaning ‘forbidden’ or ‘not permitted’. Often used in the context of diet, but can also be applied to other practices such as behaviour.
- **Heron Gate (7.02) – Ottawa Census Tract**
  - Located in south-east Ottawa, bordered by Heron Road, Walkley Road and Finn Court. For more information see Chapter Three, pages 30 to 31.
- **Hijab** – **See Islamic Modesty**
  - The Islamic veil – also known as the *khimar*, veil, or headscarf – refers to a piece of cloth or scarf used to cover one’s head to convey modesty and devotion to *Allah*. The term may also be extended to modest dress and behaviour more generally.
  - The *hijab* has also been described as a tool used for protest – for example against stereotyping (Bigelow 2008: 31; Body-Gendrot 2007: 291; Haddad 2007: 253; Hoodfar 2003: 26, 32), western beauty norms (Mishra and Shirazi 2010: 199-200; Naber 2005: 487), or to enhance social mobility (Body-Gendrot 2007: 291; Dwyer 1999; Hoodfar 2003; Williams and Vashi 2007: 282).
- **Hijabi**
  - One who wear the Islamic veil (*hijab*).
- **Imam**
  - A Muslim religious leader.
- **Islam Awareness Week**
  - Typically a week held annually that is meant to share information about Islam and Muslims; often held on university campuses.
- **Islamic Modesty** — **See Hijab; Niqab; Veil**
  - A belief in Islam that Muslims – both men and women – should dress and behave modestly, however typically discussions of Islamic modesty centre on women and dress.
  - A significant number of Muslim women wear the *hijab* (and sometimes the *niqab*) – as well as modest dress (i.e., long sleeved-shirts, pants, and long skirts) – in order to appear modest in public and in the presence of any marriageable men (i.e., men not in their immediate family) (Siraj 2011).
  - There are no universally Islamic modesty guidelines, rather modesty – and one’s everyday appearance – remains contested in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Whether one appears modest is very much contingent on individual interpretation, and as such remains highly contested, particularly in western spaces (Tarlo 2010).



- 4) Alms (zakat): annual donation of a percentage of one's wealth to charity, if financially possible.
  - 5) Pilgrimage (hajj): Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage to the city of Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) to follow in the Prophet Mohammad's footsteps at least once, so long as they are physically and financially able to do so (Haddad and Lummis 1987: 16-7).
  - There may be variations or additional practices, depending on one's specific branch of Islam and individual beliefs.
- **Public Space**
    - In the context of this research project, public space refers to two key, and somewhat contrasting, ideas:
      - 1) Areas where power relations manifest – i.e., where dominant groups dictate what and who belongs (Neal 2009; Yeoh and Huang 1998: 585).
      - 2) Areas that are open and equally accessible (Chua and Edwards, 1992, p. 2; Staeheli *et al.* 2009: 634), and that allow for random, daily encounters between strangers (Chua and Edwards, 1992, p. 2) and acquaintances (Neal 2009), as well as opportunities for negotiation and protest.
    - Examples of public spaces include parks, streets and sidewalks, but also semi-private spaces such as workplaces and coffee shops, as both provide the possibility of random, unmediated encounters.
- **Qur'an**
    - The Muslim holy book. Also written as: Koran, Coran, Quran.
- **Religiosity**
    - Visible displays of religious adherence.
- **Second Generation**
    - In the context of this research project, the second generation includes both the first generation born in the country of settlement, as well as children brought at a young age (i.e., before adolescence) (Das Gupta 1997: 574; Portes and Rumbaut 2005: 987; Zhou 1997a: 65).
- **Shia** — See *Branches of Islam*
- **Sister**
    - A term that many Muslims use to address Muslim women. Similarly 'brother' is often used within Islam to address Muslim men.
- **Subtle (Treatment)**
    - Non-confrontational, oblique ways that the difference of (ethnic and religious) minorities is highlighted by dominant social groups. Examples of *subtle* accentuations of difference include ignoring and staring. For more information, see Essed (1991), Noble (2005), and Velayutham (2009).
- **St. Laurent (122.01) – Ottawa Census Tract**

- Located in east Ottawa, bordered by 417 Highway, St. Laurent Boulevard, the Aviation Parkway, Oglivie Road, Cummings Avenue, and Cyrville Road. For more information see Chapter Three, pages 30 to 31.
- ***Sufi*** — ***See Branches of Islam***
- ***Sunni*** — ***See Branches of Islam***
- ***Tactic***
  - Tactics are used daily by individuals to deal with the power structures that regulate public spaces (de Certeau 1984; Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster 2012: 204). Tactics include both active (such as, engaging in dialogue or confrontation) and passive actions (for instance, silence, making excuses, or remaining/avoiding particular social groups).
- ***Veil*** — ***See Hijab, Islamic Modesty***
  - In this project, the term refers specifically to the Islamic veil, and is used interchangeably with *hijab* or headscarf.
- ***Western***
  - In the context of this thesis, western refers to a number of overlapping ideas. Often used to refer to:
    - 1) Specific geographic areas, in particular Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.
    - 2) A dominantly white (Caucasian) population, where those who represent a visible (ethnic or religious) minority are often perceived to be immigrants, or representative of immigrant communities.
    - 3) Secular environments, where the public practice of religion is considered out of place. However, in many ways Christianity dominates in the west through particular practices (such as, politician’s speeches, celebration of religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas, and weekly schedules).
  - The term western can be additionally linked to a number of other discourses. See the entry in the *Human Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory *et al* 2009: 808-9) for more information.
- ***Wudu***
  - Refers to a ritual cleansing done prior to prayer; also known as ablutions.

## **APPENDIX TWO – RECRUITMENT TEXT**

### *Recruitment Email to Professional / Personal Contacts*

Dear (insert name of friend / colleague),

I am working on my Master's thesis in the Department of Geography at the University of Ottawa and I am looking for participants for my research project, entitled "*The Geographies of Second-Generation Muslim Women: Identity Formation and Everyday Experiences in Public Space.*" My research is interested in interactions in public and their influences on one's sense of comfort in a city, particularly for the children of immigrants. I will be examining these issues from the perspective of second-generation Muslim women in Ottawa and I am interested in their experiences in the city's public spaces.

I am contacting you because I believe that you may have family, friends and / or professional contacts who meet the requirements of my research. My project is looking for a rather specific group of individuals: young Muslim women (aged between eighteen and twenty-eight), who were born in Canada or came under the age of ten, and as the children of immigrants are second-generation Canadians. I would like to have as much diversity in my sample as possible, in terms of ethnicity (e.g., multiple countries of origin) and religious practices (e.g., devout, secular; Sunni, Shia, Sufi). As I am interested in the role of family and community in the lives of second-generation youth, I am seeking only those born into Muslim families (i.e., those who have converted to Islam of their own accord will not be included in the study).

I would ask if you could please forward my letter of recruitment (attached with this email, in English and in French) to any of your personal contacts that qualify and that would be interested in participating in my study. Please do not feel pressured to forward my recruitment letter or to find me participants. You are under no obligation to send anything, and if you are unable, or do not want to send it, please note that this will not impact our personal / professional relationship with one another, nor will I be following up with you after this initial email. As well, in the recruitment letter, I have requested that any interested participants contact me directly, so the only role that I ask from you is to forward the initial email to interested women.

I appreciate any help that you can give me. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this email!

Sincerely,  
Alisha Lagasi

Letter of Recruitment

Dear Ms./Mrs.,

I am a Master's candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Dr. Brian Ray. My research project is entitled "*The Geographies of Second-Generation Muslim Women: Identity Formation and Everyday Experiences in Public Space.*" My research is interested in interactions in public and their influences on one's sense of comfort in a city, particularly for the children of immigrants. I will be examining these issues from the perspective of second-generation Muslim women in Ottawa and I am interested in their experiences in the city's public spaces.

For my research project, I am looking for young Muslim women (aged between eighteen and twenty-eight), who were born in Canada or who came under the age of ten, and as the children of immigrants are second-generation Canadians. I would like to have as much diversity in my sample as possible, in terms of ethnicity and religious practices. As I am interested in the role of family and community in the lives of second-generation youth, I am seeking only those born into Muslim families (i.e., those who have converted to Islam of their own accord will not be included in the study).

If you would like to take part, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire and participate in an interview which will be audio-recorded. The two components will take approximately one to two hours. The questionnaire and interview will take place together, in a setting and at a time that are convenient for you. There is also an option to participate in a supplementary focus group with other participants of the study, which will be scheduled after the completion of all interviews and will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

The collected information will be kept private throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications, and will be known only to myself and my supervisor. Your personal privacy is important, as such a pseudonym will be assigned to your responses (i.e., questionnaire; interview) to protect your identity and your name will never be revealed. This research project has received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Committee and will adhere to a rigid code of ethics, ensuring your safety and dignity throughout the project and in any subsequent publications.

Please note that your participation in this research is completely voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw at any time, at which point all of your collected information will be securely erased.

If you would like to participate or have any additional questions about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me at the coordinates listed below (through email if possible). Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Alisha Lagasi  
MA Candidate,  
Department of Geography

## **APPENDIX THREE – CONSENT DOCUMENT**

### *Letter of Consent*

**Title of the study:** The Geographies of Second-Generation Muslim Women: Identity Formation and Everyday Experiences in Public Space

This research is being conducted by:

Alisha Lagasi, MA Student of the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, at the University of Ottawa

Under the supervision of:

Dr. Brian Ray, Department of Geography (Faculty of Arts), University of Ottawa

**Invitation to Participate:** I am invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study conducted by Alisha Lagasi, under the supervision of Dr. Brian Ray.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to examine comfort and experiences in Ottawa's public spaces and the impacts of public interactions on second generation Canadians (i.e., born in Canada to immigrant parents). This research will be investigated through the perspective of second-generation Muslim women.

**Participation:** My participation will consist of the completion of a short questionnaire (one page) and one interview (one to two hours) during which I will be asked questions regarding my experiences in Ottawa, in terms of religion, family, community and interactions in public spaces. The interview and questionnaire will be completed together, will be audio-recorded and will be scheduled at a time, location and date that are convenient for me.

**Risks:** My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer personal information, and this may cause me to feel emotional or psychological side effects. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks (e.g., the interview will be stopped at any point where I feel upset; the right to refuse to answer any question; the right to withdraw from the study).

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will be used to deepen understanding of the social relations that are played out in Ottawa's public spaces, as well as to further research on discomfort in public spaces and on Muslim women. The research will also collect information on the second generation and the ways in which they experience public spaces.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the researcher's thesis and research publications and that my confidentiality will be protected (e.g., through the use of pseudonyms and secured data), and that at no point in the research will my name be made public. I may however be described in the research by my age, physical characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, choice of dress) and background (e.g., heritage) in order to provide necessary background context to the research.

**Data Conservation:** The data collected (e.g., interview tape recordings and transcripts; questionnaires; electronic files) will be kept in a secure manner (e.g., electronic data will be encrypted; all hard data will be locked away). The data will be available only to the researcher

(Alisha Lagasi) and her supervisor (Dr. Brian Ray) and will be kept on the University of Ottawa campus for a period of five years following the completion of the thesis project.

**Compensation:** Compensation will consist of refreshments (i.e., beverage and snack) during the interview, and for those without a transit pass, bus tickets will be provided to cover travel costs to and from the interview.

**Voluntary Participation:** I am under no obligation to participate, and if I choose to participate I can withdraw from the study at any time. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered prior to the time of withdrawal will not be used in the study and will be securely erased. I may also refuse to answer any questions, without suffering penalties or consequences, as well as pause or stop the interview at any point where I feel uncomfortable.

**Acceptance:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Alisha Lagasi of the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Brian Ray.

I also confirm that I meet the study's requirements:

- 1) Within the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight and reside in the city of Ottawa
- 2) A second-generation Canadian female (my parents immigrated from another country)
- 3) Born into a Muslim family (Not a convert to Islam)

***I would be interested in being contacted to participate in a complementary focus group with other participants of this study.***      **YES**      **NO**

If you select YES above, you may be contacted to participate in a focus group that will be held after the completion of the interviews. Please provide your preferred means of contact (e.g., email, phone): \_\_\_\_\_

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX FOUR – QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

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To facilitate the interviewing process, we ask that you complete the following questionnaire in advance. Please note that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time (at which point all information pertaining to you will be securely erased). Your name will be known only to the researcher and all of the following information will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym. Your participation is very much appreciated.

- 1) Age : \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Your City of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is the nearest major intersection to where you live? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) How long have you lived in Ottawa? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Have you always lived in the same part of town?       Yes       No
- 7) If not, where else have you lived in Ottawa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Your parents' country of origin?  
*Mother:* \_\_\_\_\_      *Father:* \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) What languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Religious Denomination:  Shia     Sunni     Sufi     Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) Highest level of education achieved (circle one):  
 High School Diploma     College Degree     Bachelor's Degree       Master's  
 PhD                               Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please offer three possible names to be used as pseudonyms (i.e., a false name used to conceal an individual's identity). The selected name will be used to represent you in this research project.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**For Researcher To Complete**

Questionnaire Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX FIVE – INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Introduction**

Hello! Thank you very much for joining me today. I really appreciate your help with my research. Why don't I start by telling you a bit about myself and why I am doing this research project.

I started studying Arabic language and culture, and Islam, during my undergraduate degree and became fascinated with it, which inspired travels in the Middle East. I really enjoyed myself on these adventures and I found that the diverse and engaging Muslims that I met contradicted the often limited depictions in Western media of Muslims.

That, as much as anything, was fuel for this research project – to show the diversity of the Muslim community and to challenge many of the stereotypes ascribed to Muslim women. That's why I am interested in your stories and experiences in the city. My goal in this research is not to draw any broad homogenizing conclusions, but rather to explore the individualized narratives of Ottawa's Muslim women (particularly in terms of their spatial experiences). This project is on a very small scale, but I hope that it will inspire others to delve further. Why don't we get started...

### **Neighbourhood**

- You mentioned in the questionnaire that you live near (*enter* intersection), what's that area like to live in?
  - Is that a busy or quiet neighbourhood?
  - What sorts of shops/amenities do you have nearby?
  - Are there any recreation centres nearby?
    - Do you do any activities (*i.e., recreational, sports*) there?
  - Is there anything particular/special to your area (*e.g., shops, attractions*)?
  - What kinds of jobs are available in your area of the city?
  - Do you like living there?
    - Would you stay in the same area if you had to move? Why (not)?
    - Is there anywhere else you would prefer living? Why (not)?
  - What prompted you (and your family) to move to/settle in this particular area?
- About your living situation – do you live alone or with family/friends?
  - How many people live in your house?
  - Siblings? Extended family?
  - Is your house spacious or crowded?
  - *If you live alone, what prompted you to live alone?*
    - *How did your family feel about that?*
    - *If alone, ask about previous living situation*

### **Family and Upbringing**

- I'd also like to learn about your family life growing up.
  - Could you tell me a bit about your home and parents? You mentioned that they were from (...), how did that factor into your life growing up?
    - Any particular traditions or customs?
    - What languages did you speak around the house?

- Do you find that speaking mostly (*English/French/Other Languages*) at home made your life easier or more challenging?
- Did/do both of your parents work?
  - Did they face difficulties finding jobs when they first came to Canada? Why or why not?
  - What kinds of jobs do they do?
- How many siblings do you have?
  - Did/do they all live in the same house?
  - Are you the oldest/middle/youngest?
  - Did you share a room with any siblings?
    - How was that? Did you get along well?
- Since you were an (*only child/one among many kids*), I'm wondering what kinds of household expectations your parents had for you?
  - What sorts of tasks and responsibilities did you have growing up in your household?
  - Did that change from when you were a child? A teenager?
  - How were chores given out?
  - Were there different expectations of older/younger, boys/girls?
  - Did you work more with your mom or dad around the house?
- So who had it better at your house, the girls or the boys? Older or younger siblings?
  - How do you think your experiences growing up compared to other kids your age? Other girls?
    - *E.g., in childhood, in adolescence?*
    - What about now? Do you think that your family experiences are pretty comparable to others?
- Thinking about what we've just discussed, how has it been for you growing up as a second-generation Canadian?
  - Are there any benefits that stick out in your mind?
  - Any challenges?
  - Anything that you would do differently with your children?
- (*Depending on the participant's reaction to these questions, I would like to probe further into the ways that they circumvent/negotiate with the above-mentioned experiences.*)

### Community

- You mentioned that you practice (...) Islam, is it easily practiced in Ottawa?
- Do you do with the Muslim community?
  - *If yes – such as...?*
  - *If no – why not?*
  - Has this changed since you were young?
- What about with your ethnic (*e.g., Somali, Arab, Afghan*) community?
  - *If yes – such as...?*
  - *If no – why not?*
  - Has this changed since you were young?
- ***If brought up by the participant:*** *Were your communities impacted by 9/11?*
  - *How did it affect you/your community?*
  - *Did it lead to positive/negative experiences?*
    - *How did these experiences make you feel?*

### Daily Life

- Could you tell me about a typical current weekday in your life?
  - What about a typical weekend? Do you get to relax a bit or are they quite busy?
  - What about when you were a teenager? What was a typical weekend like at home?
- When you just want to hang out, where do you like to go? *Favourite place?*
  - Why?
  - Are there any areas that you avoid?
    - Why (not)?
  - **When (Un)Comfortable:**
    - *When does it happen* (e.g., outside, inside, when, by self, with people, examples)?
    - *How does it manifest itself?*
    - *How do you deal with it?*
- Who do you tend to hang out with?
  - Has that changed a lot since you were a child?
  - Since you were a teenager?
- You also mentioned on the questionnaire that you have completed your (level of education), did you stop there or are you pursuing a higher degree?
  - Why (not)?
  - *If pursuing a higher education (university/college), what's it like?*
  - *Did it change from high school/your previous degree?*
- Do you have a job at the moment?
  - Why (not)?
  - *Could you tell me a bit about your job? What do you do?*

### Religiosity

- Although I think that the veil has been written about extensively, I will be asking you a few questions on (non)veiling and other religious practices as they pertain to your spatial experiences.
- So I noticed that you wear the (*headscarf / no visible signs of Islam*), does it have any impacts on your day-to-day life in Ottawa?
  - What made you decide to (not) wear the headscarf?
  - What sorts of positive experiences does (non)veiling give you?
  - Has it led to any challenges?
    - If so, do you have any individual strategies to deal with these challenges?
- What about other elements of being Muslim – how do they factor into your daily routine?
  - *E.g., Diet, Routine, Behaviour, Places that you prefer or avoid, gender-segregation?*
- What role does your religious identity play in your relationships with your family and friends?
  - What about with other Muslims? (*e.g., veiled women, non-veiled women, men*)
  - Do you find that it has any bearings on your interactions with the general public?

### City Spaces (Census Tracts)

- Over the course of my research, I have identified some spaces of interest in the city. In my opinion, one of Ottawa's most iconic and diverse spaces is the Byward Market.
  - How familiar are you with this area?
  - Have you ever visited this area?
    - Is there a particular time of day that you typically go to this area?

- *If suggest a particular time of day, why?*
  - What do you think of this area? Busy, boring...
  - What are your experiences in the Byward Market?
    - Positive/negative factors?
  - What's it like for you to walk through here?
- By looking at census data, I found a few areas of the city with higher Muslim residential concentrations and I am curious about your personal experiences in these areas. (*Have a map of the city handy to show them the three areas.*) A census tract represents (*the approximate size of a*) neighbourhood.
- (*Have a map of the city handy to show them the three areas*)
  - The first area is south-east of downtown, around Heron and Walkley (CT 7.02)
    - Have you ever visited this area?
      - What, if anything, do you do in this area?
      - What time of day do you usually visit this area (e.g., morning, afternoon, night)?
      - If suggests a particular type of day, why?
    - What do you think of this area?
    - What's it like for you to walk through here?
    - What are your experiences in this area?
      - Positive/negative factors?
    - To what extent do you consider this to be a Muslim space?
      - *In what ways is it Muslim to you?*
      - *If you don't consider this a Muslim space, why not? What's missing?*
  - Another area is in the east end at St. Laurent, between the Aviation Parkway and St. Laurent Boulevard (CT 122.01)
    - Have you ever visited this area?
      - What, if anything, do you do in this area?
      - What time of day do you usually visit this area (e.g., morning, afternoon, night)?
      - If suggests a particular type of day, why?
    - What do you think of this area?
    - What's it like for you to walk through here?
    - What are your experiences in this area?
      - Positive/negative factors?
    - To what extent do you consider this to be a Muslim space?
      - *In what ways is it Muslim to you?*
      - *If you don't consider this a Muslim space, why not? What's missing?*
  - The third area is in the west end, in the Bayshore area (CT 138).
    - Have you ever visited this area?
      - What, if anything, do you do in this area?
      - What time of day do you usually visit this area (e.g., morning, afternoon, night)?
      - If suggests a particular type of day, why?
    - What do you think of this area?
    - What's it like for you to walk through here?
    - What are your experiences in this area?
      - Positive/negative factors?
    - To what extent do you consider this to be a Muslim space?

- *In what ways is it Muslim to you?*
- *If you don't consider this a Muslim space, why not? What's missing?*
- Are there any spaces in the city that you would describe as Muslim? Why (not)?
  - In what ways is it Muslim?

Conclusion

- I'd like to conclude with a broader question about your experiences in Ottawa... What is it like to live in this city?
  - What's positive about living in Ottawa (e.g., *your favourite parts/places*)?
  - Are there any challenges?
- *(Address any additional questions that arose during the interview...)*
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

It was really interesting to hear your story; thank you very much for sharing it with me and for taking the time to meet with me. I really appreciate it!