

**MAPS OF BELONGING:
MUSLIMS IN HALIFAX**

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Abstract

With a growing Muslim population in Canada, questions about their integration are typically framed in terms of a problem of national belonging most often directed at the larger communities found in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. This does not address where, when and how belonging takes place: through complicated personal, social, cultural and spiritual negotiations in the locally grounded everyday life of cities. My research analyzes the alternative maps of Halifax, Nova Scotia produced by a diverse group of twenty Muslim men and women through auto-photography and photo-elicitation interviews. I highlight the complex, diverse and multiple ways in which Muslims negotiate a sense of place and belonging in the city. I examine why understanding the different objectives, motivations, challenges and approaches of participants that make up ‘participant methodologies’ is critical for analyzing the meanings of and relationships between place and belonging. I replace one-dimensional representations of Muslims with narratives of a racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse group of Muslim converts, Canadian-born Muslims, and foreign-born Muslims whose different roots/routes to Islam and Halifax produce different maps of belonging. Muslims negotiate multiple and simultaneous belongings through the experiences and practices of intersectional identities and through the use and creation of ‘halal’ space in the city. I argue that participants’ embodied practices as well as their social and cultural frameworks produce a complicated terrain of connections and disconnections through which participants negotiate everyday life in ‘Halalifax’: a city made congruent with Islamic practices and Muslim belonging. I map the challenges of fostering a sense of ‘ummah’ or community against the internal divisions of the Muslim community to reveal a complex cartography of the politics of belonging. I demonstrate how faith spaces are fought for and created and address the promise and politics of UMMAH Masjid, the city’s newest mosque under construction in Halifax. Mapping the city in these ways demonstrates not only the diverse and complex histories and politics of Muslims and Muslim community in the smaller city of Halifax, but also the efforts to create a sense of place and belonging despite them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Maps of Belonging: Literature Review, Methods and Methodology

Introduction

On March 10, 2009 a pregnant Muslim woman and her husband waited for a Metro Transit city bus in downtown Halifax. Wearing a niqab that covered her entire body except for her eyes, the woman boarded the bus with her husband and sat down. The bus driver refused to allow the Muslim couple to ride the public bus while the niqab covered her face. Witnesses reported that the bus driver, later suspended for his actions, was standing out of his seat, yelling above the woman's husband who was protesting the driver's harassing words. A passer-by who witnessed the heated engagement boarded the bus to confront the driver:

That's when the bus driver sat down and said, 'I'm not moving this bus until they get off.' And I said, 'I'm not going to get off until you call Metro Transit' (Lambie 2009).

After a brief call to the public transit office, the bus driver continued on his route with the Muslim couple on board but without a further word.

This, of course, is not an isolated event. In the year following the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11), the percentage of Canadians 'personally more suspicious' of people of Arab descent and Middle Eastern Muslims rose from 27% to 35% (Mujahid n.d.). Mosques, Hindu Temples and Sikh Gurdwaras in Canada became targets for misplaced anger, frustration, suspicion and violence (Kutty 2001) as did Muslim men and women. In Halifax, Muslim students were questioned by authorities and by other students about their involvement in the attacks. Some were attacked and spat on (Robinson 2001). Shortly after 9/11 a Halifax mosque was vandalized by a man uttering racial slurs (Mohammad 2004).

In the years since, tensions have eased, however, Muslims across Canada continue to experience discrimination, suspicion and 'othering' (Simpson 2006; McKenna 2006). In Halifax, the school board was called into question after offending many Muslim students and parents when a high school exam question asked students to write from an 'Islamic terrorist' point of view (Stewart 2006). A Halifax professor sparked debate when he posted the reproduced images of the Prophet Mohammad on his office door that had been at the heart of protest when a Danish

newspaper had published them earlier (Canadian Press 2006). In 2007, a different Halifax professor, who is Muslim, was victimized in a derogatory YouTube video that circulated throughout the university community in an email (Smulders 2007).

Not only in Halifax, but also across the country Muslim belonging is called into question. From debates about whether or not Muslim women should be allowed to cover their faces on the soccer field and in the voting booths (Montpetit 2010) to the move by both small towns and entire provinces to limit religious freedom and, thus, more formally establish a sense of dislocation and non-belonging among Muslims in particular (Authier 2013; Adams 2007; Ha 2007).

These events reveal several things about what I call the ‘thin veneer of multiculturalism’ in Canada. It reveals that accommodation, recognition and, more importantly, the assumptions of acceptance and belonging that accompany the rhetoric of both multicultural policy and the ways in which it has become embedded and embodied, is easily cracked in everyday life. It reveals that religion and religious identities do not map quite so easily onto the surface of multiculturalism in Canada and that the circulation of more powerful images, representations and discourses about Islam weakens the currency that multiculturalism might have in the everyday lives of Muslims. This event, too, suggests that there is a profound misunderstanding of Muslim identities and their place in Canada. Finally, and importantly, it also suggests that while there are weak points in the everyday surfaces of multiculturalism, there are moments of alliance between Muslim and non-Muslim through which acceptance and recognition might overcome discrimination.

The question is whether or not these fractures in multiculturalism as lived and practiced actually fully describe or represent the everyday lives of Muslims. Do the majority of Muslims in Canada feel excluded? Do they feel like they do not belong? Do they experience everyday life in their neighbourhoods and in their cities as hostile terrain?

My broader research interest is in questions of place and belonging. I am interested in the ways that people develop a sense of place and the kinds of moments or experiences that disrupt or challenge our connections to feeling in place or at home. I am interested in the ways in which our belongings, multiple and simultaneous attachments to different places, identities, and communities are both ephemeral and durable. My efforts here are to explore and explicate how belongings take place and how they might become anchored or set adrift given our different

place connections and mobilities. Everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexuality or religious identification, seek out dimensions of belonging through we find comfort, a sense of place, and ultimately comprise a map of our 'homespaces'. My research takes these inquiries to Halifax and some of the Muslim men and women who call Halifax home. In this dissertation, I provide a deeper and more intimate context for understanding, not only Muslim identities and practices in Canada, but more importantly, their journeys to be 'at home' and develop multiple dimensions of belonging that are not unlike most everyone's. This research remaps the city of Halifax as it emerges from the everyday perspectives and experiences of twenty Muslim men and women in order to counter a general and simplistic narrative of 'non-belonging' with rich, complex, diverse narratives of belonging. In other words, rather than rest on a line of difference that only reinforces both intolerance and 'otherness', this research opens up the geographies of a city in which Muslims are finding, creating and claiming multiple belongings.

In this chapter, I first, situate my research within the literature on cities, place and belonging, and geographies of religion, in particular the geographies of Muslim identities, places and communities. Second, I provide a brief overview of the research process including a review of the auto-photography literature and fieldwork. Third, I explain the interview process along with the process of analyzing the data which consists of interview transcripts and photographs. Fourth, I reflect on some of the challenges of conducting research among such a diverse research group and given the participatory nature of the research process. Lastly, I introduce the rich diversity of research participants through their demographic profile.

Part I: Literature Review

Urban Social Geographies: Alternative Mappings of Cities

In his book *City*, Hubbard (2006) suggests dissatisfaction with urban geography's concern with the form, function and system of 'the urban' to the neglect in understanding the meaningfulness of the lived spaces and practices of everyday life in the city (126). Hubbard, drawing from de Certeau (1988), argues that we "overlook some of the most important facets of city life" (98) when we become too concerned with 'knowing' the urban through the knowledge production of urban planners, architects and engineers, and the gaze of the cartographer. Urban geographers seeking to resurface some of these important facets call for alternative mappings of the city that foreground the knowledge of 'ordinary people' (see Laurier 2001; Thrift 1997;

Crouch 2001 in Hubbard 2006). Keith (2004) calls for new approaches in urban research attuned to alternative understandings of the city: he argues that the “landscapes of the city (of powerful and powerless) may be read, but they may also be lived, smelt, heard and haunted” (21). In a similar vein, Paquot (1999) argues that the multiple ways of inhabiting cities suggests that cities themselves are “always and necessarily multiple” (83) and that recovering this multiplicity requires an exploration of the ‘colour, shades, and contrasts’ of the ways in which people are “living with, doing together, [and] thinking among” (92) in cities (see also Holston 1999; Keith 2004). Amin and Thrift (2004) frame the city as the site of coming-togetherness and surprising juxtapositions (heterotopias), as replete with expressive and performative spaces and as ‘sensual’ – as ardently attuned to seeing, speaking, writing, imaging, imagining, and ‘sensing the city.’ As I outline later, these notions of sensing the city, experiencing, engaging with, and enacting within the city, are critical to the visual methodology of auto-photography used in my research.

The goal of alternative mappings is not to advance a new theory of the urban but rather as Hubbard (2006) suggests, it is “an attempt to engage with the complexity of existence, charting out the lines of force and effect which give the city substance and meaning” (127) (see Latham and McCormack 2004 in Hubbard 2006) through the experiences and perceptions of its residents. Revealing alternative mappings is a matter of focusing on the ‘particularity of social interactions’ in cities and the ways in which people understand and interpret, experience and enact, reproduce and engage with these in everyday ways (Massey 1994 cited in Smith 1999: 121). Bridge (2004) suggests that cities are ‘local spaces of realization’ and, like Agnew (1993), Sandercock (1998, 2003) and Amin (2002), calls for the specific investigation of these spaces and the identities, cultures, and communities that arise through them. By examining the city from the ground up and in everyday ways, we can reconsider ‘urban space’ as ‘cities’ and ‘places’ that are ‘embodied and lived’ (Hubbard 2006, 121) through social processes and practices (see Thrift 2003b in Hubbard 2006; Cresswell 2003; Iveson 2006, Keith 2004).

The social production and reproduction of identities, communities and belongings are constantly negotiated, created and re-created, in and through the geographies of cities (Massey 1993, 2005; Moore 1997; Body-Gendrot and Beauregard 1999; Diouf 1999; Holston and Appadurai 1999; Isin and Siemiatycki 1999, 2002; Paquot 1999; Amin and Thrift 2004; Keith, 2004; Iveson 2006). Cities are spaces of interaction, encounter and exchange between different people. They are the spaces in which people, particularly those who feel oppressed, exploited,

marginalized, or excluded, can be seen and made their voices heard (Back and Keith 2004; Wood and Gilbert 2005; Peake and Ray 2001; Teelucksingh 2006). Focusing on the everyday routines, practices and interactions that ‘take place’ in cities reveals the ways in which identity, place and belonging are interwoven (de Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1991; Highmore 2002).

A final, but important, aspect of alternative mappings of cities and city life emerges from the critique of the metrocentricity in urban geography against which there is increasing interest in considering the place of smaller cities in geographic research. Urban theory and urban issues continue to be defined and discussed through the examples of large first-tier centres, census-defined metropolitan centres and immigrant ‘gateway’ cities. Bell and Jayne (2009) argue that this metrocentricity limits a fuller understanding of urban form and function and risks losing a deeper understanding of the heterogeneity of cities and life in cities. I return to this later in a discussion of the geographies of Muslims and with a more detailed argument for research in smaller cities in Canada.

Geographies of Place and the Dimensions of Belonging

While I cannot review the extensive literature on ‘place,’ Cresswell (2004) provides a broad but detailed account of the ways in which place has been theoretically and empirically understood by geographers over several decades. I do want to briefly sketch out the ways that place as a process in order to encourage an understanding of the connections between place and belonging. As part of the ‘cultural turn’ and a renewed emphasis on politics, place became a much more contentious and contested term. Jackson (1989) argues that the ‘cultural turn’ in geography foregrounded the analysis of culture “through actual social practices that take place in historically contingent and geographically specific contexts” (23; see also Agnew and Duncan 1989). The cultural politics of place addresses the ways in which place and politics intersect in struggles over who defines place and its meaning (Cresswell 2004, 12).

As Cresswell (2004) argues, places are “the product of everyday practices ... never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices – the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis” (82; see also Pred 1984; Thrift 1996, 1997; Seamon 1980; Soja 1989, 1996, 1999; Amin 2004; Massey 1993, 2005). Thinking about the importance of place requires keen attention to the practical knowledge of everyday life (Relph 1976; de Certeau 1988; Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartlett and Fuller 2002). Amin and Thrift (2004), for example, suggest that places are comprised in and of the everyday local and lived experiences, or what they call

‘microcultures of place’ that “privilege everyday enactment as the central site of identity and attitude formation” (967).

Place is not a static or a priori ‘thing’ in waiting but rather as Escobar (2001) notes “places gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations” (143 in Cresswell 2004). Thus, a necessarily important aspect of place is its affective dimension (see Tuan 1977). The ways in which places become meaningful through our emotional connections is how we develop a sense of place and a sense of belonging (or not) in them.

In many senses, place and belonging are the same processes or are at least mutually dependent and mutually constituted. While there has been a great deal of research and writing on place, the theoretical and conceptual work on belonging is much less developed and articulated. Where once ‘place’ was used uncritically and less reflectively, recent and increasing attention to belonging has also failed to adequately explain what belonging is or what it means to us, how it operates as a process of inclusion and exclusion, or the ways in which belonging, as a geographical process of affective bonds, can be mapped out in our everyday lives. Furthermore, few have fully explored why ‘belonging’ might be a stronger or more useful concept than, for example, identity or citizenship (Mee and Wright 2009).

In addressing some of these questions, Mee and Wright (2009) outline three central reasons why geographers should more seriously consider the importance of belonging. First, they rightly note that belonging is ‘inherently geographical’ particularly in terms of its affective dimensions and human longing to have connections in and to place(s) (772). For Mee and Wright (2009), various belongings take place across multiple scales and include various relations of power through formal/informal citizenships and civic identities, exclusion and exclusionary processes, daily practices and performances. Second, Mee and Wright (2009) suggest that ‘belonging’ is a useful analytic alternative to ‘inclusion’ and, in some places, ‘social cohesion’; ‘fuzzy’ concepts based around identity politics and, especially, citizenship that dominate the discourse in policy-related debates, positions, and practices (773). Belonging is often mis-used synonymously with identity and citizenship without addressing the ways in which belonging differs from or extends our understandings of these concepts (Antonsich 2010). Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) argue that neither citizenship nor identity alone is analytically sufficient for understanding the myriad and complex relations of individuals and society. Bhimji (2008: 414, in Antonsich 2010) addresses the multidimensionality of belonging arguing that it is inclusive of

citizenship, nationhood, gender, ethnicity, and a whole range of “emotional dimensions of status or attachment” (645). These modes of belonging extend to various attachments to places, groups, and cultures (Antonsich 2010, 645). Belonging usefully broadens and extends meanings of ‘inclusion’ and citizenship to, for example, incorporate emotional and affective elements of feeling at home. Third, Mee and Wright (2009) suggest that despite its often ambiguous meaning and use, ‘belonging’ resonates with people in a way that inclusion does not, and thus provides a common ground for discussion between researchers and with those we seek a greater understanding of belonging (774).

Antonsich (2010) articulates the myriad ways and multiple places and scales through both belonging as emotional attachment and belonging as the negotiated outcome of boundary politics might be usefully examined. He explores both place-belongingness as the personal, intimate connections and feelings to place and ‘home’ as well as the politics of belonging “as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion” (645) through boundaries. He argues that placing the analytic lens on the intersection of ‘place-belongingness’ and ‘the politics of belonging’ allows us to explore the geographies of place “in all its multiple scales and in their connections” (653). I examine the concepts of ‘place-belongingness’ and ‘the politics of belonging’ throughout this dissertation as parts of the same ongoing process in what I call the dimensions of belonging.

My approach to belonging follows the framework set out by Antonsich (2010) beginning with the personal, intimate, emotional connections and relationships people develop with place where an individual can feel ‘at home’” (646). Citing hooks (2009), Antonsich argues that ‘place-belongingness’ encompasses “a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” where “feelings of belonging to a place and processes of Self-formation are mutually implicated” (Antonsich 2010, 646). Linking place-belongingness to notions of ‘home’ in these senses provides an analytic entry point to the “practices inherent in creating and maintaining a sense of belonging which ties homes in multiple places and involves a multiscaled understanding of both home and belonging” (Mee and Wright 2009, 773). Thus, ‘home’ takes on broader meanings but with an eye to much deeper connections. Place-belongings, as such, are not found in ‘a home’ but developed through ‘homespaces’ – the sites, places, and spaces that we mark as our own, as important and meaningful, even if temporarily, and in the ‘traces of movements that have passed’ (Wise 2000). Place-belongings are developed through the milieus

that are created as we pass through and mark space and through the opening of these milieus into other milieus, both real and imagined associations, orientations, and memories (Wise 2000). For Antonsich (2010), place-belongingness can be analyzed through five overlapping terrains in which ‘homespaces’ emerge through place, identity, and belonging: the auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal/formal dimensions of belonging.

First, place-belonging emerges through our autobiographical experiences, memories, perceptions, and reflections of personal histories and journeys. The stories we tell about our selves reflect a personal engagement with our own sense of identities, belongings, and attachments to places. Drawing from Probyn (1996) and Yuval-Davis (2006), Fenster (2005) underscores the substance of our memories of times and places along our journeys in life and which accompany our developing identities and identifications: memory and association are the “accumulation of little events from the past, our childhood experiences, our personal readings and reflections on specific spaces, which are associated with significant events on our personal history” (Fenster 2005, 248). The ways in which we remember and the ways in which we re-tell these memories are important in understanding our connections to place. The auto-biographical, therefore, is a key dimension in exploring place-belongingness. Our journeys through time and space, our childhood and growing-up years and our rootedness and mobilities, feature prominently, not only in how we connect to various aspect of our identities to different places at different times, but also how these routes continue to mark significant ‘belongings’ in the present and in our current ‘homes’ (Antonsich 2010, 647; hooks 2009; Fortier 2000).

Second, the individual and personal relationship between self and place must also be analyzed within the relational processes through which we develop a strong sense of belongingness among others. These identity and social relations through which we engage with others, familiar and strange, constitute the “personal and social ties that enrich the life of an individual in a given place” (Antonsich 2010, 647). While not all relations at all time will be equally formative, we must pay critical attention to the range of interactions that constitute the social “from emotionally dense relations with friends and family members ... [to] occasional interactions with strangers with whom we come to share public space” (647).

Third, cultural belongings, stemming from language, ethnicity, faith or some other collective affiliation, are integral parts of feeling ‘at home’ and having a stake in some place. While language, for example, can and often is deployed in the politics of belonging, separating

‘us’ from ‘them’, having a common language through which to communicate also provides the sense of comfort that come from being “among people who not only merely understand what you say, but also what you mean” (Antonsich 2010, 648). Language is one example of cultural ‘elements of intimacy’ that can comprise different belongings but we must also explore other cultural and religious expressions and practices that comprise the many belongings to which we lay claim. As Bridge (2005) reminds us, we have multiple allegiances, loyalties and communities. Identity is not singular and “people can occupy multiple communities or parts of communities” (69).

Fourth, feeling safe, secure, stable and comfortable also contributes to the ways in which we connect emotionally to place. Therefore, our economic contexts must also be considered for their contribution to our emotional and affective connections to place. A safe and stable economic context can provide, in part, the “material condition for the individual and her/his family” (Antonsich 2010, 648) within which to live, grow, raise a family, and establish life goals. If we are to develop strong attachments to some place, if we are to invest our own hearts and souls into a place, then “economic embeddedness matters ... in relation to make a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives” (648). Here, in keeping with place-belongingness, the absence of a ‘right to be’ some place, to stay and to work in some place, results in feelings of “loneliness, isolation, alienation, and dis-placement” (649).

Fifth, formal claims to belong, through citizenship provide a “vital dimension of belonging” (Antonsich 2010, 648) through the knowing security of having entrenched rights. Formal citizenship, however, is rarely if ever enough to provide people with deep and meaningful connections to place. Citizenship and other legal and legitimate formal forms of belonging are also key in the politics of belonging where their absence or contestation manifests in marginalization and exclusionary boundaries. Following Fenster (2006), however, such ‘formal structures of belonging’ also allows one to participate and shape one’s place and is key in “generating feelings of belonging” (Antonsich 2010, 649). Citizenship can make a person “feel recognized and accepted” (650) but in order for place-belongingness to develop and grow one must be able to freely express their needs, desires, and expectations. A sense of place-belongingness builds up from feeling integral to society; that you are “valued and listened to” (659). These qualities cannot be legislated into existence or provided through formal declarations of citizenship, but rather build up through daily experiences, practices, and engagements between

ourselves and others. In this way, as noted by Crowley (1999), belonging is ‘thicker’ than formal citizenship.

If place-belongingness reflects our emotional attachments of feeling at home in different ways and across multiple scales then the politics of belonging refers to the (also personal and individual) social and political boundaries of belonging. Crowley (1999) argues that the ‘dirty work of boundary maintenance’ that separates ‘us’ and ‘them’ lies at the heart of the politics of belonging. For Yuval-Davis (2006) the terrain of the politics of belonging is shaped through and by the creation, maintenance, and negotiation of boundaries. It encompasses the ways in which individuals and collectives decide whether those with whom you make connections stand either inside or outside those boundaries (204). These exclusionary politics involve social and political “borders which mark the edges of different types of belonging” (Mee and Wright 2009, 775) and requires discussions “about who belongs and how is such belonging imagined and achieved” (773). Antonsich (2009) describes the politics of belonging as the ways that one might come to feel rejected or welcomed as a social sense of belonging framed by “discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion” (649). But these boundaries are neither always complete nor clearly demarcated. Probyn (1996) reminds us to question the often taken for granted by focusing on “messy, uncertain, fragile, and shifting” boundaries among and between individuals and collectives (in Mee and Wright, 773).

This politics of engagement at and around the boundaries invites us to think about the ways in which belonging and the politics of belonging are practiced and performed and, hence, always becoming rather than fixed and essential (Probyn 1996). Bell (1999) argues that processes of belonging are about the ‘doing’ of belonging: “performed, displayed, and enacted through individual and collective practices” (cited in Antonsich, 652). Yuval-Davis (2006) also argues that belonging is constituted through performative aspects of cultural practices that link individuals and collectives in ways that are “crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment” (203). Because performances and practices ‘take place’, meaningful attachments to place form and processes of belonging begin to take root (Fenster 2005, 249).

At those sites where the boundaries of belonging are constructed and maintained, sites for tension, contestation, resistance, and a potential reworking of boundaries also emerge. Schein (2009) suggests that power relations “create certain openings and closures around belonging” (in

Mee and Wright 2009, 776) that allow people to resist, to ‘speak back’, and to form alternative belongings outside of or despite exclusionary politics. Therefore, in any politics of belonging it is critical to examine not only the ways in which exclusion and exclusionary processes and practices limit, restrict, and confine belonging, but also, and importantly to think about the multiple places and scales through which belonging is created, contested, and negotiated within and in spite of them.

Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) indicate the ways in which we can begin to consider the complexities of the politics of belonging as situated temporally, spatially, and intersectionally. First, the politics of belonging must be situated in the historical and contemporary developments that create and maintain exclusionary boundaries. Second, research must recognize the role of space and place and that exclusion and exclusionary processes operate differently in different places. Third, this same attention to the situated politics of belonging extend intersectionally: “not all people affect and are affected by specific politics of belonging” (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006, 7) in the same way.

Geographies of Religion: Muslim Identities, Places and Communities

In 2001, Kong promoted the opportunities that the ‘cultural turn’ offered for the study of religion, religious identities and the cultural politics of place. She argued that geographers must take seriously the importance of religion in both identity and community production, negotiation and contestation as well as the ways in which religious identities shape and are shaped by spatial processes, local landscapes, places of practice, notions of belonging and a ‘sense of place’. She (2001) also argued that religion must be taken as a primary axis of analysis alongside race, class and gender, particularly in relation to religious based identities and communities and the ‘making of place’ (Kong 2001, 212). Her call for greater insight through intersectional approaches pushed geographers to understand the different ways that different people at different times and places experience, perceive and interpret their religious identities, practices and experiences (226). As Boyd (2005) argues in the Canadian context, religious individuals are not only members of a particular religious institution or faith but rather have additional dimensions of identity that are mutually constitutive. She, too, suggests that an intersectional approach that takes into consideration race, class, gender and other social and cultural markers of identity highlights the ‘multidimensionalities’ that religious identities and communities may face because of their ‘simultaneous belongings’ (73).

There is little doubt that since, Kong's 1990 and 2001 reviews of the geographies of religion, the field has both widened and deepened in scope. In her third decadal review of the geographies of religion, Kong (2010) notes a 'burst' of research shaped primarily, she argues, by the events of September 11, 2001 and subsequent events such as the bombings in Bali, Madrid, London and Mumbai which "radically reshaped and sharpened" (755) geographical imaginations especially in relation to Islam.

Kong (2010) also notes that the growth in research on everyday and banal religious practices demonstrates that "everyday spaces can be implicated in religious meaning-making, legitimating, maintaining and enhancing, but also challenging religious life, beliefs, practices and identities" (757). Cultural geographers are reconsidering religion within a critical human geography framework exploring both the everyday experiences and expressions of religious identity as well as the myriad ways faith intersects with a range of other social and cultural markers (see Holloway and Valins 2002; Alexander 2006; Bhimji 2009; Harb 2009; Mishra and Shirazi 2010). In particular there is an emerging literature exploring Islamic communities and the establishment of and contestation over mosques in non-Muslim cities (see Antoniou 2003; Marranci 2004; Cesari 2005; Dunn 2005; Naylor and Ryan 2002; Gale 2004; and Isin and Siemiatycki 1999, 2002). More pertinent to my research is a second body of work analyzing the ways in which Muslim identities, communities and practices are negotiated in particular places (see Dwyer 1998, 1999, 2002; Peach 2002, 2006; Falah and Nagel 2005; Kaya 2005; Moghissi 2006, Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan 2007; Hopkins 2008; Moghssi, Rahnama and Goodman 2009). Despite this growing literature, there remains a continued need for grounded place-specific and contextual research focusing on the intersections of religious and other identities in everyday life.

Much of this second body of research on Muslim identities and focuses on either national belonging or the experiences of living in diaspora. The first area of research takes on issues of identity and citizenship and perceived tensions surrounding the presence, integration and national belonging of Muslims in non-Muslim but increasingly multicultural nations (see Vertovec and Rogers 1998, Abbas 2005; Amin 2002; Koenig 2005; Rohe 2005; Modood 2007; Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero 2006; Mushaben 2008, Diehl, Koenig and Ruckdeschel 2009; Molokotos-Liederman 2005; Rath 2005; Dunn 2003, 2004, 2005; Gould 2005; Modood 2010; Seddon 2010). The second body of research on Muslim identities and communities

explores Muslims in diaspora in order to understand the ways in which Muslims ‘re-compose’ identities as they live out everyday life through transnational and diasporic relations (Schmidt 2002; Moghissi 2006; Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan 2007; Moghissi, Rahnema and Goodman 2009).

What is often eclipsed by focusing on the negotiation of Muslim identities and communities at either the national level or by focusing on the Muslim diaspora, is an exploration of the significance of ‘place’ in the everyday geographies of Muslims. Amin (2002), writing in the context of “unashamed questioning of the cultural and national allegiances of British Muslims” (959) argues for a much more grounded approach in understanding both the experiences of and the place of Muslims in ‘non-Muslim’ countries. Rather than continued attention on national framings of Muslim identity, citizenship and belonging Amin argues for greater focus on the everyday negotiations of difference emphasizing the local “micropolitics of everyday social contact and encounter” (959). Amin argues that an analysis of Muslims on the ground, in particular places at particular times, reveals the multiple lifeworlds and intersectionalities of Muslim identities, thereby complicating simplistic and idealized notions of (not)belonging at the national level.

Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan (2007) also argue that while much research has explored Muslim identities, particularly since 9/11, the importance of ‘place’ and the ‘local’ in the formation and practice of Muslim identities deserves greater attention from geographers. In their anthology, *Geographies of Muslim Identities: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging* (2007) Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan challenge the stereotypical representations of Muslims rooted in Orientalist and racist constructions of ‘being Islamic’ by exposing the ways in which Muslim identities and geographies are heterogeneous. Their focus is on how and where Muslim identities are produced and lived out and emphasizes “the importance of place and time as significant influences over how Islam is experienced, lived out and practiced on an everyday basis” (7-8). Such an approach allows for greater understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Muslims where they spend their day-to-day lives: on the ground, at the local level, in a particular place and at a particular time.

Peter Hopkins’ research with young men in Glasgow and Edinburgh represents an exceptional example of the everyday geographies of Muslims and the negotiation of identities, communities and practices (Hopkins 2008). He reveals in detail the complexity and

multidimensionality of identity through an intersectional analysis exploring the ways in which religious identity intersects with other markers such as race, social class, gender, generation, sexuality and disability (See Hopkins 2004; 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2007d; 2007e; 2009a; 2009b; Ali and Hopkins 2012). In addition, Hopkins explores the ways in which intersectionality is also a process of recognizing the importance of how identity finds expression in specific places and through different scales (See Hopkins 2007a; 2007b; 2007d; Hopkins 2010). His work responds to an increasing call for human geographers to practice more critically, reflecting on our methodological approaches and their effects on the production of knowledge (See Hopkins 2007c; 2008; 2009b).

In the Canadian context, however, there is little grounded, contextual, place-specific research with Muslims that detail the negotiations of everyday life (See Arthur et al. 2008; Abdul-Razzaq 2008). Moreover, the geographies of Muslims must be considered in Canada in their own right. For example, Rahnema (2006) suggests that the differences in Canada's Muslim population as compared to those in many European countries justify further research. In Canada, Muslims are a much smaller population and much younger in its history than in many European countries. In countries such as France and Germany, Muslims typically share national origin identity while in Canada the Muslim population is much more diverse, representing what Rahnema (2006) calls a 'global profile' of Muslims. Multiculturalism in Canada has set the stage for a 'comparatively more tolerant' society though lingering discrimination continues to be an issue for the Muslim community.

While the geographical range of research on Muslim geographies has expanded elsewhere (Kong 2010), there remains a gap in which grounded empirical research on the everyday identities, practices, and places of Muslims in Canada can make a significant contribution. Muslims have long been present in Canada (see McDonough and Alvi 2002), however, the growth in the Canadian Muslim population since the 1970s, signifies a relatively new religious group on a broader scale (Delic 2008). Based on the 2001 Statistics Canada Census, Rahnema (2006) notes that while representing just 2% of the population Muslims are the 'fastest growing ethno-religious group' in Canada "diversified in terms of ethnic, national and sectarian affiliations, and degrees of religious conviction" (24). The vast majority of Muslims in Canada are recent immigrants living primarily in urban centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. However, there is also an increasing second-generation Muslim population in

Canada, drawing considerable attention from policy researchers and geographers eager to assess the successes and failures of integration and social cohesion policies for second-generation populations more generally (see Tonks and Paranjpe 1999; Pratt 2002; Ali 2008; Arthur et al. 2008; Boyd 2008; Brooks 2008; Gallant 2008; Hébert, Wilkinson and Ali 2008; Jantzen 2008; Jedwab 2008; Khanlou 2008; Kobayashi 2008; Lalonde and Giguère 2008; Potvin 2008; Wilkinson 2008; Zhou and Lee 2008).

There is a more recent but still small body of literature on the geographies and experiences of Muslims in Canada. There are, however, four limitations to this literature to which my dissertation makes significant contributions. First, research conducted prior to 9/11, while detailed, rich and valuable contributions, is now outdated in some respects (Husaini 1990; Yousif 1993; Qureshi 1996). Research written prior to a context in which a reinvigorated Orientalism (See Helly 2004; Rahnema 2006; Afshar 2008) has the West in an ever more vigilant stance of suspicion toward Muslims, both near and far, cannot adequately speak to the everyday experiences of Muslims, particularly in non-Muslim countries like Canada.

Jedwab (2005) suggests that due to great diversity among the Muslim population in Canada, negative stereotypes and broad generalizations about the population must be countered by more specific and contextual research that seeks to understand a wider range of positions and locations of Muslims in Canada (See Dib 2006). Under increasing scrutiny is whether or not Canadian multiculturalism provides the context for Muslims to create spaces in which to maintain their religious and cultural differences and practices while simultaneously contributing to and feeling a sense of belonging in Canada (Cañas 2008; Ramji 2008: 104). Given the events of the last ten years as well as recent debates in Canada surrounding the success or failure of multiculturalism (Bannerji 2000; Bissoondath 2002; Rahnema 2006) and the limits to reasonable accommodation (Gross Stein, Cameron, Ibbitson, Kymlicka, Meisel, Siddiqui and Valpy 2007; Hamilton 2007; Siddiqui 2007, 2008; Wyatt 2007), which have placed Islam and being Muslim centre stage, Husaini's (1990) conclusion that the Muslim community in Canada has 'socially evolved' into a 'unified body' and matured to "encompass the concept of Umma" (102) comes both at the cost of, and is a call for, a more detailed and critical examination of religious differences among Muslims and their diverse experiences in everyday life.

The second limitation to the existing literature on Canadian Muslims is the tendency to narrowly focus on and privilege Islamic identity over a more critical engagement with multiple

identities through intersectionality. Research immediately following 9/11 reasserted the marginal position of Muslims in Canada, subjected to increased attention, stereotyping and discrimination. Hamdani, Bhatti and Munawar (2005) note increased reports of racism, verbal and physical attacks as well as property damage against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim after 9/11 (see also Helly 2004, Rahema 2006; Ruby 2006; Arat-Koc 2006; Delic 2008). Research that centers on Islamic identities and practices, if at times discussed alongside other markers, reproduces a hierarchical notion that being Muslim and practicing Islam is always in the foreground of everyday life (Ramji 2008). This may or may not be the case for all Muslims.

There is little research that fully explores the everyday realities of multiple identities and attachments (outside those that reproduce the notion that young Muslims occupy a ‘conflict zone’ between their parents culture and that of non-Muslim Canadian society; see Delic 2008). Bakht (2008b) argues that Muslim Canadians experience feelings of both belonging and banishment in their own country (see also Arat-Koc 2006; Arthur et al. 2008). Bakht (2008b) suggests that the multiplicity of being Muslim is poorly understood in Canada: a context characterized by mainstream ignorance and inaccurate media representations (Arat-Koc 2006; Biles and Ibrahim 2005; Awan, Skeikh, Mithoowani, Ahmed and Simard 2007; Abdul-Razzaq 2008; Siddiqui 2008; Malak 2008; Harb 2008).

Jedwab (2005) suggests there is a need for research that increases our understanding of the multiple meanings and experiences of belonging to counter those accounts that generalize the experiences of all Muslims. Importantly, there seems to be no research that includes the experiences and perceptions of Muslim converts as they also must negotiate a new landscape as a Muslim marked by their dress or other forms of Islamic practice (though see Franks 2000 and Haw 2010 for examples of research in Britain that includes the perspectives of converts).

In Canada, as elsewhere, an essentialist reading of ‘Muslim’ has produced a kind of ‘invented’ Muslim community, and in so doing, has rendered invisible the diversity of, and conflicting and contested identifications within, the Muslim world. The Muslim community in Canada is highly diverse, crosscut by ethnic, national, language, religious adherence, age, and gender differences among others. All this diversity shifts attention to problematic claims that seem to represent Muslims as a homogenous community. To counter such claims, Rahnema (2006) argues that Canadian Muslims must be thought of as, at least, “triple identities of home national identity, religion, and as citizens of new host nation” (32). A number of others call for

more research that investigates the complex diversity within groups labeled Muslim in Canada exposing multiple lines of identity and community difference (Arat-Koc 2006; Mehdi 2008; Ramji 2008; McDonough and Hoodfar, 2005; Arthur et al. 2008; Delic 2008).

Third, while there are increasing efforts in research to account for the diversity of Muslim identities and communities in Canada, many of these studies remain broadly focused on cultural identities that may include Muslims alongside other faiths (see Eid 2007 for example) or on diasporic, transnational, and national belongings to the neglect of local and place specific expressions of identity, community and belonging (Rahnema 2006; Moghissi, Rahnema and Goodman 2009). For example, Khanlou, Koh and Mill (2008) argue that discrimination and racial prejudice help to shape the sense of belonging among Iranian and Afghan youth in Toronto. The authors focus on the social and cultural identities of youth, including their religious identities as Muslim, and their feelings of (dis)connection to a ‘multicultural’ Canada. They suggest that both societal factors, particularly media (mis)representation, and personal experiences being perceived as ‘perpetual immigrants’ shape young Muslims’ sense of self and belonging. On one hand, participants expressed a fear to disclose their Muslimness at certain times and places while on the other hand they found that even negative experiences and events contribute to a stronger “sense of identity and personal resiliency” (506). After 9/11, for example, participants made efforts to “themselves and others to dispel inaccurate stereotypes and images” (506; see also Ramji 2008). Yet, Khanlou, Koh and Mill’s (2008) discussion of attachment and belonging among Muslim youth remains at the level of the nation and discussed through vague feelings of feeling connected to Canada or appreciative of its multicultural policy and ethos.

In 2005, John Biles and Humera Ibrahim suggest Canada’s increasing Muslim population represents a ‘seismic shift’ that brings to centre stage the pressing concern of “the relentless treatment of Canadian Muslims as an un-integratable mass of illiberal individuals who pose a threat to Canadian society” (68). Delic (2008), however, argues that Canadian multiculturalism ‘naturally’ reflects multiple identities and provides the context for a very diverse Muslim population in which to renew and reform societal and religious positions as identity is negotiated. Delic (2008) suggest that, within the context of Canadian Multiculturalism, the successful integration of Muslims cannot take place unless they can develop a sense of belonging to the nation and the societal culture (94). He draws on an Environics (2007) survey which indicates

successful integration “despite experiencing some degree of discrimination” (99). This counters, he argues, what others have claimed: that “Muslims in Canada feel isolated or besieged” (99). He concedes, however, that while “Canadian Muslims enjoy full rights as citizens ... [they] are not fully embraced into Canadian society as full citizens” (99). If there is a wide public perception that Muslims do not belong in Canada, it will continue to be difficult to develop a sense of belonging. This, he argues, indicates that the ‘Muslim question’ is really a ‘Canadian question’; if perceived to not belong, it is difficult to feel a sense of belonging (99). Delic (2008) argues that to change the misperception that Muslims are somehow necessarily ‘outside the nation’ and to embrace them as fellow citizens we must lessen public misunderstandings through open communication and by challenging media representations that pit the ‘Muslim they’ against the ‘Canadian we’ (100). In addition, a multicultural Canada must provide the means for Muslim organizations to increase civic engagement and build bridges across communities. In particular, there is a need to focus on the second generation as they re-evaluate their identities and sense of belonging in Canada compared to their parents and ethnic and religious communities (101). In both Khanlou, Koh and Mill (2008) and Delic (2008), the importance of place, the significance of the local, and the experiences of everyday life remain obscured through the lens of national belonging.

Lastly, Ruby (2006) demonstrates that immigrant Muslim women in Canada continue to be constructed through the media stereotypes and misinformation as ‘outsiders and foreigners’. She further argues that Muslim women “struggle with their Muslim identities while trying to craft distinct identities” (43). While Ruby discusses a geography of belonging framed by ‘insiders’ and outsiders’, ‘here’ and ‘back home’, there is little specificity linking identity, place and belonging. Thus, Ruby’s (2006) attempts to explore belonging through the idea of ‘home’ as the “situated presence at a particular moment” (38), remain vague and ambiguous; without a clear understanding of where Muslim women ground belonging and create ‘home’ in local and meaningful places, her discussion does not address “how these women situate themselves as to who they are and where they belong” (28) beyond the national level.

The fourth limitation returns to the critique of metrocentric focus of research on Muslims and Muslim communities, specifically in Canada. Research that includes Muslims overwhelmingly emerges from immigration and settlement research in Canada’s largest cities and draws primarily from quantitative methods that produce very broad and general

understandings of the experiences of Muslims in Canada (Abdul-Razzaq 2008). While such findings are adequate for identifying trends across very broad categories, they do not contribute to an understanding of individual or group-specific experiences and lived realities in particular places (i.e. specific cities). Finally, these approaches tend to vastly under represent people and places outside of major cities (Jantzen 2008).

As Graham and Phillips (2007) remind us, diversity is not a new phenomenon in Canada. With increasing concentration of diverse populations, particularly in larger centres like Toronto and Vancouver, cities are becoming more multicultural and multiethnic. Such diversity is read as either a problem to manage or an asset of urban life to celebrate: diversity, however, must be understood in different ways in different cities, and thus grounded and contextual research is required to explore the place specific experiences and articulations of multiculturalism in everyday life particularly in cities other than Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (cities that dominate in the Canadian multiculturalism, diversity, immigration and settlement literature).

Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-Laban (2006) and Teelucksingh (2006) among others, suggest that we re-direct attention from the larger centres, such as Toronto and Vancouver to smaller cities. Luis (n.d.) argues that conducting research in smaller cities provides an alternative perspective on community, identity and belonging among racialized visible minorities and contributes to a small but growing body of research outside of large cities in Canada (see Byers and Tastsoglou 2008; Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Halseth 1999; Halseth and Halseth 1999; Henin and Bennett 2001; Sherrell and Hyndman 2004a, 2004b; Walton-Roberts, 2004; Di Biase and Bauder, 2005; Bradford 2002; Abdul-Razzaq 2008). Bradford (2002) and Walton-Roberts (2004), for example, suggest that identity formation, community building, and the negotiation of multiple belongings take different forms in different cities. There are few examples of research that links place, identity and belonging among Muslims in a smaller Canadian city (though see Ramji 2008 for the inclusion of Ottawa alongside Toronto and Montreal). Thus, there is a need for research that steps out of the centre ring and moves to the peripheral spaces of small and medium Canadian cities in which growing populations of Muslims may be living.

Recently, greater focus has been directed toward immigrant settlement experiences in Halifax (for example see Grant and Buckwold 2011; Kronstal and Grant 2011; Pearce 2008). Most immigrants settle in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia; as such, Byers and Tastsoglou (2008) suggest that issues like the context of immigration, settlement, and acceptance of

diversity is different in Atlantic Canada compared to the rest of the country because there are lower numbers and densities of immigrant populations. This context may mean that maintaining cultural identification while also ‘fitting in’ with the wider dominant culture marks a process with ‘unique pressures’, particularly on youth in Halifax (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008). In their study of Greek and Jewish young men and women for example, they examine the ways in which negotiating ethno-cultural and religious identity and developing a sense of belonging in Halifax presents challenges that are unique compared to Canadian cities (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008). For some, interpersonal relationships and marriage within their own culture or religion was sometimes difficult while others noted limited employment opportunities. Many also noted the difficulty in maintaining any privacy in a small ethnic or religious community within a small city is difficult. For most, however, the notion of keeping culture and religion ‘alive’ in a smaller city is a salient challenge. One Jewish respondent noted that “one had to ‘work at’ being Jewish in a small community like Halifax” (92). They found that religion may be more important socially and culturally; churches are spaces used for social interaction as much as they are for practicing faith. In this way they are one resource or strategy from which they draw to avoid isolation and negotiate themselves through challenges of multiple belongings (91). Their findings do not suggest that in Halifax, a smaller city characterized by less diversity and a less tolerant vision of multiculturalism, that ethnic and religious identification is declining but rather that such identities are ‘performed’ in different ways (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008).

There are several similarities between Greek and Jewish participants in Halifax: they express a strong sense of pride in their community given its small size; they navigate hyphenated identities within a state driven and public discourse of multiculturalism and yet they do so in a region where this is often challenged and where minorities are “numerically ‘lost’ in a majority White Canadian culture” (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008: 92). They also share very similar experiences of racism and otherness as well as need to maintain community and identity. Given the difficulty of doing so in Halifax, with an urban area population of 297,943 (Statistics Canada 2011) it is important to also keep in mind that for “those living outside the urban spaces where visible social and cultural differences are central to everyday life may experience a double sense of marginalization” (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008: 92-93).

While Byers and Tastsoglou provide insight into the everyday experiences and negotiations of identity in Halifax among Greek and Jewish men and women, there is little

research reflects the everyday experiences of Muslims in Halifax. In Abdul-Razzaq's (2008) study, seven Arab immigrant women living in Halifax were interviewed about their experiences since 9/11 and the complexities of identity, home and belonging. She demonstrates that having a shared religion and language in the Arab community is useful but not always enough to bond together or to bridge class, ethnic or ideological divisions within the Muslim community of Halifax. Participants did not, however, discuss instances of overt racism though acknowledged that they were "willing to dismiss the occasional unpleasant experience as isolate incidents and most generally agreed that Halifax, and overall Canada, was one of the more accommodating places that Arabs and Muslims could live in" (Abdul-Razzaq 2008: 19).

Finally, despite important contributions to a small but growing literature on the geographies of Muslim identities, places and communities, particularly in places outside of Canada's metropolitan centre, there remains no research that addresses these geographies and also includes the experiences of Muslim converts.

Part II: Methods and Methodology

Muslims in Halifax: An Overview

On Canada's east coast, Halifax is the capital city of the province of Nova Scotia and in many ways the unofficial capital of the region of Atlantic Canada (see Figure 1). In 1996, the municipal governments of Halifax County were amalgamated into the current Halifax Regional Municipality, which is now the most populated urban area in Atlantic Canada (see Figure 2). Halifax has 42.3% of the total population of Nova Scotia and 16.8% of the total population of Atlantic Canada (see Table 1).

Halifax is an important port city both in terms of its military and defense history at CFB Halifax and its shipyards as well as in global trade and the operation of two container ship terminals. Halifax is home to several universities including Dalhousie, Saint Mary's and Mount Saint Vincent Universities all of which attract significant numbers of international students, particularly from the Middle East (Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa 2007). Dalhousie and Saint Mary's are both located in the South End of the Halifax Peninsula while Mount Saint Vincent is on the Halifax Mainland between Halifax and Bedford.

Figure 1: Nova Scotia, Canada



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova_scotia

Figure 2: Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halifax_Regional_Municipality

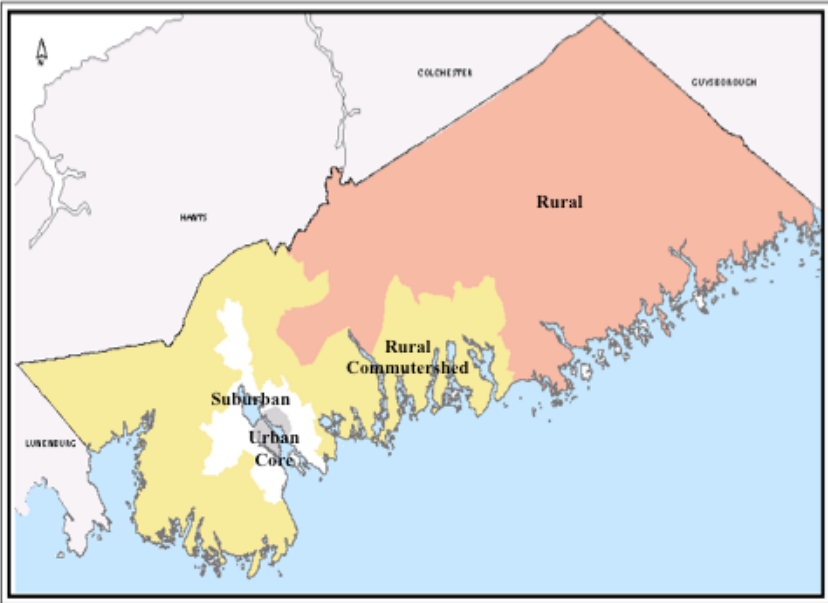
Table 1: Total Population, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada, 2011

	Total Population
Halifax (HRM)	390,096
Nova Scotia	921,727
Atlantic Canada	2,327,650

Source: Statistics Canada 2013

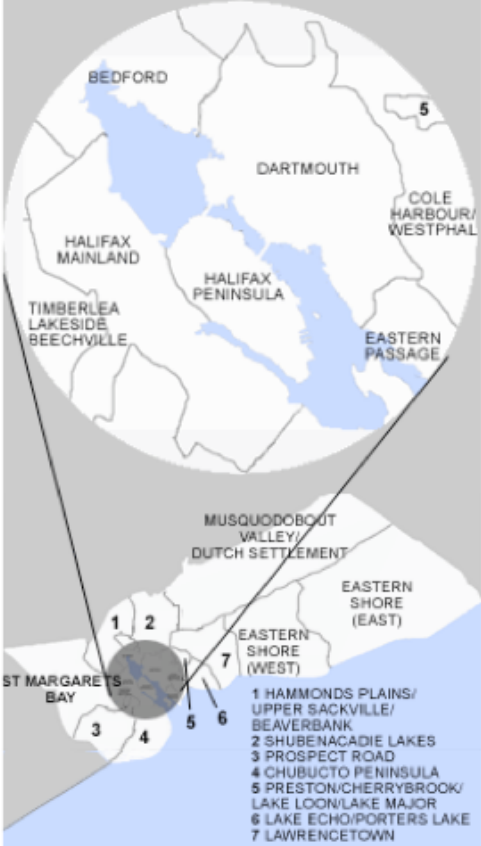
My research is centred on Metropolitan Halifax consisting of its urban (Halifax Peninsula and Downtown Dartmouth) and suburban core (Mainland Halifax, Clayton Park, Bedford, Cole Harbour) (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). Nearly three quarters of participants' photographs were taken in the urban core on the Halifax Peninsula. With a few exceptions, remaining photographs were taken in other areas of the urban and suburban core notably Dartmouth and Bedford.

Figure 3: Urban and Suburban Core, Halifax Regional Municipality



Source: Halifax Regional Municipality 2014

Figure 4: Urban and Suburban Core Communities



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halifax_Regional_Municipality

While Halifax might easily be described as overwhelmingly white and Christian, the city has always been a city of difference and diversity. Founded in 1749, Halifax was the first permanent British settlement in Canada. But in its early history as a naval and army base, and with a growing shipping industry and fishery, the area was settled by the French, Scottish, Irish and Portuguese. Originally, Halifax was primarily a Protestant community. During the 19th century, however, Irish settlers introduced Roman Catholicism to the city's faithscape (History of Halifax 2009). During the same time period, Halifax, and Nova Scotia more broadly, became home to several thousand black loyalists and freed slaves from the United States following both the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Many of these migrants made their way to the North End of Halifax and established the community of Africville where subsequent generations would live, work, and attend church. Targeted as a slum development by city officials, and beginning in 1962 Africville was razed to the ground and residents relocated to social housing in Halifax's North End (Nelson 2009). Prior to changing immigration patterns set in motion during the 1970s, Halifax was the 'hub of Canada's black citizenry' (Nelson 2009, 7).

Most immigrants to Atlantic Canada today settle in Nova Scotia, and Halifax specifically, but the numbers of new immigrants have been in decline since 1996. Halifax is the preferred site of settlement with more than 59% of new immigrants to the province settling there. However, Nova Scotia is an 'immigrant scarce' region and both the province and Halifax Regional Municipality struggle to retain immigrants (Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa 2007). In the early 1990s, Nova Scotia saw increasing numbers of immigrants from the middle east first because of the historical presence of a large Lebanese community in Halifax that continues to attract others (mostly Christian Lebanese) and, second, in the aftermath of the first gulf war significant numbers left to find a home in Halifax (Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa 2007).

Compared to other cities in Canada today, Halifax is much less racially, and ethnically diverse today. The population of Halifax is characterized by relatively few speakers of languages other than English or French, small numbers of immigrants, and a small number of people who identify as a visible minority. Most people in Nova Scotia and Halifax are third-generation citizens, white, and English-speaking (see Table 2).

The first Muslim to be born in Canada was in Ontario in 1954 (Khan and Sallojee 2003). The first census to record their presence noted that 13 Muslims resided in Canada by 1871. From

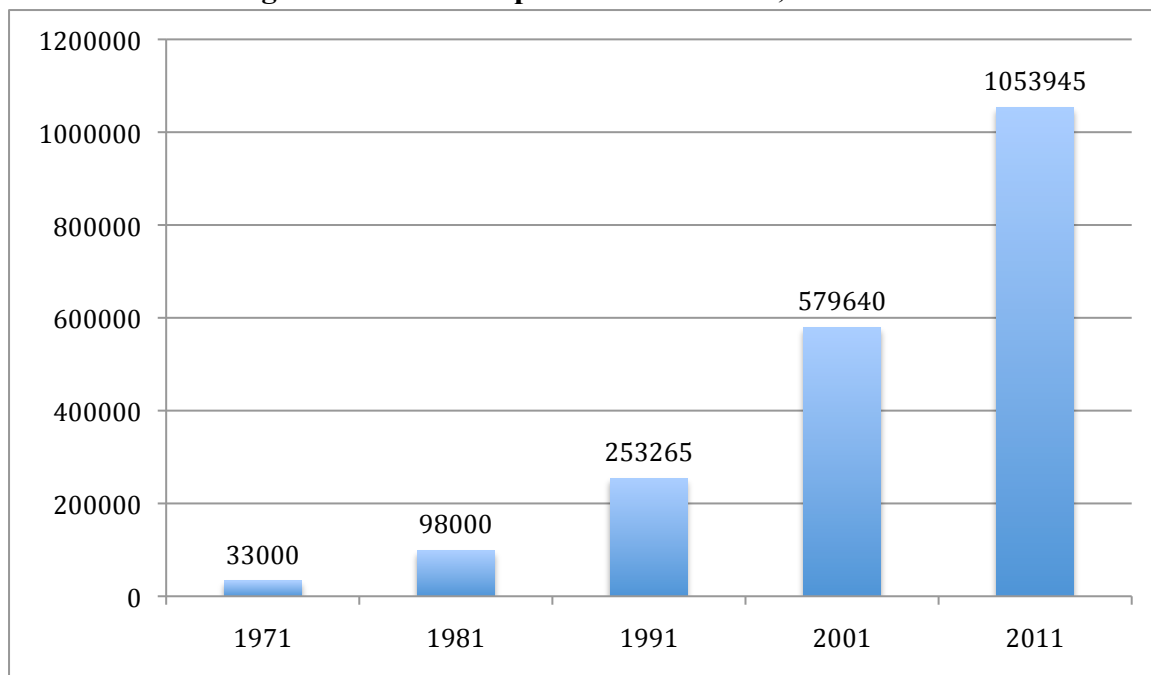
these small but early beginnings to the rapidly growing Muslim communities across Canadian cities today, Muslims have always been part of a ‘quiet’ nation-building project in Canada (Ali 2007). Significant changes to immigration policies in the 1970s (Hiebert 2005) resulted in a growing and diversifying immigrant population in general across Canada. This includes Muslims as one of the fastest growing religious and ethnic groups in Canada (Arthur 2011; Rahnema 2006: 24). The first mosque in Canada found its home in Edmonton in 1938; there are now over 200 mosques across Canada in town and cities big and small (Khan and Sallojee 2003). In 2011, just over 1 million Muslims call Canada home (see Figure 5) ; nearly two thirds of which live in one of Canada’s three largest cities: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (see Table 3).

Table 2: Selected Measures of Diversity, Halifax, 2006

	% Mother Tongue Other than English or French	% Immigrants	% Aboriginal	% Visible Minority	% Third Generation
Toronto	45	46	1	43	23.7
Montreal	23	21	<1	16	64.3
Vancouver	42	40	2	42	31.5
Halifax	6	7	1	7	81.7

Source: Statistics Canada 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2007d

Figure 5: Muslim Population in Canada, 1971-2011



Source: Khan and Saloogee 2003; Statistics Canada 2013

Nova Scotia also has a long history of Muslim presence. Truro is home to Atlantic Canada’s first Islamic cemetery (1944) and an accompanying mosque and Islamic community centre was established by 1971. In 1966, the Islamic Association of the Maritime Provinces (subsequently renamed Islamic Association of Nova Scotia) was established and the Dartmouth mosque built also by 1971. At this time, most Muslims were from Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India (Arthur 2011).

The Muslim population in Nova Scotia is small but did experience a significant growth in the 1990s because of an exodus during and after the First Gulf War (Arthur 2011; Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa 2007). This change in immigration also changed the overall Muslim population in Halifax from one made up of mostly Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi Muslims to a majority Arab population. Thus, in Halifax today, Arabic is the second most spoken language after English and Islam is second only to Christianity (Arthur 2011). Further influencing the population since the mid 1990s is the increasing numbers of international students coming from the Middle East attending one of Halifax’s six degree-granting institutions (Akbari, Lynch, McDonald, and Rankaduwa 2007).

Table 3: Muslim Population by Number and % of Population, Halifax, 2011

	Total Population	Muslim Population	Muslims as % of Total Population
Canada	32,852,320	1,053,945	3.2%
Toronto	5,521,235	424,935	7.7%
Montreal	3,753,475	221,040	5.9%
Vancouver	2,280,695	73,215	3.2%
Halifax	384,540	7540	0.9%

Source: Statistics Canada 2013

By 2011, Nova Scotia is home to 8,505 Muslims, 7,540 of whom live within the Halifax Regional Municipality (See Figure 6). Compared to cities like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver where larger Muslim communities exist within a more diverse and multicultural context, the Muslim population is small in number and represents just 0.9% of the total population of the city.

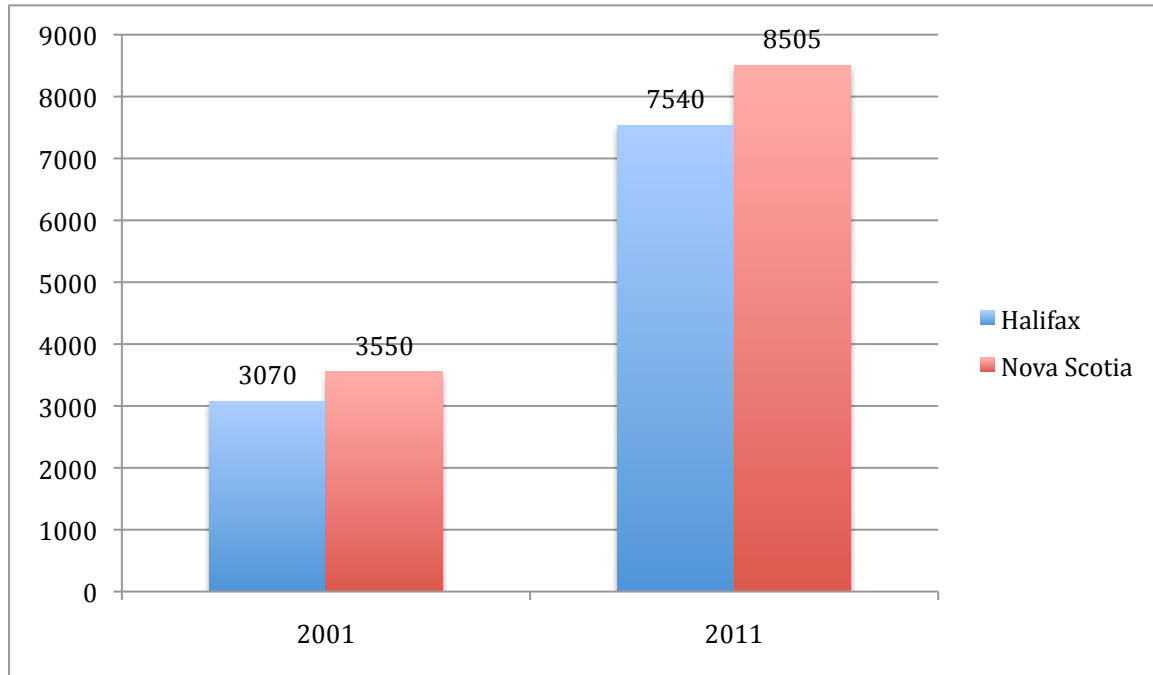
Halifax was chosen as the city to explore the connection between place and belonging among Muslims calling it home because of these unique place characteristics. The history of migrant flows into Halifax has resulted in a much less diverse landscape. It is a smaller city on the margins of immigrant reception in Canada (compared to the ‘immigrants gateway’ cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver). Only since the early 1990s has Halifax experienced a small

but growing diversification of its population as Arabs and Arab Muslims arrived and with a growing presence of international students, largely from South and South East Asian countries and including a significant number of Muslims. These demographic changes, though they have decreased since in the mid 1990s, have made an impact, not only on diversity of people but also on its faithscapes. These changes provide an ideal opportunity to explore issues of adjustment and integration among those Muslims new to the city and negotiating new dimensions of belonging. Despite these changes, Halifax remains a place characterized by a majority white and Christian population whose roots and sense of place here reach back three or more generations.

It is important to recall at this point, however, that the geographies of identity and religion outlined thus far in relation to Muslims in Halifax do not entirely account for Muslim converts. While growing up with an ethos of multiculturalism may have provided some converts a sense of their right to practice their culture and faith, they must navigate the terrains of both the Muslim community and non-Muslim community as they take on a Muslim identity and practice Islam. Converts, therefore, may experience a loss of belonging in some senses and certainly begin to adapt, adjust and forger new dimensions of belonging with a new sense of their identity. Not only does Halifax have a growing Muslim population because of immigration and international student programs, but it also has an active centre for attracting new Muslims to conversion. Thus, this research explores a greater diversity of Muslim experiences in a smaller, less multicultural Canadian city.

Diversity and multiculturalism might be newer to Halifax, as I have outlined already, however, there is a very strong place-shaping narrative that cuts long and deep here. The racial segregation and ultimately erasure of Africville from the city's landscape has certainly impacted relations between the majority white population and minority black population of the city. As Jennifer Nelson (2009) suggests, the place and the history of Africville cannot be separated from the place and history of white settled Halifax. This is another reason Halifax provides a unique case study to explore Muslim belonging. The events of September 11, 2001 forged what Nelson (2009) calls a "newly cemented culturalized racism" (148) where belonging and "place are infused with more than resentment or intolerance; they are saturated in fear" (148). Just how these two narratives of Africville and Post 9/11 Islamophobia figure in the narratives of place and belonging among Muslims in Halifax in 2010 is one of the framing questions with which I entered the research field.

Figure 6: Muslims in Halifax and Nova Scotia, 2001-2011



Source: Statistics Canada 2001; 2013

Auto-photography in the Field

[P]hotographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record ... although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing (Berger 1972: 10).

Emerging from the literatures set out above is the need for grounded, contextualized research that offers an alternative to the stereotypes of Muslims in Canada as somehow simultaneously inside and outside but problematically of the nation. In order to explore more nuanced geographies of the everyday lives of Muslims and provide an alternative mapping of Halifax through different dimensions of Muslim belongings I use auto-photography: a technique that grounds analysis in participants' own perspectives, experiences. As the quote from Berger (1972) suggests, a picture may be worth a thousand words, but they do not speak for themselves: photographs are a way of seeing but our interpretation and analysis of the same picture is also framed by the viewer's particular framing. Alexander (2006) suggests that visual methods, including the use of photography, can be useful as "a way of getting research subjects to reflect on their lives" and in "making visible what might otherwise go unmarked and unchallenged" (405; see also Noland 2006). In both cases, however, photographs must be understood alongside of 'ethnographic narratives' derived usually from in-depth interviewing (see also Johnsen, May

and Cloke 2008). A renewed interest in the methodological use of photography in research has resulted in a number of specific techniques and approaches including ‘photo-elicitation’ (Collier and Collier 1986), ‘autodriving’ (Heisley and Levy 1991), ‘reflexive photography’ (Harrington and Lindy 1998), ‘Photo Novella’ (Wang and Burris 1994), and ‘photovoice’ (Wang and Burris 1997). All of these approaches are considered auto-photography in that they engage research participants in taking photographs to discuss them in an interview context.

Auto-photography engages participants directly in what might be considered more collaboratively focused research. Incorporating a photographic component in fieldwork includes participants in the production of knowledge (Hurworth 2003) while the use of photographs as a launching point for deep, reflexive dialogues about what otherwise might be abstract notions of identity and belonging is an effective method for sparking discussion from points of participants own interest and perspective (Blinn and Harrist 1991; Latham 2003). Latham (2003) suggests that auto-photography is a good tactic to see ‘how urban public life gets done’ (241). Photo interviewing gave his interviewees some distance from their ordinary routines and enabled them to articulate some of the taken-for-granted practical knowledges with which they negotiated public space (see also Davidson 2002; McIntyre 2003).

Although not explicitly undertaken widely in geographically-based research (though see Rose 1997; Sidaway 2002), several studies indicate the usefulness of photography for various social geographies. Radley, Hodgetts, and Cullen (2005) suggest that photographic components have been productively incorporated into research on, for example, thinking about and understanding neighbourhoods (see van der Does, Edelaar, Gooskens, Liefting, and van Mierlo 1992; Wang, Ling, and Ling 1996) and on homelessness (see Hill and Stamey 1990; Dewdney, Grey, and Minnion 1994; Zald 2004; Johnsen, May and Cloke 2008).

Castledon, Garvin, and Huu-ay-aht First Nation (2008) note that auto-photography is especially useful in research with marginalized ‘others’ (where there may be skepticism or resentment) because it works toward balancing power, creates a sense of ownership, fosters trust, builds capacity, and responds to cultural preferences (1394; see also Johnsen, May and Cloke 2008). They note the effectiveness of such an approach conducted in projects that work with a number of groups where, in part, issues of identity, community and belonging are explored including the homeless (see Radley, Hodgetts, and Cullen 2005; Wang, Cash, and Powers 2000), senior citizens (see LeClerc et al. 2002), youth and children (see Ali 2006; Jensen, Kaiwai,

McCreanor, and Barnes 2006; Cook and Hess 2007), immigrant communities, particularly immigrant or refugee women and children (see Bender, Harbour, Thorp, and Morris 2001; Clark and Zimmer 2001; Gold 2004; Berman et al. 2001; Oh 2012), indigenous peoples (see Moffitt and Vollman 2004; Castledon, Garvin, and HUU-ay-aht First Nation 2008), African-Americans (see Douglas 1998; Killion and Wang 2000); mothers with learning disabilities (see Booth and Booth 2003) and people living with HIV/AIDS (see Hergenrather, Rhodes, and Clark 2006).

In my approach of auto-photography, photographs are central components guiding interviews into exploring the relations and meanings between images, ideas, and identities. More specifically, in my research they help to intensify discussions about important places in the city, both public and private as well as social and cultural, landscapes in relation to how and why Muslims in Halifax develop certain belongings.

This dissertation is based on research conducted during several visits to Halifax between June 2009 and October 2010. Each visit was preceded by various methods of advertising my call for participants including introductory emails, newspaper and online advertising. Participant referrals or snow-balling was the most effective. Data collection included a series of interviews, informal conversations noted in a research journal, and photographs. I provided disposable cameras to 20 Muslims (11 men, 9 women) asking them to take photographs of important places in their everyday life. They were asked to think of places they liked and disliked, felt comfortable or uncomfortable in, and that were key places in connection with some aspect of how they self-identity.

Following Noland (2006), most participants were interviewed three times: during the camera assignment interview, again during the camera in-take interview when we arranged the interview date and time, and finally, when we conducted the photo-elicitation interview. The camera assignment interview was an informal introduction for both myself and participants; an opportunity to find out a little bit more about one another and set the foundation for our relationship over subsequent days or weeks. During this interview, I assigned the camera, provided instructions for its use, and discussed the goals of the photography in relation to the research (see Appendix A). While each of the interviews was specific to the participant, I explained in general terms that I wanted participants to take photographs of places that were important to them, frequented in everyday life, or had some connection to their identities. I suggested that participants could think of places that were comfortable or uncomfortable for

them, places they liked or disliked, or places they considered safe or unsafe in relation to their identities. Especially when asked by them, I purposely avoided defining identity, community or belonging in strict terms and instead focused on the multiple ways these might be defined. For example, I tried to make it evident that while my research interest focuses on the ways in which Muslims in Halifax negotiate belongings, I also recognized the importance of a range of identities that are important in everyday life; gender, age or being a student, for example. Finally, the camera assignment interview provided the opportunity for participants to ask questions of the project, the photography or of me personally.

Once the participant finished their photography, we met again for the camera in-take interview during which I asked participants to reflect on their experiences taking pictures. How did they approach the photography? Did they make lists ahead of time or just take pictures as they went about daily life? Were there unseen challenges in completing the photography in terms of time, content, or with using the camera? Did anything surprising happen? Did they enjoy it? Did they think their photographs are a good representation of their daily life or of their identities? These interviews provided some interesting discussions on the use and effects of photography in qualitative research, which I especially turn to in Chapter Two.

Finally, in the photo-elicitation interview we discussed the photographs taken (and not taken). The interview foregrounded photographs as conversational starting points to open a space for discussion of the multiple modalities of the images therein; not just about what is captured on film but also what was not, and how, when and why the images came to be framed in a given way (intent) compared to and as reflected in their photographs (result). My original interview guide asked participants to select and discuss certain photographs, which I would then probe with questions in an attempt to pull out detailed explanations, thoughts and feelings. Their selections were to be based on favourite and least favourite photographs, most and least relevant to identity, the city, or Muslim space in the city, and representations of difference or diversity and belonging and exclusion. The original interview guide also allowed me to select certain photographs ahead of time that I believed were key to discuss, perhaps in relation to identity or community, representations of the city, or representations of being Muslim in Halifax.

In the first photo-elicitation interview, I followed this basic semi-structured interview framing using the guide outlined above. The end result is a fascinating two-hour discussion of Amira's photographs, however, I found the approach to be too structured and somewhat

cumbersome to maneuver around. I abandoned this format and incorporated the spirit of the questions into a much more organic and fluid interview led primarily by the participants and in the vast majority of cases by the photographs themselves rather than pre-framing themes. Like other semi-structured and open-ended approaches, this provided opportunities for participant and researcher insights to surface what otherwise might have been missed (Ajrouch and Kusow 2007). At times, due to sets of repetitive photographs or a lack in the number of photographs that were either taken or developed, the interview fell more into a typical unstructured question/answer interview with lines of questioning having emerged from my previous interviewing experiences.

The camera assignment and camera in-take interviews were typically shorter than thirty minutes each while photo-elicitation interviews ran between one and three hours in length. Both the camera in-take and photo-elicitation interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Two other background and context interviews were conducted with Duke and Maria simultaneously and with Talib; both were tape recorded and transcribed. In some cases interviews were combined. All transcripts, research notes and photographs were coded and cross-referenced with pseudonyms assigned to each participant in order to ensure anonymity and guard confidentiality (in most cases pseudonyms were chosen by participants themselves). Two sets of pictures were developed one for the participant and the other for the researcher (along with a CD version of photographs). Only after the interview was complete did I provide a thank you card containing a gift card of twenty-five dollars to be redeemed at various local retail outlets. Participants have signed consent forms and have provided me full rights for the use of transcripts and photographs for research and teaching.

First Research Visit: June-October 2009

The first attempts to contact potential participants were made from my office in Toronto before the first research trip to Halifax. Additional contacts were made throughout the research process through emails, telephone calls, posting flyers and placing ads in local newspapers but most successfully through word of mouth. Initially, introductory emails were sent to key religious and cultural institutions associated with Islam and Muslim communities in Halifax including: Islamic Association of Nova Scotia; Dartmouth Masjid; Chebucto Masjid; Isma'ili Khana; Centre for Islamic Development in Halifax; Nova Scotia Islamic Community Centre; Al-Rasool Islamic Society and the Al-Rasool Youth Association of Halifax; Maritime Muslim

Student Association at Dalhousie; Arabic Society at Mount Saint Vincent University; Saint Mary's Muslim Society; Dalhousie Pakistani Students Association; Dalhousie Canadian-Iranian Student Society; and the Maritime Muslim Academy in Halifax. In addition, I sent introductory emails to associations, groups, and individuals that might also have connections to Muslim immigrants through services offered such as: Community Outreach and Family Services and Youth Outreach; Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia; Multicultural Immigrant Settlement Association; Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre; African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes; Dalhousie Indian Subcontinent Students Association; Dalhousie Egyptian-Canadian Friendship Association and the Diversity Centre at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Once in Halifax, I volunteered and attended cultural and religious events where I would come in contact with members of the Muslim community including the annual Halifax Multicultural Festival and the annual Fast-a-thon organized primarily by members of the Maritime Muslim Students Association at Dalhousie. I also attended several religious events including weekly jummah prayers held at Dalhousie's Student Union Building and iftars at the Multifaith Centre at Dalhousie University where many Muslim students would break fast each day during Ramadan.

In addition, I placed my call for participants through online and print advertisements in a local community newspaper and posters on community bulletin boards. Advertisements ran throughout July, August and September 2009 and May 2010 under the Announcements, Community, and Volunteer sections of the classifieds in a local paper. From September 2009 until October 2010 a call for participants also appeared on the website of the Maritime Muslim Student Association at Dalhousie. In August of 2009, I appeared on the Halifax CBC Radio talk show 'Mainstreet' to discuss my research during which I provided contact information in hopes of reaching the broader Muslim community. Flyers were posted in high pedestrian traffic areas of downtown Halifax, such as libraries, grocery stores, transit hubs, and community bulletin boards and on the university campuses downtown.

During this first research visit, I conducted background and context interviews with 4 people, assigned cameras and completed photo-elicitation interviews with 9 people, and attracted a total of ten participants (7 men, 3 women).

Second Research Visit: May-June 2010

Prior to my second visit in May/June 2010, I sent reconnection emails to past participants to thank them and ask for help in spreading the word on the project and finding new participants. Several past participants were helpful in referring me to friends and acquaintances that subsequently took part in the project.

In April 2010, I mailed out packages that included an introduction letter and flyers to the Centre for Islamic Development, Dartmouth Masjid, Islamic Centre in Kearney Lake, Maritime Muslim Academy, and the Al-Rasool Islamic Society. Additional emails introductions and requests for assistance in contacting Muslims in Halifax went to Computer Science Students Association; Undergraduate Engineering Students Association; Dalhousie-Sexton Engineering Student Association; Dalhousie Science Society. I also contacted DALOUT, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Society of Dalhousie in an effort to include members of that community who have or had a connection with Islam and may have or continue to identify as Muslim. Through April and May, I resumed online and print advertising in the local paper and posted new flyers.

The second research visit occurred over six weeks during which 7 new participants completed the project and a total of 8 photo-elicitation interviews were completed (one participant who did a background interview during the first research visit took part in the auto-photography during this research visit). At the end of this visit, the project included the photographs and narratives of 17 participants (10 men, 7 women).

Third Research Visit: October 2010

The final visit took place over the 2010 Canadian Thanksgiving holiday; a brief period during which I could take time off from responsibilities of teaching and during which I could complete pre-arranged interviews. I sent reconnection emails to most of the past participants ahead of my visit in hopes of finding new participants. In order to make this work, I mailed cameras and instructions out to participants once we had talked through email. I also posted a final advertisement in the local newspaper 'The Coast' that ran throughout September. Four cameras were mailed out in September and three interviews (1 man, 2 women) were completed during this final research visit: all three participants were referrals. In the end, the fourth participant, due to a family emergency, was unable to complete the project. In total, 20 people (11 men, 9 women) completed the project.

In Words and Pictures: Interview and Photograph Analysis

This research produced a large set of data comprised of informal interviews, field research notes, interview transcripts and photographs. In total, over 100 pages of typed field research notes, more than forty hours of recorded interviews amounting to over 1500 pages of transcripts and 277 participant generated photographs comprise the data set for this dissertation. While I do not engage strictly with a grounded theory approach in this research, I embrace the spirit of it during the analysis of transcripts, field notes, and photographs. Importantly, my ‘data analysis’ occurred throughout the research, in all its different journeys and sojourns and not simply and directly at the ‘end’ of fieldwork. Interpretations of, and reflections on, my experiences at different stages shaped the ongoing research process - at times changing its direction entirely (see Schiellerup 2008 for a discussion of ‘moments of interpretation’ in the research process).

Although I did complete a literature review, which framed my position as I entered the fieldwork phase and my first research visit, my experiences on the ground changed the direction and even intent of my research very early on. The frames of reference changed from a focus on second-generation Muslims to a more open category of Muslims living in Halifax. This allowed for a greater diversity to be represented by including both foreign and Canadian- born Muslims as well as Muslim converts. Moreover, the themes and concepts that I analyze throughout the dissertation emerged from participants. That is to say, I followed participants in how and what they pictured allowing key ideas, themes, and concepts to emerge from their perspectives, experiences, and narratives.

The process of assigning codes and then re-coding was iterative as categories and themes changed and were reworked alongside the framework of belonging. Similar to Khanlou, Koh, and Mill (2008): all data sources have been read through multiple times; on the first reading I compiled a list of ideas, themes and concepts using the words and phrasing directly from participants’ interview transcripts. This list was then organized thematically correcting for overlaps and redundancy across the interviews but maintaining individual codes that might have only been extracted from one interview. The conceptual framework into which I collapsed the open contextual and interpretive codes from the transcripts was developed from Antonsich (2010). Using both the compiled list of codes and the selective codes developed from Antonsich’s conceptual framework, I re-coded all transcripts and extracted excerpts for each of

the main themes. This means that transcripts were read, coded, and recoded multiple times throughout the analysis and writing stages.

Beyond the Map: Limitations and Negotiations in the Field

There are a number of positions and locations from which the alternative mapping of Halifax through the dimensions of Muslim belonging are not represented in this research. One of the limitations certainly is located in how I, and my research, might be perceived by members in the Muslim community. The issue of trust came up time and time again, not only in my own experiences contacting participants but also from participants experiences themselves. Members of the Muslim Halifax community that I came in contact with were overwhelming positive and encouraging of the research I was undertaking. However, there were critical moments where I needed to negotiate the reactions of some individuals that ranged from hesitancy to suspicion. An example of two different responses emanating from the same call for participants sent to Islamic organizations in Halifax illustrates this.

Prior to my first research visit, I sent introductory emails to as many organizations directly or tangentially related to Islam and/or Muslim communities in Halifax. This included an online request made in April 2009 to the Centre for Islamic Development which advertises itself as a centre for Muslims and non-Muslims seeking knowledge and education of Islam. I received an enthusiastic and encouraging reply within a few short hours:

Hello James, my wife and I will be delighted to participate in this research. Besides being an avid photographer, she is Canadian born and recently accepted Islam. In terms of identity perception you may obtain much stronger images from her. When can we expect further instructions? Please let me know (Duke 2009).

This quick response marked the beginning of a very important relationship for the project. Both Duke and his wife Maria were my first contacts once in Halifax. Maria invited me to jummah prayer at Dalhousie where I was able to share my research with those in attendance and where I met two future participants. Duke and Maria hosted me in their home on several occasions introducing me to potential participants, hosted myself and two other participants for an informal conversation about being Muslim in Halifax, provided background context interviews about Muslim communities in Halifax, and ultimately, participated in the project with their photography and interviews.

In June 2009 I secured the emails of two other individuals connected to the Centre for Islamic Development and sent individual introductory emails. Again, I received a response the same day, however, this time the author was suspicious about my intent with the project, as well as called to question my definition of Muslim and understanding of Islam. The author indicated that his concerns were based on past experiences with interviewers with perhaps misconceptions or ill intentions. The author's critical questioning set me back, especially given the tone and content of my original email, which was open, honest, and clear in my intentions. However, I happily answered his questions and provided additional information and clarification about who I was, where I was coming from, in particular, that I was not a theologian but a geographer eager to learn more from a variety of Muslim voices in Halifax. I further clarified that my approach was focused on Muslim experiences and perceptions of everyday life in Halifax. Unfortunately, and despite follow-up emails, I never heard from anyone directly from this particular organization again. I can only speculate that they never received my message, did receive it but forgot to follow-up, or received it and were neither happy with my response nor wished to continue the dialogue.

In between these two responses lie others that I would characterize as hesitant or tentative but open to dialogue further. A potential participant referred to me by a well-known Muslim in Halifax sent me the following email:

I was given your contact info by xxxx (the dawg father). He mentioned to me that you were interested in doing a study of revert Muslims who grew up here in Canada, and I may be interested in assisting you in this study, but I have some reservations. Could you please tell me why this subject interests you. I guess, to be straight forward, my reservations are that I don't want to be involved if this is another attempt to vilify or mock Islam. Other wise, I would be very happy to participate (Talal 2009).

Talal indicates his hesitance to participate in light of misunderstanding, misconception, and outright attempts in media and elsewhere to 'vilify or mock' Islam. However, because a well-known and respected Muslim convert introduced him to me, there was enough trust on which I could build a relationship with Talal. My first meeting with Talal took place over coffee and lasted an hour during which we had a very open and frank discussion of where each of us was coming from. At the end of our coffee, Talal agreed to participate and became the first participant to take the camera to the field.

An email exchange between myself and Saladin in 2009 provides another example of negotiating trust while introducing my research to potential participants. After he agreed to take part in the project Saladin voiced some concerns:

Saladin: By the way, something came to my mind and I forgot to ask you last time in Tim's, How do I guarantee that your research is not gonna offend Islam or Muslims in Canada in any way?

James: Hi Ahmed ... While it is impossible to guarantee that I will never offend anyone with this work, I can assure you that my motivation here is one of understanding and sharing, not judging. My motives are rooted in social justice and equality - principles that underpin the way I am doing the project. That is, to have participants own experiences and perceptions, through photography and through their own words in our interviews, be central in the research. My ultimate goals are to increase understanding and awareness around issues related to being Muslim in Canada; being identified both racially and religiously; and how this impacts or influences everyday life. I hope that learning more about the day-to-day life of Muslims in Halifax can help to bridge differences and misunderstandings and not to contribute to them. I hope this helps to address your concerns. Let me know anytime if you have further questions or concerns. Peace be with you!

Saladin: Well those were exactly my intensions from helping you in that research ... I really hope that this would happen. I was afraid that your research would increase the gap or show Muslims as an isolated group in the community or whatever. I am gonna start shooting some pictures next week and hopefully I will be done by the next weekend.

This exchange illustrates the negotiations that take place to assure participants that I understand their concerns and address them in a fair and respectful manner. In doing so, we negotiate trust by moving ourselves closer and closer to similar positions within the research (I discuss these shifting positions in the next section).

This exchange also shows how participants, even in the early stages, begin to forge a stake in the research process. It is evident that many of them do not view their role as passive but rather as co-producers of knowledge. By taking on the photography themselves and understanding that they will be discussing those photographs in their interviews with the goal of understanding their own perspectives and experiences of in everyday life, participants develop ownership within the research process.

Despite my efforts to gain trust and assure participants by addressing their concerns, there were examples where potential participants dropped out of the project for reasons I was not

always able to discern. One of the women referred to me by an active member in the Muslim Student Association met me for the camera assignment interview and the camera in-take interview once she had taken her photographs. On the day of our scheduled interview she emailed me:

I thought about the whole interview thing after the last meeting and I don't feel very comfortable giving off so much personal information, even if it will be posted under a fake name. I would like to pay you for the camera and the development of the pictures. Sorry for the inconvenience (Hala 2010).

I returned Hala's email and in part suggested that she might speak with two of her friends who had completed their participation in hopes that she might be made more comfortable through their experiences. Unfortunately, I never heard from Hala again.

Adara is an 18-year old Muslim student who has lived in Halifax since moving from Saudi Arabia when she was four years old. I met her and a male friend of hers (who decided he did not have time to take part) at a Tim Horton's on campus. After explaining the project, Adara did express concerns about the possible 'negative' uses of the research. After further discussion, highlighting the goals and approaches that foreground the experiences and perceptions of Muslims as central aspects of the project, she agreed to participate and I assigned her a camera. Unfortunately, despite several attempts to contact her through email and a scheduled date for the camera in-take interview, I never spoke with Adara again. Perhaps her discomfort resurfaced after further reflection. Perhaps the demands of school, work and/or family go the better of her time. Two others, Raseem and Mahad, also expressed interest in participating but because of demanding schedules and, in Raseem's case, a death in the family meant that we never actually met face to face and neither of the men were able to take part in the project.

Common Ground: Reflections on Positionality

When I began to formulate this research in 2006, I had just finished working as a research assistant in two projects with Muslim communities in Vancouver, Canada (Hyndman and McLean 2006; Houston, McLean, Hyndman and Jamal 2010). In one of those projects, in particular, I worked with a team conducting interviews with second-generation Ismaili men and women about their experiences and challenges of growing up in Vancouver (Houston, Hyndman, McLean and Jamal 2010). My interest in identity and belonging, first in my masters research on bisexual men in Vancouver (McLean 2003), and then with Muslims in Vancouver, gave me a

sense of the geographies of identity, place and belonging negotiated by those who are marginalized. My involvement in refugee and immigrant research, in particular among inter-generational Muslim communities, provided some footing on which to ground my connections with Muslim participants in this new research. However, much can be said about the differences that characterize the research field between the participants in Halifax and myself. I am neither Muslim nor religious. I am not Arab, brown or an immigrant. I am a white Canadian-born man and who admits to the kinds of privileges and powers that this bestows upon me particularly, perhaps, in academia. I recognize the ways in which popular media and public discourse position me as outsider to the experiences of Muslim identity and community in Canada. Only once, however, was difference singled out in the field in a way that made me fully conscious of it.

At the beginning of my first research visit, Maria took me to jummah prayer on campus. She introduced me to the Imam, who is also affiliated with the Centre for Islamic Development. In a brief exchange before the prayer, during which I outlined my research and approach, he spoke defensively and politically about the media and about being careful about what Muslims say publicly. Following prayer, his speech for the week focused on anti-globalization, anti-consumerism and advocating a more casual and simple social life. He did agree to introduce me following prayers, which he did quite respectfully, but he added that by introducing me he did not necessarily endorse my project and reiterated a need to be 'careful' about what 'we' say publicly. This was my second encounter with someone from the Centre for Islamic Development. As stated earlier, my first contact with this organization was met with suspicion and a set of questions to which I responded only to never hear from them again.

These markers of difference might be perceived and treated as insoluble differences that somehow must be overcome or ignored in order to conduct 'good research' (Butler 2001). However, I do not wish to belabour these differences, as evident as they seem, in a way that inflexibly locks my positionality, or that of participants, in ways that maintains distance to 'ignore or overcome'. Rather I explore the negotiation of positionalities through researcher-participant interactions as a reflection of our shifting positionalities.

Drawing from Hopkins' (2007c; 2008, 2009b) critical reflection on positionality and other aspects of the research process, I explore my own positionality as the "negotiation between various degrees of difference and similarity ... as a position of 'betweenness'" (Hopkins 2009b, 6). Hopkins (2009) argues that positionality is not about locating oneself as either 'inside' or

‘outside’ but it is to recognize the “researcher as never being completely the same, nor entirely different from their participants” (5). Like Fortier (2000), I wanted to both belong and not belong, “constantly negotiating my in-between positions” (8) in my interactions and relationships with participants. These positions place participants and myself in relations of similarity and difference that vary throughout the research process from individual to individual and between encounters with the same participant.

Following Hopkins (2007c), I have put forward some of the ‘points of difference’ that suggest a wide field between participants and myself that positions me as an ‘outsider’. And while I do not want to overemphasize our ‘points of connection’ in a way that suggests I am somehow an ‘insider’, I do believe that those moments during which we find ourselves socially, cultural, or politically connected can make way for a ‘common terrain’ (Fortier 2000, 7), or common ground, upon which mutual trust and respect is founded. There are many moments and places throughout my research visits, during informal conversations and the photo-elicitation interviews, where small connections of commonality between participants and myself are made. Each small connection contributes to the ongoing negotiation of trust and respect across the real and perceived differences between each participant and myself. And it is often during these moments where the most interesting exchanges have occurred during my research.

There were many subtle examples where the idea of ‘common ground’ established points of connection rather than dissimilarity. In my emails and in my face-to-face greetings with participants my use of ‘asalaam alaikum’ or a simpler ‘salaam’ was appreciated by most and surprising to some. During my interviews several participants spoke about the social currency of sending a brother or sister a ‘salaam’; a social currency I deployed without initially recognizing its importance in opening a space for engagement. Yet, I also quickly recognized when it carried little or no social currency, and therefore stopped using it in participant correspondence. This is true of my interactions with not only the Bangladeshi students but also Kareem, for example, for whom religion is not a central factor in his identity or everyday life.

When speaking with Amy for the first time, during the camera assignment interview, there were many moments during which we patched together common ground. First, Amy and I are approximately the same age and have both lived in various places across Canada. We could relate to one another given our generational similarity and background of being born and having grown up in Canada. However, as I sat sitting across from Amy, a First Nations, hijabi convert,

for the first time, the distance between us seemed self-evident and I actively sought to recognize those moments in her comments and experiences on which to forge common ground. When she spoke about homosexuality in an open and accepting way I understood it as a moment where I could tell her about my previous research and teaching on the geographies of sexuality. My continued discussion of past research, which included a project with Achenese refugees in Vancouver (Hyndman and McLean 2006; McLean, Friesen and Hyndman 2006), provided Amy the opportunity to connect this to her volunteer efforts with refugees in Halifax. It seems that both of us were shifting ourselves onto a more comfortable common ground moving forward in the research.

In my interview with Sara, another small example of the lines of connection forged between researcher and participant is revealed:

My sister, the elder one, might be getting married, so obviously we would only do it in the Indian [way], cause it's so much better, sorry [laughs] (Sara 2010).

With each sharing between us potential moments of connection are revealed, in this case, a small light-humoured bonding moment based on knowing that I was about to have my own wedding as she joked about how wonderful Indian weddings are and her anticipation for her sisters wedding.

Other small examples include being able to speak with Lulwa about our shared experience of living in Vancouver; sharing a moment of commonality with Sara about the television series 'Lost' that we both enjoyed; or, recalling a childhood memory shared with Maria of 'the little red bible' we both received in public school. While my status as a student and my familiarity with university life in general created some common ground with students who took part, participants like Talal and Duke found in me someone with whom they could relate along lines of age, maturity and experience both inside and outside of the academy. The more one turns oneself out to participants the greater the risk but also the greater potential for common ground. Over several meetings and hours of interviews, a myriad of small moments created a 'common ground' between participants and myself and provided a basis for a shared understanding and increased the comfort, trust and the ability for us to relate more to one another over time.

Despite the limitations in methodology outlined thus far, my attempts to include diversity in the Muslim narratives of belonging in Halifax and to reconfigure the balance of power and directive in regards to fieldwork and interviews are my efforts to forge a 'halal methodology'

such that Muslim voices are not only heard but become the active and engaged producers and narrators of their own experiences of belonging. In Islam, halal refers to those things in daily life that are permissible to possess or engage in according to Islamic law. As my participants and I demonstrate throughout the dissertation, the definition of halal is widely interpreted and variously embraced. However, as a principle that helps guide the intent to be a ‘good’ practicing Muslim it also provides a framework for a methodological approach, and a set of methods, which is conducive to Muslim participation. As such, my attempts at a ‘halal methodology’ is a critical part of remapping the city from the positions and perspectives of Muslims.

Part III: Participant Biographies: Remapping Halifax Begins Here

In total, 11 men and 9 women took part in the study. Participants range in age from 20 to 49 but the vast majority are in their early to mid twenties (only three participants are not in their twenties). Many of the participants are full-time students, a few of which also work part-time. Overall, 11 participants (6 men, 5 women) are either employed or looking for employment (see Table 4). Lastly, 14 participants are single while 6 participants are married (in the case of Duke and Maria, and Kareem and Catherine, married to one another). Amy and Talal are also married; their spouses (Muslim-born), however, were not interested in participating. In the case of Talal’s wife, she expressed some concerns over my motives in conducting this research and as such was uncomfortable taking part (see Table 5).

While the diversity evident in gender, age and marital status is important in terms of offering different perspectives, there is also great diversity in terms of origins and expressions of faith (see Table 6). Four participants (2 men, 2 women) are Canadian-born converts. Of the sixteen Muslims born into the faith, two (1 man, 1 woman) are Canadian-born Muslims and the remaining fourteen (8 men, 6 women) are foreign-born Muslims having come to Canada with family or for university.

The range of identifications revealed through participants’ narratives reveals a diversity of social and cultural relations of belonging. These relations of belonging are complexly shaped by birthplace, migrations (journeys and sojourns) and citizenship(s) (see Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 4: Participants by Employment and Educational Status

	Employed, Full-time	Employed, Part-time	Seeking Employment	Full-time Student, Undergraduate	Full-time Student, Graduate
Men	2	3	1	6	2
Women	3	2	0	4	2

Table 5: Participants by Gender, Age and Marital Status

Men (11)	Age	Marital Status	Women (9)	Age	Marital Status
Talal	49	Married	Amira	23	Single
Malcolm X	20	Single	Maria	26	Married
Tarek	27	Single	Catherine	25	Married
DJ Albtaross	21	Single	Lulwa	21	Single
Duke	30	Married	Sara	21	Single
Talib	21	Single	Amy	38	Married
Saladin	23	Single	Harrie Podder	20	Single
Abdullah	20	Single	Trishana	26	Single
Kareem	26	Married	Jane	21	Single
Kuyasha	25	Single			
Sabir	21	Single			

Table 6: Participants by Origin of Faith: Canadian-Born Converts (CBC), Canadian Born Muslims (CBM), Foreign-Born Muslims (FBM)

Men (11)	Origin of Faith	Women (9)	Origin of Faith
Talal	CBC	Amira	CBM
Malcolm X	CBM	Maria	CBC
Tarek	FBM	Catherine	FBM
DJ Albatross	FBM	Lulwa	FBM
Duke	FBM	Sara	FBM
Talib	CBC	Amy	CBC
Saladin	FBM	Harrie Podder	FBM
Abdullah	FBM	Trishana	FBM
Kareem	FBM	Jane	FBM
Kuyasha	FBM		
Sabir	FBM		

Table 7: Participants by Birthplace and Citizenship

Men (11)	Birthplace	Citizenship	Women (9)	Birthplace	Citizenship
Talal	Canada	Canadian	Amira	Canada	Canadian
Malcolm X	Canada	CDN/ Lebanese	Maria	Canada	Canadian
Tarek	Bangladesh	Bangladeshi	Catherine	Kuwait	CDN/ Egyptian
DJ Albatross	Pakistan	Canadian	Lulwa	Saudi Arabia	Canadian
Duke	Pakistan	Canadian	Sara	India	Canadian
Talib	Canada	Canadian	Amy	Canada	Canadian
Saladin	Egypt	Egyptian	Harrie Podder	Pakistan	Canadian
Abdullah	India	Canadian	Trishana	Bangladesh	Bangladeshi
Kareem	Kuwait	CDN/ Egyptian	Jane	India	Canadian
Kuyasha	Bangladesh	Bangladeshi			
Sabir	Bangladesh	Bangladeshi			

Table 8: Participants by Path to Halifax

	Path to Halifax
Talal	Small Town, Nova Scotia to Halifax
Malcolm X	London, Ontario to Halifax
Tarek	Dhaka, Bangladesh to Halifax
DJ Albatross	Pakistan to Toronto to Halifax to Small Town, Nova Scotia to Halifax
Duke	Karachi, Pakistan to USA to Toronto, Ontario to Waterloo, Ontario to Halifax
Talib	Halifax
Saladin	Egypt to Sydney, Nova Scotia to Halifax
Abdullah	Bombay, India to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to Halifax
Kareem	Kuwait to Halifax
Kuyasha	Dhaka, Bangladesh to Halifax
Sabir	Dhaka, Bangladesh to Halifax
Amira	Halifax
Maria	Halifax to Small town, Ontario to Halifax
Catherine	Kuwait to Halifax to Egypt to California to Halifax
Lulwa	Saudi Arabia to Vancouver, British Columbia to Singapore to Halifax
Sara	Kerala, India to Saudi Arabia to New York to Louisiana to New Brunswick to Halifax
Amy	Ontario to British Columbia to Halifax to New Brunswick to Halifax
Harrie Podder	Karachi, Pakistan to Halifax
Trishana	Dhaka, Bangladesh to Halifax
Jane	Kerala, India to Saudi Arabia to New York to Louisiana to New Brunswick to Halifax

Participants' birthplaces include Canada (6), Bangladesh (4), Pakistan (3), India (3), Kuwait (2), Egypt (1), and Saudi Arabia (1). In terms of citizenship status, 15 participants hold Canadian citizenship (7 men, 8 women) six of who were born in Canada. Of these 15, three hold dual citizenship (2 hold Canadian-Egyptian Citizenship and 1 holds Canadian-Lebanese citizenship). There are four participants who are Bangladeshi citizens in Halifax as international students (1 female and 2 male graduate students; 1 male undergraduate student). The final participant is an Egyptian citizen seeking employment in Halifax on an extended work visa after completing university as an international student (1 man).

Conclusion

This dissertation provides an opening for greater understanding, not only of Muslim identities and practices but, more importantly, of their journeys to be 'at home', to have a 'sense of place', and develop multiple dimensions of belonging. At the core of this research is a desire to put forward a remapping of the city, its places and identities, and the multiple belongings that develop within them, from the perspectives and experiences in everyday life of those from whom we rarely hear; not because they do not have a voice, but rather because often times, other voices are louder. My research reveals a remapping of the city of Halifax from the perspectives and experiences of the everyday life of Muslims.

In Chapter Two, entitled "Participant Methodologies: Reflections on Auto-Photography", I more fully explore the process and outcome of auto-photography. I analyze how and why participants conduct photographic fieldwork in different ways that reveal different relationships between people, place and belonging. Understanding participant methodologies is an important part of providing context for both photographs and subsequent interviews.

In Chapter Three, entitled "Mapping Journeys of Faith and Place", I retrace participants' journeys to both Islam and Halifax in order to reveal the ways in which the diversity among participants matters in terms of their perspectives and experiences. Their journeys are intricately connected to the city and help provide an intimate and richly detailed mapping of their multiple belongings.

In Chapter Four, entitled "Negotiations of Everyday Life in 'Halifax'", I explore how participants negotiate different dimensions of belonging through the experience, expressions and practices of being Muslim. I draw attention to participants' embodied practices of faith and the

social and cultural frameworks that give meaning to their identity and sense of belonging in the city. These complex and diverse social connections and disconnections reveal the many negotiations through which Muslims experience everyday life and make claims on spaces for belonging.

In Chapter Five, entitled “Mapping ‘UMMAH’”, I focus on multiple lines of difference cross-cutting the Muslim community revealed through their mappings of mosques and prayer spaces in the city. In particular, I map out the promise and politics of the city’s newest mosque as narrated by participants and in ways that reveal difference and tension within the Muslim community

In Chapter Six, entitled “Maps of Belonging”, I conclude with an overview of the dissertation and a discussion of its key findings and limitations.

Chapter 2: Participant Methodologies: Reflections on Auto-photography

Introduction

In Chapter One, I outlined the use of auto-photography across a range of disciplines and subject matter highlighting it as a method that incorporates the experiences and perspectives of participants' everyday lives making them co-producers of knowledge throughout the research process. In this chapter I build on this drawing from Crang's (1997) 'picturing practices' to explore what I call 'participant methodologies' and their impact on the production of knowledge.

Crang (1997) argues that a reflective and critical analysis of the 'picturing practices' of the 'photographer' is central in understanding subjectivity and social practice and for understanding the ways in which taking pictures creates a space for the performance of self and identity and also a space to observe and reflect on it further. Lastly, he suggests that the act of recording through photographs becomes part of the experience of everyday life that is being 'pictured'. As such, the 'picturing practices' of participants must be considered in terms of their influence on the construction of place but also in terms of what they reveal about the relationships between people and place (Johnsen, May and Cloke 2008, 196).

Johnsen, May and Cloke (2008) suggest that despite a growing interest in visual methodologies, including auto-photography, there remains a need for critical reflection on the ways in which 'picturing practices' contribute to the production of knowledge:

[The true value of photographs] lies not just in the images presented per se, but in the accompanying narratives (regarding the use and meaning of the spaces) and in consideration of the 'picturing practices' that led to their construction in the first place. Far from merely providing illustrative material to augment conventional research methods, auto-photography is itself a powerful heuristic tool that can enhance understanding in new and nuanced ways (205).

My goal in this chapter is to explore how we might fruitfully examine multiple aspects of how and why participants conduct photographic fieldwork in different ways that reveal relationships between people, place and belonging.

While my own methodology and methods provide the larger framing for the research, individual participants responded to and took part in this research because of their own

motivations, goals and objectives, and completed the photographic fieldwork using different approaches. It is important to take note of participant methodologies because of their impact on, not only the quantity and quality of photographs taken, but also because they help frame the narratives that emerge through those photographs. A reflexive examination of their methodologies exposes different approaches and challenges encountered by participants in the field. Moreover, and importantly, it also reveals the ways in which different approaches were shaped by the researcher’s framing as well as shaped the images and narratives of identity, place and belonging (Johnson, May and Cloke 2008).

Part I: The Practice of Auto-photography

Auto-photography is a labor-intensive research process, not only for the researcher but also, and especially, for participants who agree to multiple interviews and to conduct photographic fieldwork. As part of a complex and personal methodology, individuals approached their fieldwork differently. To highlight these different approaches I focus on two dimensions: first, whether participants set out to take photographs intentionally or whether the camera was incorporated into everyday life. Second, whether or not participants had thought about and prepared lists of desired photographs before taking to the field. Given these two dimensions, participants’ methodological approach to the photographic fieldwork fell into one for four categories (see Table 9).

Table 9: Participant Methodologies

Participant Methodology	Description
Intentional but Casual	Participants set out on a specific day or days to take photographs; participants did not prepare a list per se though they may have had some ideas about photographs
Intentional and Directed	Participants set out on a specific day or days to take photographs; participants thought about or prepared a mental or actual list of places to photograph
Incorporated but Directed:	Participants carried the camera around taking photographs as they went about everyday life; participants thought about or prepared a mental or actual list of places to photograph
Incorporated and Casual	Participants carried the camera around taking photographs as they went about everyday life; participants did not prepare a list per se though they may have had some ideas about photographs

The camera in-take interview provided the opportunity to ask participants to reflect on the research process thus far and to elaborate briefly on their photography. These reflections, and further discussion in our photo-elicitation interviews reveal details on participant methodologies in terms of motivations and approaches in their participation.

Sabir's and Saladin's methodology was guided by the 'Intentional but Casual' approach to photography each choosing specific days to photograph but without a list to guide them. For example, Saladin took most of his photographs during a one-day excursion:

I took the majority in one day and then the rest, you know, I had the camera in my pocket, sometimes going here, going there, I find some place ... so I get a picture for that thing (Saladin 2009).

Subsequently, he carried the camera around and took pictures of places he had forgot on his first day of photography. One of the pictures he forgot to take entirely was of the international hostel he stayed at when he first arrived to Halifax and before he continued on to Sidney for school. It was at a nearby park where he and others rested after the long flight from Bangladesh and then drive into Halifax from the airport. An "important moment" (Saladin 2009) of pause in a journey, a chance to rest and reflect; a special memory held between friends . Such 'untaken photographs' were significant in several participants' fieldwork experience, many of which became central to critical discussions of identity, place and belonging.

Three participants took an 'Intentional and Directed' approach in the field. Kareem, Duke and Maria all set out on a specific day with prepared mental or actual lists of places to photograph. Kareem's approach was a conscious effort to capture the images that would represent how he saw Halifax in relation to himself:

I was just trying to capture Halifax ... I had the same goals with all these pictures ... [I had a] mental list, I didn't actually write anything down but ... I knew before I started ... what I wanted to take pictures of. And as I started doing it, I started getting more ideas. I actually had a great time doing it. It made me self-actualize a lot. It made me realize that I'm very rooted in Halifax, and I could have filled three of those cameras (Kareem 2010).

In this excerpt from our camera in-take interview he discusses the generative nature of taking photographs; that as he took pictures more ideas came to mind about additional pictures to take. He describes the process of photography as enjoyable and self-actualizing in that it made salient his deep connection to Halifax as a place, as a home.

Even though Kareem had a mental list of important places, because he incorporated photography into everyday life, he, too, missed out on some photographs. In particular, he discusses the ‘untaken photograph’ of the two bridges that cross the harbour from Halifax to Dartmouth raising important aspects of photographic fieldwork:

I either didn’t have the chance to go there or when I did have a chance to go there it was foggy. And when it’s foggy in Halifax you can’t see the bridge at all ... I couldn’t be at the right place at the right time when I wanted to take the picture (Kareem 2010).

In addition to navigating weather conditions in order to capture the images you desire, Kareem draws attention to timing. He suggests that being in the right place at the right time with the camera was crucial but didn’t always occur as happened also with his ‘untaken photographs’ of past workplaces:

I was in the mall but I [forgot the camera in the car] which would have been the perfect time to take the picture of Sony and Rogers ... [So] I got a Sony MP3 player and the back of my phone says Rogers on it. I just took a picture of that (Kareem 2010).

Considered significant enough to include them in his photographs, Kareem chose to represent these former work places in another way by taking photographs of his MP3 player and cell phone.

Another ‘untaken photograph’ represents two other dimensions of Kareem’s belonging and sense of attachment in Halifax:

I wanted to get a shot of all my graphic design tools for engineering. I didn’t get a chance ... because I left the camera in the car (Kareem 2010).

The images of his graphic design tools represent not only his identity as a university student but also his future plans in relation to career and supporting his family. He did include a picture of the university, however, to indicate some of these aspects of his life.

Married couple Maria and Duke, were the only other participants whose methodology was guided by the ‘Intentional and Directed’ approach. They each made separate lists of places to photograph, however, they took one day together in their car to shoot their photographs. Maria explains that as they drove around other places were added to her list as she thought about or came across them:

I made a list of things that I thought of and then certain things came onto the list as we were driving around ... we had our own list of shots, we weren't influenced by each others, but it was really interesting how mine encompassed everywhere and his was a very small corner of the city and he actually started to feel bad (Maria 2009).

While Duke's photographs focus on everyday life in the present context, Maria is one of three participants (along with Amira and Kareem) to use the photography to narrate her story in a kind of photo-essay that charts through her childhood and into the present including the places and experiences connected to her journey to Islam:

He's like 'I've been here for five years and all I have to talk about this tiny little thing, I didn't know of any of these hidden gems.' And I wonder if that's the case with most immigrants where they're in this tiny corner of the city and they haven't explored or are afraid to explore anywhere else. And I thought it was interesting, I'm like, 'it's okay love' [laughs], 'you're exploring now' (Maria 2009).

Maria's reflections highlight not only the difference in the way they each tell their stories but that they do have different stories and, therefore, different dimensions of belonging. She is telling stories about her journey to Islam, first and foremost, but also her story of coming to live in Halifax married to a Pakistani Muslim. Duke is telling the story of his position or location in the community in the present tense and offering reflections on Muslim life and Muslim communities in Halifax.

While Maria insists that she and Duke did not influence each other's photographs, her own reflections on taking pictures in and from the car reveal that their approach dramatically impacted the quality of her photographs and detracted from conveying her intimate sense of belonging in such places. She was not always able to take the kind of time to take her shots that she might have wanted because Duke was driving and was at times less than patient with time:

I didn't get to set the shots as nicely as I would have wanted to for all of them. Some of them were drive-by shoots [laughs]. And I missed some shots that I would have probably taken but that's okay ... Usually I already had a plan going there but, of where I wanted to take the picture but I was very unhappy with the drive-by shootings (Maria 2009).

These 'drive-by shots' included not only taking pictures from the car while they drove but also taking pictures quickly while Duke impatiently waited in the car. Maria suggests that some shots did not turn out the way she wanted and that she also missed some altogether because of this

approach. In one example of the ‘drive-by shot’ she discusses her disappointment with a photograph of one of her favourite places to eat in Halifax and a place she directly ties to her Muslim identity (see Photograph 1):

I wanted - see one of the drive-by shootings is Turkish Delight, it’s a restaurant. And it’s probably going to come out so blurry. I wanted to go in there, find a table that was empty and take a picture of the empty table (Maria 2009).

Photograph 1: Halal Space: Favourite Restaurant (Maria 2009)



Maria attaches personal meaning to Turkish Delight, as one of the few places that serve halal food. It was important to her to go into the restaurant, find a table, and take the picture inside to reflect her personal connection and to offer a view from her perspective as if she were sitting and enjoying food with friends or a having quiet lunch by herself.

In another example of the ‘drive-by shoot’, Duke waits in the car while Maria rushes in to the Second Cup café to photograph one of her favourite hang-outs in the city (see Photograph 2):

I couldn’t take a picture of my favourite seat there because people were sitting there ... I have specific favourite seats and I was going to do that [say excuse me can I take a picture here to the people sitting there] except that Duke was waiting outside and he hates downtown ... so I just took a picture from somewhere inside (Maria 2009).

In this excerpt, and elsewhere in our interview, she discusses this place as extremely important in her journey to Islam as well as in terms of social relations and feeling part of the vibrancy of the city’s downtown core. She spoke of coffee shops, more generally, as places of ideas and

conversations, places she would spend time talking to friends about Islam among other things. She wanted to get a photograph of her favourite spot to sit in the café; don't we all have our favourite spots? Due to her husband's impatience and dislike of downtown, as well as the fact they were not parking and getting out of the car to take pictures, she was unable to wait for the seat to be empty or take her time getting a picture that would fully convey its meaning to her. Rather she had to move in, take the shot, and move out quickly to return to the car and move on to the next location. In the end, Maria may not have taken the kinds of pictures she would have liked but these 'drive-by shots' provided opportunities for Maria to narrate her attachments to specific places while also illustrating the ways in which both her and Duke are differently placed in the city.

Photograph 2: Drive-By Shot of Second Cup Cafe (Maria 2009)



Four participants adopted a third methodology: the 'Incorporated but Directed' approach to photographic fieldwork. In this approach, participants carried the camera around taking photographs as they went about everyday life but had thought about or prepared a list in the process. DJ Albatross's enthusiasm for the project is quite evident in his approach to the photography:

I really knew so many places that I would take pictures of ... I knew so many different places that I had in mind. It's just that coordinating that within my schedule was the thing for me (DJ Albatross 2009).

He made a mental list of the important places in his everyday life he wanted to photograph at the time. Due to time and scheduling some of the pictures were never taken but his approach still speaks to the way he took ownership of his participation and indicates that the project held meaning for him given his wish to fully engage. DJ Albatross focused primarily on Muslim identity as the frame for his photographs and the stories he wanted to tell:

I thought the objective of the photo shoot was to capture the essence of just my Muslim identity ... I didn't really think of taking pictures of my identity as a student or as a Dalhousie student or as, you know, a son or a babysitter, or a friend (DJ Albatross 2009).

This participant focuses on the connections between self and faith taking photographs that demonstrate his Muslim identity rather than other aspects of his identity. And yet, in our interview, much of his perspective and experience lies firmly with being a Muslim university student (though we do talk about gender, masculinity, and sexuality to some degree).

Talal's approach was to directly think about the implications of accepting Islam and becoming Muslim in terms of comfort and discomfort, particularly in public spaces such as commercial and business spaces as well as employment environments:

I thought about being comfortable and being uncomfortable, and as a direct result of my religion. Ah, and I tried to think of things that would represent these places, although some of these places are more, what's the word, kind of like a state of mind [pause] more like an attitude of the people rather than a specific place kind of thing, right? (Talal 2009).

He notes that comfort and discomfort aren't necessarily obviously and objectively represented through photography. Rather, his intent was to take pictures that represented these kinds of places through the feelings and attitudes of people that shape the space (see Photograph 3):

I took some pictures of government buildings ... to represent ... the 'idea' of Canada. And also I encountered places where I'm really comfortable. Like the place where I work now, I'm very comfortable, they treat me really well ... I had maybe one or two instances where somebody's said something out of the ordinary ... off colour, but ... I just understood where it was coming from you know. It wasn't a big deal (Talal 2009).

He explains that some of his photographs are representative of people's feelings and attitudes reflecting what makes him feel comfortable, or not, in certain spaces. In these cases, the buildings themselves are less important than conveying a certain sense of feeling acceptance. The building in a photograph of his workplace is less important than conveying that he is 'treated

well' and has very few negative experiences. Any 'off colour' comments that do happen are interpreted as not a big deal; as coming from a place of ignorance.

Photograph 3: On Finding Belonging at Work (Talal 2009)



Amira sometimes forgot about taking photographs even though she had prepared a list of places to photograph in her journal and carried the camera with her everyday:

I kinda wrote down places that I identified with or that maybe I didn't so much. Like I took a picture of Sacred Heart School, and I went there for a year and I hated my life that year. ... that's like the only picture that I don't really identify with but everything else is pretty close to my heart ... [The camera] was in my purse all the time, but sometimes I forgot it was there (Amira 2009).

She indicates that one photograph taken was of a place she hated and a time she hated – attending a private all girls catholic high school. She finally says all the other pictures are 'close to her heart' – a very 'homey' declaration.

The majority of participants adopted the fourth and final 'Incorporated and Casual' approach with their photography. They took photographs as they went about everyday life but without a prepared list per se though they may have had some ideas about photographs. Malcolm X's interpretation of the project led him to take photographs of places in which he spends a lot of his time or places that have some importance or connection to his own personal growth and maturity:

I just carried it around with me for a couple of weeks and anything that really caught my eye, that I really spend a lot or time in this place or this place has really

helped me to open my eyes to things ... so I took a picture of that (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X raises two important interpretations of the project. First, that taking photographs of important places might be understood as places where one spends most of their time. This aspect focuses more on frequency and a more quantitative understanding of what constitutes important places. Second, that photographs of important places might also be understood qualitatively. Meaningful places and things captured in photographs might not be places most often visited but rather convey something integral to one's identity as Muslim or sense of belonging. Abdullah also comments on his approach to the auto-photography:

It was mostly random. Just going around to places and I remembered something and I took a picture ... some things came up in my mind that I should take a picture ... but I didn't really get time to (Abdullah 2010).

Abdullah's comments raises two concerns with auto-photography. First, participants may not always have the time to take the kinds of photographs they might always like. Second, in a more casual approach where taking photographs is incorporated into the practice of everyday life, participants do not always remember to take photographs in the first place. Harrie Podder also incorporated the photography into her everyday life carrying the camera around in her bag. This often meant, however that she forgot to take pictures:

I just forgot about the camera. So, it used to lie in my bag. [Also] I just didn't think I should take pictures, I didn't even have that in my mind and then later on, I would remember that oh, shoot, I forgot (Harrie Podder 2010).

Most participants incorporated the photography into their daily life taking photographs when it occurred to them. Trishana's motivation and approach, for example, was to take photographs of where she spends her time most frequently which may or may not map onto the places in which different dimensions of belonging have emerged.

Regardless of the approach, participants shared many of the same challenges in completing their fieldwork. Timing was an important consideration in two senses. First, participants indicated challenges in terms of having enough time to dedicate to the photography. Given that I was asking people to meet first for instructions and to pick up the camera, second, for a camera in-take interview, and third, for the photo-elicitation interview I was appreciative of any time participants were able to carve out in order to take part. Sometimes this meant having the camera for a month and only taking the photographs the day before the camera in-take, other

times it meant that out of 27 exposures only four, five or six photographs were taken, Regardless, the interviews allowed for conversation about these limitations as well as their equally important 'untaken photographs'. Second, participants indicated that the time of year during which they were taking part in the photography also impacted their photographs and the kinds of experiences their narratives included. Again, the first phase of the project took late summer and early fall 2009. The second phase was in May and June of 2010. The final phase was in October 2010. Depending on what time of year people took part, the geographies of everyday life varied.

Like many participants, Jane is a busy student with a heavy course load and two part time jobs making it difficult to dedicate time for her fieldwork photography. She suggests that the timing of her participation is different from some of her friends who had taken part in the project earlier during the summer of 2010:

They had theirs in the summer time and I didn't ... they could walk around. But once school started ... I was kind of bogged down with the amount of work that I had (Jane 2010).

The fact that she took part during a busy time of the school year meant that she simply did not have the same amount of spare time that others may have had to take photographs around the city. Although Jane only contributed four photographs, we still had a meaningful interview exploring her feelings, experiences, and perceptions about living in Halifax initiated from the photographs. This was also one of those times where I fell back into a more standard semi-structured interview based on questions developed through previous interviews and photographs.

Similarly, Amy forgot about her camera taking just seven photographs (mostly taken from her car) reflecting her busy day-to-day life as a mom, full-time office manager, and dedicated volunteer to a host of community and charity projects associated with different Muslim groups and associations. Again, while she did not think consciously about the kinds of places she wanted to photograph, our interview explored her journey to Islam, her identification as Muslim, and a range of issues and challenges she faces as a Muslim convert over a three hour period stemming from her photographs but also with a more semi-structured interview dynamic.

Tarek focused his photography on the things that structure everyday life for him: home, work, and school:

It doesn't resemble my daily life that much ... because this time of the year like I'm pretty busy. So if it was before like in summer when, so I used to go out and play something, soccer, tennis, something like that ... that time of the year the life

is a bit different, you know? This time, like I am fully packed up. Writing papers, a couple of papers, my thesis, extreme amount of work, and once you've took work outside, there is no spare time (Tarek 2009).

Tarek indicates that the time of year during which he took part in the project has an impact on the photographs taken. During the summer when the workload at university is lighter, the weather is nicer and the days are longer, he and his friends play soccer and tennis for example. Had he taken part during this time of year, he admits he would have taken different photos. These absences for him mean that not the whole of everyday life, across the year, is represented in the photographs. Similarly, Kuyasha did his photography during the second phase in June 2010. In the summer time, he and his friends, mainly other Bangladeshi students, often go for day trips in one friend's car. He explains that he might have included these kinds of photographs as well but at the time of our interview in June, Kuyasha was taking classes and summer had not really gotten under way for him.

In my camera in-take interview with DJ Albatross, time of year is raised in relation to special events in the Muslim community that take place at different times of the year that would impact his photographs. During his participation it was possible to take photographs during Ramadan and at the Fast-a-thon event held at Dalhousie. However, these pictures would be absent if he had done the project another time of year. Perhaps, though, if they remain key to his experience, he would have found ways to take representative photographs or they would have come in during the interview nonetheless as central aspects to his Muslim identity and practice of Islam.

For some, taking part during Ramadan made it more challenging to find the time and energy to get out and take photographs. As Maria explains:

With Ramadan [fasting] - and then I was sick after Ramadan and work's crazy right now so I just didn't get a lot of chance to get out (Maria 2009).

During Ramadan, fasting, of course, does take its toll. Coupled with attending iftars, Taraweeh prayers and daily prayers as well as work demands, Maria just felt that she did not have the time to put in the effort and focus she would have liked.

Catherine experienced difficulty, in particular, with translating feelings related to culture and religion into photographs. She found it difficult to transfer these into tangible photographs for the project:

There are things that are so relevant in my life but there are just no tangible pictures that I could take, for example like the feeling I have about my culture ... there was really no way to express them ... that's one big thing about my life ... there are so many things I hate about my culture and so many things I agree with ... and that [tension] I couldn't incorporate in any of the pictures (Catherine 2009).

Regardless, the inability to capture photographs to represent these tensions between identity, faith and culture provided, through 'untaken photographs', an opportunity to discuss issues such as, gender equality and modesty. Catherine says that the personal choices around wearing the headscarf, for example, are inner conflicts that were difficult to photograph.

Part II: Geography, Place, Belonging: Participant Interpretation and its Photographic Effect

The ways in which participants interpret the overall purpose of the photography as well as the instructions provided before going to the field have also had an effect. In this section I reveal issues that arose because of the different participant interpretations of some of the framing concepts of the research. Participants understood 'geography', 'place' and the idea of 'belonging' in different ways both subtle and stark. At the end of Tarek's photo-elicitation interview, I turned the recorder off and back on again because he began to discuss participating in community blogging with various Bangladeshis elsewhere on topics ranging from everyday life in different parts of the world to professional wrestling and cricket. These were important avenues for him, especially when he first moved to Halifax providing a social outlet. This comes up after I ask him if there were photographs he would have liked to take but did not for some reason: "That's the thing, you can't take a photograph [of blogging] right?" (Tarek 2009). This raises the question again of how people interpret the research in terms of what constitutes place and belonging. Does it have to be a specific place or can it symbolize or represent something or some activity? As Tarek says, he took up blogging when he moved to Halifax and had few friends and little to do outside of school. Community blogging allowed him to connect with Bangladeshis around the world, share common experiences and interests in sports, and importantly, to communicate in his own language, something he found himself doing less and less of when he came to Halifax.

Similarly, Duke also missed out on taking a photograph to represent his interest in video gaming as both an individual but also important social activity:

Duke: We had a dispute about this, Maria and I. I was thinking of more of a geographic place. So I felt that the video game system would not qualify. But I did take a picture of Future Shop ... you go to Future Shop to buy games ... There was [also] a concern when I wanted to take a picture of my watch and she said well, that doesn't really qualify as a place ... so then my sense, it became it has to be a place as in something where you can be. So you can't be in a watch. But you can be in a car, you can be in a house or in some kind of a, some kind of capacity, area. We thought of it, in that sense.

James: If you and Maria had not done the photographs together yesterday and had done them on your own, would you have taken a picture of that watch?

Duke: Yes I would have (Duke 2009).

Duke's response highlights a number of methodological concerns. First, the ways in which individual participants understand or interpret the notion of geography and place matters in terms of where they take pictures and how they understand the idea of taking pictures in relation to identity. Second, and related, individual interpretation of geography and place therefore also influences whether participants took more objective material photographs of 'actual' places somewhere out there or made attempts to take photographs that represented ideas of identity and belonging or a mix of both. Third, and as introduced in the earlier discussion with Maria and Duke about methodological approaches, this also highlights the ways in which participants may influence one another or in fact persuade others to alter some original and intended direction. Duke seemed to have gone into the project with a broader notion of place and the ways in which things and space might represent identity and form various belongings, yet influenced by his wife's perspective at the end of the quote he refers to the way "we" approached the project in the end. Had Duke taken on the project on his own and without the influence of his wife, he would have taken different photographs. The photograph of the watch was to accompany photographs of his BMW that he tied into a narrative of his personal philosophy and work ethic of "high performance, dedication, commitment, with solid results" (Duke 2009) (see Photograph 4). As part of a much longer and detailed discussion of his commitment to his work, Duke connects all of these qualities with his own sense of self and as intrinsic to his identity as a Muslim in Canada.

Photograph 4: Symbolizing Self-Identity (Duke 2009)



Other participants also articulated some concern with the ‘geography’ of the research. Amira discusses her interpretation of instructions provided during the camera assignment interview explaining that she would revisit the information from time to time to ensure she was on track:

I took one picture with a person in it ... I had to read your description a couple of times of what you wanted, to make sure I got it, cause I’d forget every couple of days or whatever, and I don’t think that really had to do with your idea with what you wanted, from what I understood (Amira 2009).

Amira suggests her interpretation of ‘geography’ and the connections between ‘self’ and ‘place’ largely excluded people and focused more on ‘physical’ places in the city to which she had connections. Jane, too, was somewhat unclear on what was meant by ‘geography’ and ‘place’, She expressed concern about her photographs not meeting my expectations. She had a conversation with her sister, Sara, informed partly by her sister having already participated, about what ‘geography’ and ‘place’ might mean:

When I read [your handout], it said geography. My sister and my friends are taking pictures of objects. So I wasn’t sure if you needed like a picture of a space or a picture of things. But then I was talking to my sister this morning and she’s like, geography could mean things too, so I wasn’t sure what was expected in that sense and maybe I should have emailed you earlier ... I wasn’t completely sure, because [you] didn’t really say anything about things, I thought it was more spaces and places ... Things belong in spaces and they make the space ... like my

sister took a picture of tennis shoes. Okay, but it's not the same thing as taking a picture of the gym (Jane 2010).

This section highlights several methodological ambiguities. First, the interpretation of instructions I provided either orally or through textual communication in the form of emails and letters varied from person to person. Even when there were opportunities for clarifications through additional questions or emails, participants' understanding of what constitutes 'geography' and 'place' influenced the kinds of pictures they took and in some cases stopped them from taking pictures they wanted to take as important connections to their identities and belongings in Halifax. Second, participants contacted through snowballing techniques, due to the very nature of the technique, will know each other, and when participation occurs at different times, there is no way to guard against participants communicating about participation in the project. This, of course, means that earlier participants may influence later participants in terms of how they interpret the project overall and what kinds of pictures might be taken. However, this does not necessarily mean that later participants are somehow 'tainted' and therefore less authentic. The photographs remain their own perspectives, they are authors of their own images, and, most importantly, the stories of everyday life that accompany the images throughout our interview are narrated from their own memories and experiences.

Duke's photographs were also influenced by Maria but not during the photographic fieldwork. Rather, he made changes to the kinds of photographs he was going to take based on Maria's comments about what kinds of photographs were appropriate for the project. He explains that differences in their interpretation of the research impacted his list and decisions about the photographs he wanted to take:

Both of us drew up our list of things independently. And the reason we [took photographs] together is because of convenience ... the list was made individually ... I was thinking from a geographic perspective so, it had to be a place or a building that something can be identified geographically. I remember the conversation I had with you and I mentioned can I take a picture of my car, and you had said that was fine. Based on that conversation I decided to take a picture of my car, without her knowledge of course [smiles]. So, um, I put a lot of focus on places that I would feel represent me or I'm connected to, and places that I am not connected to or that I find are repulsive (Duke 2009).

Duke raises a number of methodological issues. While individually, they created a list of things and places from which they wanted to ensure photographs were taken they compared the list to

co-ordinate movement around the city and in some cases took similar pictures or pictures in the same place. He reveals how a conversation that he and I had during which he asked me for clarification on taking photographs changed his approach to include a photograph of something central to his sense of belonging and identity: his car.

Duke reveals another aspect of ‘intentionality’ through his deliberate effort to tell a story with his photographs by referring to framing techniques that help him convey deeper meanings these images have for him:

There was a purpose behind every picture and shot and angle that was taken. So, to the casual observer it might just seem boring but there is a deeper meaning behind it (Duke 2009).

In some photographs he analyses and interprets the angles of his shots in terms of the meaning he was trying to convey. For example, with the photograph of where he works, his camera is angled up toward the building and the clouds in the sky (see Photograph 5).

Photograph 5: Multiple Readings of Photographs (Duke 2009)



This is a connection to the place in which he grew up in Pakistan. In Pakistan, clouds are “considered mercy from the oppressing heat” (Duke 2009) and therefore, Halifax, a place that is no stranger to a cloudy day, is a perfect fit for him. This is about conveying his attachment to Halifax in relation to his birth home through the symbolism of the photograph. Lastly, in reaction to his wife’s description of ‘drive-by shots’ in which part of the car is visible in the photograph,

Duke suggests that these were deliberate framings meant to convey their new perspectives as car owners rather than as pedestrians in the city (see Photograph 6 and Photograph 7).

Photograph 6: Intentional Drive-By Shot (Duke 2009)



Photograph 7: Intentional Drive-By Shot (Duke 2009)



Part III: The Impact of Auto-photography on Participants

One of the things that people would say or convey to me was a concern that their contribution would somehow not be appropriate, relevant or interesting, in part, because they did not understand why I might be interested in their day-to-day life. As Amy says near the

beginning of our three-hour photo-elicitation interview: “Well I hope I don’t bore you to death”. Hers was, by far, the longest interview I held with participants and was a detailed and complex narrative exploring her journey to accepting Islam and how it changed her everyday life. Similarly, Tarek expressed concern during our camera in-take interview that other people’s lives might be more exciting and that perhaps his everyday routine of home, work, and school did not merit examination or provide for interesting discussion:

It was a little bit hard because, you know, maybe other people have something exciting but I mean my life is not that exciting. So, most of the days are, like, wake up in the morning, come to the lab, work here, go back home (Tarek 2009).

He feels a certain degree of failing to complete the photographic fieldwork in a way that neither satisfies my expectations nor his own:

Initially, I was planning to go to someplace, you know, like last summer I visited some places around Halifax and if I had a chance to go there I could have taken that but unfortunately I couldn’t. So initially I was thinking about a lot of places but finally the outcome is not that great (Tarek 2009).

Despite his feelings that his contribution was ‘not that great’ our interview raised a number of interesting points related to being new in Halifax, finding community among other Bangladeshis and issues surrounding Islam and the politics of belonging.

Others expressed the idea that they did not see their life as representative of the Muslim community or of being Muslim in Halifax, and thus, were concerned about somehow skewing the research:

I’m sorry if I like deviated away, like, because yours is more [about] I guess [being] Muslim but the thing is, that’s what I wanted to show. I am a Muslim person but at the same time I don’t live my life, ‘oh, I do this because I’m Muslim or I do that because I’m Muslim.’ I live my life because I am me (Jane 2010).

Coming at the end of our photo-elicitation interview, Jane expresses concern that she has taken our interview off course and that her photographs and narratives might not match up with the purpose of the project, as she understands it. She notes, however, that this was the point of her participation in a way. That is, to show that while she is Muslim it is not the only thing that defines her or shapes her everyday life. Jane’s motive and goal in participating was to highlight the multiple identities and different dimensions of belonging that shape her everyday life as a young Muslim woman in university.

Amira also suggests that her photographs might be different from other participants. Her concern is that in a research project that uses photography to help tell stories of Muslim belonging her photographs are not very Islamic:

I think my pile of pictures might be different than the other ones that you interview ... aside from a couple of pictures, I don't think my pictures are very Islamic. And I think that that reflects me a lot ... I just think that like religion is really spiritual and personal and between you and god. And I'm not really involved in the community that much or very vocal and I think that will reflect in my pictures (Amira 2009).

Through their photographs and narratives, both Jane and Amira are constantly working against a single and unified script that portrays Muslims in overly simplified and stereotypical ways. These women are rewriting those scripts by mapping out their own identities, sense of attachment, and dimensions of belonging.

Several participants suggest that the fieldwork photography forced them to consider their identities, sense of place and feelings of belonging in a conscious and sometimes different way than they had before. As Kareem suggests, the fieldwork photography "made me self-actualize a lot". For Sara and Lulwa, the photography fieldwork made them more appreciative of the importance of, and amount of time spent in, places they took for granted:

[It] emphasized to me on a personal level, okay, this is what my life is like. This is what I do on a personal basis ... these are things that are important to me. So, that was kind of interesting to see (Sara 2010).

Well it's just weird because you never realize, oh, I see this place all the time, oh, I'm here so much, like, [the university] for example. Like I know I'm here a lot during the year, but you don't realize how much ... when I was taking pictures, I was like, wow, 90% of my time is spent here ... it puts in perspective what is your life, what's the most important things (Lulwa 2010).

Amira took her photographs during Ramadan, a period of inward spiritual reflection that in some ways was reflected in her fieldwork experience:

It made me think that I want to be more spiritual ... Ramadan is a great time to bring me back to that, that's what the month is for, all about reflecting and praying and making that connection with god. And [the photography] made me realize that I don't have a lot of, I don't think that I have to have a lot of Muslim connections ... but I don't have any hardly. I don't know if that's good or bad (Amira 2009).

During a month of reflection she was asked to reflect through photographs about her own sense of place and connection in Halifax. By participating in this research, she not only recognized the extent to which she feels a lack of connection to other Muslims and Muslim communities in Halifax but also, on a more personal level, a desire to connect more deeply with her faith.

Both Duke and Malcolm X provide further examples of the more transformative effects of photographic fieldwork. In each case, they experience a kind of revelation about their sense of identity and belonging as an effect of the fieldwork photography photographic. Asking Duke to think consciously about everyday life, identity, and the importance of place through photographs revealed a sense of imbalance:

It was an eye-opener for me because I realized how empty my life is in Canada ... the idea was for me to take pictures of things that help define me as a Canadian Muslim ... and I realize that my life in Canada has been revolving around the more immediate needs, practical needs, [rather] than recreational ... and that was a shocker ... I realized there are things that I have wanted to do for the last nine years since I've come to Canada but I never really got a chance to. I put them on the back burner until I forgot about them. And this project helped me refresh those desires or goals that I had set for myself long ago. So it was a very, very nostalgic experience ... [And] it was very heavy leaning towards community and my professional life. But as a personal life, it was extremely lacking ... and it's shocking because I realized that my life is not balanced ... All the photographs are of my public or social sphere ... versus being personal (Duke 2009).

Duke admits that his photographs are representative of basic needs and activities associated with work and home but lack broader representation from things like recreation and social activities. His own photographs and narratives focus on this community and professional life while his personal life is somewhat absent from the photos – at least in an explicit way. He shares his dismay over his realization but also new hope that he will devote more of his time and efforts to add balance to his life. His wife, Maria, suggests that their part in the project has also has an effect on their relationship more broadly:

I think that now after we've done this project, we kind of, I don't know, I think it's helping him get to know me better. Cuz he's saying well maybe now we'll go downtown maybe sometime for a coffee. And I'm like yay, thank you James [laughs] (Maria 2009).

For Malcolm X, the photography became a conversation with himself about identity and belonging. The photographic fieldwork raised his self-awareness about the complexity in his own identity:

I was looking at what identifies me and nothing really identifies me as a Muslim, you know? These [photographs] identify me as a human being and I happen to be a Muslim. That's really it ... There weren't that many pictures that were distinctly Islamic. Maybe some picture of mosques, people praying, Islamic prayer rugs, a kufi, but other than that, really, there wasn't much that really identifies me as Muslim, but as a human being (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X begins to articulate his identity in relation to parts and wholes opening up the discussion to multiplicity; that being Muslim is one part of his whole being (human) and that this is reflected in his photographs as less than Islamic. As the interview moves forward he continues to break in with a developing theory of his identity:

This project really opened my eyes as to, [and] maybe it was the opposite of what you were hoping for, but that identities are just BS, it's just fake. Identities really don't even matter ... it's kind of sad to say but ... I'm beginning to keep myself away from that identity. I feel identifying myself as a Muslim puts me into too small of a box ... I'm more than - I'm not a Muslim, I'm a spiritual individual who happens to follow Islamic beliefs (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X discusses the impact of the project in terms of taking photographs to represent identity. He realizes that for him identity is restricting, that it places him in too small of a box and that the risk of saying, 'yes, I identify this way', then shifts to others the ability to view him with assumptions and expectations of how to behave or 'perform' that identity. As a representative of more than himself, but of Muslims in the student body and of Muslims in Halifax as well, this identification is too narrow to be able to express what he sees as a 'whole identity'. He tries again in our interview to sum up his position:

Malcolm X: You know, we're all human beings. We're all ...

James: And that sort of sentiment was behind you're motivations while you were taking photographs? Was it conscious when you were taking photographs?

Malcolm X: It became conscious ... It made me think, you know, being a Muslim is, is important, but being a human is more important (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X reflects on the way that the photography aspect of the project forged this realization about identity and about being Muslim. While being Muslim is a critical aspect of identity, he continues to draw attention to the complexity and wholeness of his 'self'. Near the end of our photo-elicitation interview, he shares another realization about identity:

As I'm doing this thing you know, I recognize that, you know, I'm just an Arabized Canadian. I'm a Canadian who's been Arabized" (Malcolm X 2009).

Just prior to this excerpt we had been talking about social relations, friendships, and going to bars and clubs while also maintaining his commitment to Islam. He agrees that the social and cultural context of the Maritimes, and of Nova Scotia specifically, are part of his identity but that, as he states here, as he did his fieldwork photography and reflected on that process, he realized that he is what he calls a 'Canadian who's been Arabized'. Malcolm X was born in Canada and moved through his own journey to accepting Islam and learning about his culture and other Arab cultures through his practice of Islam and attendance at university. To him this reflects that he was born in Canada and therefore holds many western values while at the same time engaged in both a journey to Islam and a journey to self-identity which rejects some Western values and embraces many cultural and ideological positions that he considers to be Arab in nature. What Malcolm X's journey of identity and belonging reveals, a journey that takes place not only during the photographic fieldwork but also during our interviews, is that identity and belonging are always 'processes of becoming' in place. It also reveals the influence that sustained participation, with time for reflection and discussion, may have, not only on the narratives emerging from the field but also on participants' own sense of self.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the importance of reflecting on and analyzing how participant methodologies not only influences the outcome of participation (photographs and interviews) but also has more personal and, perhaps, transformative implications for participants. I have demonstrated the different outcomes, in terms of both the quantity and quality of photographs and its implications for how they feel about their participation. In addition, it has provided the opportunity for participants to reveal the importance of 'untaken' and even 'undeveloped' photographs further enriching their narratives of place and belonging. This reflexive process has revealed some disjunctures that exist between researcher instructions and research goals and participant interpretation. For some, these interpretations were limiting but for others they remained open concepts through which they captured key elements of belonging in the city. Finally, in recognition of the fact that research is an ongoing process that influences both researcher and participants, I have revealed some of the ways that photography fieldwork and subsequent interviews have left a lasting impact on participants' lives.

Chapter 3: Mapping Journeys of Faith and Place

Introduction

There is no singular identity of “Muslim.” The roots of the Muslim community in Halifax demonstrate that the city is no exception to this. Exploring the histories of Muslim’s journeys to Halifax and to their faith is necessary to appreciate the diversity of identities within the Muslim community. Differences among Muslim journeys of faith and place produce different maps of place and belonging. My research into how and why people have come to be in or remain in Halifax, and how and why people have come to self-identify as a Muslim shows that the community can be analytically organized into at least three groups: those born or raised for most of their life in Halifax, those born in Canada who have converted to Islam, and finally, those newly arrived in Halifax and whose origins are quite diverse as well. Each group inhabits Halifax and its Muslim community in different ways related to their different journeys to Halifax. This chapter details those journeys and the complex picture of the Muslim community and the city of Halifax they produce.

In Part I, “Placing Memories: Growing Up Muslim in Halifax”, I recount the stories of participants who were born or who grew up in Halifax in a Muslim family. As part of the second generation, Malcolm X and Amira map belonging in their own terms yet among shifting positions within the family and among friends and through practices of Islam. Kareem and Catherine are foreign-born Muslims who have spent all of their ‘memorable’ years in Canada. While most of their memories emerge from their experiences in Canada they also reveal the way memories of the places from which they and their families have come continue to influence their perspectives in Halifax.

In Part II, “Becoming Muslim: Canadian-Born Converts”, I explore the personal journeys of Canadian-born converts as they come to find Islam in Halifax. Maria, Talal, Amy and Talib have, in different ways, spent their lives seeking refuge from unsettled homespaces by recreating a space of belonging through faith and practice in Islam. They illustrate the ways in which both coming to Islam and being in Halifax are intertwined and that, in different ways, under different circumstances and for different reasons, their memories of these journeys both are anchored in and help anchor their personal sense of place and belonging. In particular, their narratives are framed by a ‘before and after’ Islam discourse. They map new territories, new associations, and

new memories through the lens of becoming Muslim. In addition, they each demonstrate how their journeys to Islam mark a dimension of belonging significantly different from those who are born into the faith.

In Part III: “Creating Home: Recent Arrivals to Halifax”, I discuss participants who have come to Halifax for work, with family or for school. I map out the ways in which Muslims who are relatively new to Canada create spaces of belonging and, perhaps, renegotiate their relationship to their faith. These Muslims often draw on a comparative geography to narrate the ways in which they feel a sense of belonging in Halifax (or not) and the ways in which they find themselves renegotiating faith. They compare everyday life in Canada and Halifax with everyday life in the other countries and cities in which they have lived. Even for those whose journeys also include movements within Canada this narrative helps to articulate current qualities of belonging to Halifax and the Maritimes. For several participants a renewed interest in their faith after moving to Halifax is also part of their own negotiation of belonging in Canada. These journeys provide alternative mappings that illustrate the ways in which Muslims negotiate a sense of place and belonging in a new home. Of the twenty interviews, twelve fall into this group.

Part I: Placing Memories: Growing Up Muslim in Halifax

The histories and memories of Muslims for whom Halifax has been home for all or most of their lives reveal a strong sense of place and belonging. For Malcolm X and Amira, two Canadian-born Muslims, Halifax has always been homespace. Their memories of growing up in Halifax reveal the important places to which they feel attachment as well as some of the challenges growing up Muslim in Halifax.

Amira

Amira is a 23 year-old Egyptian-Canadian Muslim who was born and raised in Dartmouth. She speaks from a position between her parents’ ‘immigrant’ identities, values and expectations and those of her peers and society growing up in Halifax. Many of Amira’s photographs are ‘memory pictures’ that document her years growing up in Dartmouth, mapping out a personal history of attachment to places including the mosque and schools she attended and the places she played as a child. Her photographs are a collage of place that declare her presence and pride in calling Dartmouth home while also revealing a number of tensions within belonging

in terms of growing up Muslim in Halifax. She territorializes even the mundane spaces as her own:

We always had people over so I could never study at home so I spent a lot of time at the Killam library. On the second floor, in the quiet room, there's like a table, that like basically doesn't have my name on it but basically is like mine, that's where I studied ... my friends know if they can't find me to go there. I just spend a lot of time there (Amira 2009).

Amira claims everyday space in personal ways that convey a sense of belonging through affective ownership (see Photograph 8):

Coburg Coffee ... it's a really great place to just be able to relax and study and meet friends and just like a cool really awesome atmosphere. I just feel like, really, it's one of my favourite places in Halifax by far (Amira 2009).

Photograph 8: A Respite: Coburg Coffee (Amira 2009)



Even a public statue of Sir Winston Churchill is claimed as part of a very private and individual map of belonging (see Photograph 9):

This is the Halifax library. And in the second picture, this is facing Sexton campus where my dad works. And when I was little I spent a lot of time at this library, because my dad used to take me to work there. And I used to think that was a statue of my dad, so that's why I took it (Amira 2009).

Photograph 9: My Dad; Well Not Really (Amira 2009)



More substantially, Amira identifies home as a centre point for her and for the community. On our first run through of her photographs, she discusses a poorly developed photograph of the backyard pool at her home:

It was like a nice gathering point ... we always had people over growing up and still do. We always have BBQs, we always have people at our house. Our house was like a centre point I think for a lot of the community (Amira 2009).

In a photograph taken at Clam Harbour, on the coast north of Halifax, Amira stretches this sense of home and belonging beyond the backyard (see Photograph 10):

It's my favourite beach ... growing up we used to go there at least once every summer and it used to be like a community gathering. We'd all go, all the kids, all my mom's friends ... and we'd have a BBQ and the kids would go swimming. So a lot of childhood memories there ... we used to have ten cars of families ... And

even like during the winter we'd always have ... dinner parties or the kids would always come over. Like, you know, we always had people at our house, we were always going to other people's houses (Amira 2009).

Photograph 10: The Beach at Clam Harbour (Amira 2009)



In her photographs of schools and baseball diamonds, backyards and beaches, Amira documents the landscape of play, school, home and faith to which she belongs and has come to know intimately. These attachments are not only to the people and activities she describes but also to the physical landscape itself (see Photograph 11 and Photograph 12):

I feel really like connected to the water ... Sometimes if I'm really stressed out I'll just drive down to the Wally Wharfs, Bridge Cove it's called. And just sit by the water; it's so calming. And I don't know, my mom felt the same thing ... mom said she loved Halifax because it reminded her of home because she's from Alexandria which is on the Mediterranean Sea. And, she was like 'I could never live away from the water'. And Dartmouth is actually the city of lakes. So, we live really close to water, like, we have Albro Lake is like literally in my backyard (Amira 2009).

Photograph 11: Wally's Wharf, Bridge Cove, Dartmouth (Amira 2009)



Photograph 12: Albro Lake, Dartmouth (Amira 2009)



Amira's emotional mapping of place through her, and her mother's, experiences is an orientating of self and home through the physical landscape. Of course, she also simultaneously reveals her position as a second-generation Muslim born to Egyptian immigrants.

For Amira and others who have grown up in Halifax, having a sense of home and belonging is not a given. Home and belonging were in some senses taken for granted yet at the same time there was something different about her homespace compared to friend's homespaces that reveal the ways that belonging is a project worked at and struggled over. Like others, her journey was one of negotiating between the culture and faith of family and the culture and society of broader Halifax.

Amira's journey growing up in Halifax was marked by what she calls a 'double life': one life led at home and one life led outside the home:

It really felt like I had this double life ... I just felt like I was just one person with my family and one person with my friends. And it's tough. It's not fun to lie. It was really hard to lie. About stupid shit. It's almost like you had to because your parents just wouldn't get it. Like 'What do you mean your going to a party with boys and girls? What are you going to do? What do you mean you wanna go to a dance? What do people do at dances?' ... I just mostly felt that I wouldn't be cool if I didn't go because I would miss out on everything (Amira 2009).

Amira's parents did not understand the social pressures of belonging among peer groups while her friends did not understand the situation at home in terms of her parent's ideas and rules:

Like, my friend Jennifer ... she didn't understand a lot of the time but she knew everything ... [other friends] still don't understand to an extent ... they don't understand it's a culture thing. They just think my parents are strict ... [They'll say] 'just tell your parents you're going downtown. They're not going to say no.' I'm like, 'you don't understand.' What do you do downtown? You dance and you drink. And my religion is against both of those things. So it's not that easy (Amira 2009).

Within the homespace, Amira's siblings became the only people who could understand her situation although there was a gendered difference in experiences. Her older brother was left to his own, but her older sister, having had similar experiences, often helped her negotiate between parents and her desired social life:

My brother is different because he's a man and he can do whatever he wants. And that's really prominent in the culture ... my brother never really had a lot of like guidelines ... My sister ... was the test. The guinea pig ... my sister was super

good, she's like 'If you wanna go to a party just say you're hanging out with me and I'll drop you off and then pick you up' (Amira 2009).

The struggle for some kind of balance between her parents and her social life continues, even in our interview. Amira says over and over again that negotiating these tensions is 'hard; or 'difficult' and yet she also actively works against the perception that her parents were limiting her social activities and social relations.

She also struggles with the ways in which she is positioned by others as transgressing the boundaries of racial and cultural belonging concluding that she does not easily fit in anywhere:

One of my brown friends in the past has said to me, 'Like you are so white-washed' and I was like, 'what does that mean?' Like that really messed up with my emotions. Like should I say thank you, should I be mad, I'm like what does that mean? But I'm just not, like, really Arab-Muslim. I don't really portray it. I think that will show in my pictures ... because I don't feel like I'm so attached to a culture. I'm attached to religion, but not outwardly ... It just made me feel like sad. I don't want to be anything. I really hate labels. I don't want to be anything. I just want to be me. Whatever me is (Amira 2009).

I don't think I belong anywhere. I just don't. I just think I am so many pieces of different things that in a way I feel like I'm definitely, I'm almost like a mutt ... I don't know what I am. I don't feel that I'm struggling with myself but I just don't feel like I am anything because I think I'm everything ... I'm like almost too Christian for the Muslims but too Muslim for the Christians, do you know what I mean? In the cultural sense ... So sometimes I just feel like I'm too much of one thing but not enough of the other. And I used to feel that way with being Egyptian too but not so much anymore. Like when I was friends with some Egyptian people I felt like I was too Egyptian because like I was really trying to embrace my culture at that point in my life, because I felt like I was way too Egyptian for my white friends but almost too white for my Egyptian friends (Amira 2009).

The Egyptian friends to whom she refers are those she met at university. Initially, Amira thought that because of her parents' background she would have more in common with Egyptian international students than, as it turns out, she does. Those students had attended American schools abroad and were exposed to Western values and a Western upbringing and thus found her parents 'weird'.

Her struggles with identity and belonging took an even more difficult turn when someone posted a video on YouTube using photographs taken from her Facebook page. The video was sent to her father and circulated through email at the university at which he worked. The video

was edited with pornographic sounds and overlain with vulgar and sexualized text. Amira feels very strongly that it was made by an Arab Muslim and designed to humiliate her father:

That was super tough. After that I have just been totally out of the community. Not that I've been shunned but I have just taken myself away. I, like, hate my own kind ... So that was a huge breaking point for my family ... a time where I decided I really needed to get more religious. I thought about wearing a scarf ... [but my mom] was like 'no, you didn't do anything wrong. Just be who you want to be' (Amira 2009).

This event had personal and lasting effects on the way she felt attached to place and community:

I'm very social [but after] I had such anxiety ... I didn't like walking down Spring Garden Road. I thought everyone saw the video, knew I was a bad person, a bad Muslim ... Not that I was, but that's what I was portrayed to be ... I was even nervous to step on the parking lot, to step on campus (Amira 2009).

One of the photographs that she says best reflects how she sees herself is a picture of her friend Laura, a white, non-Muslim Canadian girl (see Photograph 13):

Photograph 13: Reflections on Self (Amira 2009)



I just think that that represents me. I think that this girl right here represents who I am ... I mean I don't look like that at all ... I always joked, and I always said that I'm half, no wait, did I say I was three-quarters Canadian? No, half Canadian and half Egyptian. Because I said wherever you're born is a quarter, wherever you lived is a quarter, and wherever your parents lived are from, a quarter. That's why I'm half and half. But I mean like I'm Canadian, first thing I say is, if I'm ever abroad or something and people say where are you from, like, I'm Canadian. I always say I'm Canadian and then maybe later on I'll be like oh, my parents are Egyptian (Amira 2009).

Malcolm X

Malcolm X is a 20 year-old Canadian-born Lebanese Muslim attending university. His father was born in Lebanon and came to Canada to a small town outside of Truro, Nova Scotia, when he was five years old. His mother was born in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and came to Canada when she was 25. When his parents met and married they moved to London, Ontario where Malcolm X was born. The family returned to Halifax when Malcolm X was four years old.

Though Malcolm X has lived most of his life in Halifax, he identifies with home across a number of scales from the house he helped his father build and now lives in, to the Maritime region he discusses through his photograph of Albro Lake and beyond to places that comprise a kind of imagined home (see Photograph 14):

It's Lake Albrow I think yeah. I like lakes, I like swimming, I like being near lakes. Once you leave a Maritime province, you really miss this kind of aquatic nature of it, this beautiful ocean breeze that goes on. Lakes are really important (Malcolm X 2009).

I don't have any family [in Halifax]. That's a big thing for me ... London [Ontario] is where a lot of them are ... I love London, it's great. It's a strong tight-knit community ... The Muslim community ... and the Lebanese community too ... very tight out there (Malcolm X 2009).

[We own a home in Lebanon]. That's one thing that's kept me strong to my village and also I love Lebanon. It's a great, great country, I'm a citizen of it so there's a connection to it (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X suggests that he identifies with all of these sites as both material and emotional places of home and belonging.

Photograph 14: Albro Lake by Dartmouth Mosque (Malcolm X 2009)



Growing up in Halifax, Malcolm X had a diverse set of friends and developed a sense of belonging over time, not only as a young Muslim man, but as a Canadian:

[As a kid] I wasn't so much religious back then, I just didn't believe or care so much ... Anybody who becomes religious, it's a gradual process ... It's still a gradual process for me (Malcolm X 2009).

A lot of people who are born and raised in Halifax [either] become super religious, super extremist because they are reacting against Canadian culture ... or they'll react as super liberal and they'll embrace sexual liberalism and drinking and all this sort of stuff. I guess I went right down the middle (Malcolm X 2009).

I mixed with everybody. Muslims, Arabs, Lebanese, Canadians, Jews, Christians, Hindus, whatever. Didn't matter ... [we'd hang out at] friends houses, parties, you know just chill, the mall. Driving around, movie theatres (Malcolm X 2009).

I'm not evidently Muslim-looking I guess. I don't wear a big beard. I don't have a kufi on my head, I don't wear a coat, djellabia ... I've faced some racism for sure, because I'm Arab, because I'm Muslim. Ah, 'Hey Osama', 'Saddam' ah, 'sand nigger' ... there's a lot of misinformation about Islam, a lot of stereotyping about it so ... it's an everyday battle I guess. You're always saying something, you can't keep quiet. Especially when you're representing the religion (Malcolm X 2009).

Raised for most of his life in Halifax, Malcolm X positions himself as an insider with a deeply developed belonging to Canada, the Maritimes, and more specifically, Nova Scotian culture. He contrasts this with immigrant Muslims in Halifax who might not have or even want such belongings:

They hang out with people from their own culture and hang out with Arabs and other Muslims, they immerse themselves in that culture all the time, all the time, all the time. And so, somebody like me comes in, and I'm like hey guys, I'm Arab, kind of right, and then I could bring them in to show them, you know, Canadian culture, real Canadian culture, the culture that they have kind of forgotten, real Nova Scotian culture, house parties and all this funny stuff, kitchen parties or whatever they call them. So they can understand exactly, Nova Scotian hospitality, Nova Scotian food, lobster, that sort of thing (Malcolm X 2009).

He disagrees with Muslims who separate themselves from the broader social contexts of Halifax because of cultural or religious reasons:

I'm 20 years old, I'm in university. What else, you know, what else am I going to do, right? ... I'm living in Nova Scotia, in Halifax where alcohol is the biggest, the most important thing for social interaction, right? ... You're not going to go to anyplace, unless you're going to go to a coffee shop, if you want to hang out with your friends, and I do that too ... it's not a big deal. I'm going to a party later on tonight ... back when I was in high school I used to drink and stuff ... and then I smartened up and I stopped. I still attended the parties and I still enjoyed myself, I still had a good time. And the same now. I still go to bars. I still go to pubs. I still go to parties. I just enjoy myself, spend time with my friends, you know, I'm a sociable person so, to cut myself off from my friends would not be a good thing. I'd be devastated, friends are very important to me ... if I completely cut myself away from that, I'm isolating myself ... [But] I don't tell all Muslims this ... I just don't tell people because ... well, they're going to think strangely of me, they're going to think weirdly of me (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X integrates Islam into everyday social life as an adolescent and now a young adult and in the context of local social and cultural norms of Halifax. His journey to Islam is marked by a conscious effort to create balance between the principles of Islamic faith and spirit while also developing and maintaining important social relations and networks in Halifax.

Malcolm X also reveals an uneasy connection to the institutional framing of religion and the tension between Muslim identity and being identified as part of the Muslim community in and beyond Halifax:

It's probably one of the most important identities ... [but] being a Muslim, being part of an organized religion ... puts you in a sort of tribe ... You're either in the tribe or you're out of the tribe. I don't want to be part of the tribe ... I follow the ideologies of the tribe but I don't want to be part of the tribe. I'm a bit of a Humanist ... we're all brothers and sisters that's why I like everybody being together ... this tribalism ... I push away from that (Malcolm X 2009).

Like many of the participants, he speaks of unity, community and a Muslim ummah against the myriad divisions that would separate and divide Muslims in Halifax and elsewhere. Mapping out these tensions of unity and division is taken up in Chapter Six.

Kareem

Kareem was born in Kuwait and lived in Egypt before moving to Halifax with his family 19 years ago. He is 26 years old, married with a young son and working part-time and attending university full-time. His wife, Catherine, also participated in the study almost a year previous. She is a 25 year-old Canadian-Muslim woman with dual Canadian-Egyptian citizenship. While she was born in Kuwait, she has spent most of her life in Halifax. She chooses not to wear the hijab.

For Kareem, the photographs became a critical part of claiming a sense of ownership to Halifax revealing a deep pride of place as expressed through the pictures and his knowledge of the city (see Photograph 15):

I had the same goals with all these pictures ... I was just trying to capture Halifax ... Whenever there's cruise ships in town you can clearly see them and it looks really nice, but unfortunately the time I was there, there were none. They're usually lined up right along there, it's a very beautiful view. And the town clock ... another thing that symbolizes Halifax. They always have like a sketch of it on, like, signs and stuff ... And Citadel Hill is also a Halifax symbol but you can only take a picture of that from an airplane so [laughs] so obviously I couldn't capture that with a camera (Kareem 2010).

Despite his discussion of both taken and 'untaken' photographs of iconic 'Halifax' images (including Citadel Hill, the Clock Tower, and the bridges across Halifax harbour) he feels that he was not able to capture Halifax the way he wanted from inside the city. In an 'untaken photograph' of the MacDonald Bridge connecting Halifax and Dartmouth, he says he missed a "a very strong symbol of Halifax" (Kareem 2010) representative also of his identity as an engineering student and overall sense of belonging in Halifax.

Kareem illustrates an intimate awareness of and connection to Halifax and 'roots' himself into the everyday fabric of the city:

I do [love Halifax], yeah. Um, whenever I visit other places (in Canada and Egypt) ... I just feel weird, but when I'm in Halifax, I just, I know so much about it, I've had a lot of jobs in Halifax, a lot of contacts. I've been to school in Halifax; I just know everything about Halifax. A lot of my friends that are new to Halifax, anything they need to know, they always call me and ask (Kareem 2010).

Photograph 15: Halifax Harbour From Citadel Hill (Kareem 2010)



First, he draws from experiences in ‘other’ cities in a way that constructs them as decidedly ‘not Halifax’ that leaves him feeling oddly out of place. Second, he reiterates his multiple belongings in Halifax: he has lived here most of his life, had several jobs growing up, and attended high school and now university all of which has resulted in a network of social relations embedded into the everyday city. Third, with his lived knowledge of the city, he positions himself as a kind of ambassador to those who are new to Halifax. In all of these ways, Kareem narrates a deep connection to place, a sense of belonging rooted in Halifax as ‘home space’.

In a pair of ‘memory pictures’, taken from different perspectives from the same location, Kareem narrates several dimensions of belonging rooted in his families’ journey to Halifax, the memories of which have left important traces in the city landscape (see Photograph 16 and Photograph 17):

We came straight from the airport to this motel and we stayed there for a couple of weeks until we got an apartment . That’s why I took the picture of it, because that’s a memorable view for me ... after we left the motel here we moved to this building. We had the same view (Kareem 2010).

His description of the apartment building that features so prominently both in his memory and the landscape reveals his sense of pride:

It’s a huge landmark you can’t miss it. If you’re ever anywhere around this area or Clayton Park area, you would see that building. It’s a huge, huge building, you can’t miss it (Kareem 2010).

Photograph 16: First Home from Motel Site (Kareem 2010)



Photograph 17: View from both Motel and First Home (Kareem 2010)



The photographs of these places are an emotional testimony to the early seeds of belonging established long before he felt so rooted through experience in Halifax. Kareem reveals a second reason for taking photographs at this location. The highway that runs through the frame figures much later in his history of belonging as the site of a tragic car accident and a friend's death. Multiple layers of hope and excitement, of love and loss are etched into the landscape here and in Kareem's memory.

In comparison to these meaningful memories of deeply emotional times and places for Kareem, in a set of photographs of his current home, framed and presented similar to those of and around the motel, Kareem seems to reveal little emotional connection (see Photograph 18):

That's where I live ... I don't know why I took that picture, doesn't mean nothing. I've lived in this building for two years now, three years now. But this is where me and my wife live (Kareem 2010).

Photograph 18: Home for Now (Kareem 2010)



Kareem takes photographs of his apartment building, rooms in his home, and a picture of him and his wife Catherine that is kept out in the living room. As a collage, these photographs reveal the importance of his current home despite the way he almost dismisses the individual photograph of the apartment building. If not now, he likely will look back on this photograph in ten years, to a site where the memories of his son's birth and early years are anchored, with the same emotional connection that surfaces when he looks back at the motel.

Like Amira and Malcolm X, Kareem navigates between the cultural and religious expectations of parents and the social activities among his peer groups:

Dating was not allowed ... That was just the rule [laughs], of course drinking wasn't allowed, smoking wasn't allowed, all the stuff that you'd expect ... When I was younger me and my friends, you know, you're young and you're experimenting, you just turned 19, it was something that we used to do ... it was all just behind our parents back you know [laughs]. If we're going to go to a club or something, you know, just tell my parents I was spending the night at my

friends house and we'd go to the club and take the bus home in the morning (Kareem 2010).

Growing up in Halifax, Kareem suggests that because Halifax is a relatively small city, with a relatively small Muslim population, there was always a chance that knowledge of his activities would work its way back to his family:

We were always conscious of, always, you know, oh, that's my mom's friend or that's whoever ... Halifax is a small city so it wasn't hard to be spotted or to be seen (Kareem 2010).

Faith was never an important aspect of Kareem's sense of belonging or in his journey growing up as an Egyptian-Muslim in Halifax:

You probably know more about Islam than I do. I grew up not paying attention to religion at all, unfortunately. It just wasn't really a big deal in my life ... I don't really have a lot to say about Islam unfortunately. Except that it's a way of life, I mean, I celebrate the big events with family and everything but I don't really practice Islam the way I should practice Islam ... I'm not a religious person at all, whatsoever ... It's not like I'm a bad person, I'm just not a religious person ... If the family wasn't around I probably wouldn't even remember to be honest with you ... that's how out of tune I am (Kareem 2010).

Catherine

Catherine was born in Kuwait and migrated to Halifax with her family to Canada in 1992. She lived in several places while completing her undergraduate degree including Egypt and the United States. Halifax, however, has remained the home to which she always returned:

There's something about the Maritimes that I really like ... I always knew that I wanted to move back to Halifax ... I'd come here all the time for summers ... I think that if we moved away [now] we would move somewhere to save some money but I think we'd always come back here (Catherine 2009).

A collage of Catherine's photographs indicates a deep connection to Halifax as a homespace particularly in relation to the routines of everyday life (see Photograph 19 and Photograph 20):

This is the Bedford Basin ... this is truly like a connection I have with Halifax. I've always lived off of the Bedford Highway. And I always drive on this road. And it really represents Halifax to me ... it's just very peaceful. When I think of the Bedford Highway I think of my family, I think of my community, I think of the Mount (Catherine 2009).

These photographs are about everyday life; where she goes, where she's been and what she does. This commute reminds her of family and home, of being part of a wider community both in terms of the Arab and Muslim community as well as university communities to which she belongs such as at Mount Saint Vincent University where she sometimes teaches. She constructs an intimate portrait of home through the everyday use of space.

Photograph 19: Daily Drive: Thoughts on Home (Catherine 2009)



Photograph 20: Daily Drive: Thoughts on Home (Catherine 2009)



Catherine now lives in a suburb between Bedford and Halifax. She has a new sense of home living here with her husband and son that provides a feeling of belonging to a larger community while also maintaining some distance from it:

I like it because before this I lived in Bedford and that was a representation of home to me plus there's a lot of Arabs there, plus it was peaceful and very residential. And then it kind of got overpopulated with Arabs. So, I moved to Royal Hemlock, about five minutes away from Bedford, some people still consider it Bedford. Officially, my address is Halifax (Catherine 2009).

When Catherine discusses some of the things she misses about Egypt, the energy and activity of street life, I ask her what keeps her from moving to a larger city in Canada or elsewhere and what keeps her in Halifax. She says:

I think people are a lot nicer here. They're a lot more friendly. I know a lot of friendly people that live in Toronto. I have lots of friends there but, I think people are less racist here than in bigger cities ... I think the Maritimes, there's something very special and peaceful about Halifax. At the same time, it's not like Newfoundland. Okay, it's peaceful there but there are no Arabs there so I would feel really strange. But there is enough Arabs here that I feel like, okay, it's acceptable for me to be here ... So peaceful and not very racist (Catherine 2009).

Photograph 21: Gloomy Halifax (Catherine 2009)



And as with many residents in Halifax, the weather offers a challenge of a different kind. In another photograph meant to capture another side of home, Catherine discusses the gloominess of Halifax against Egypt (see Photograph 21):

It's one thing I really think I struggle with in Halifax. I think the sun makes me a happy person. When I'm in Egypt, I'm so happy that I'm going to sleep that night knowing that there will be sun tomorrow. And here, that's the worst part about Halifax, is the gloominess ... That's what I hate ... it's just so gloomy ... Halifax is beautiful, like the scenery is just so beautiful, but you can't enjoy it (Catherine 2009).

Part II: Becoming Muslim: Canadian-Born Converts

The journeys of Muslim converts reflect a sense of dislocation both in faith and belonging in Halifax. For the converts in this research, the spiritual journey to Islam coincides with other kinds of personal and physical transformations. By examining their narratives of origin, choice and change in becoming Muslim, I map out the places in which such narratives have become anchored and subsequently where belongings are moored.

Talal

Born and raised in a small county in Nova Scotia, at 49 years old Talal is the oldest of the participants. Personal issues that include precarious employment, drugs, drinking and incarceration have troubled him for much of his pre-Islam life. Shortly after 9/11, the events of which sparked so much disbelief and, for some, anger, Talal began to research Islam by purchasing a translated copy of the Qur'an for, in his words, "what better way to know the enemy":

The only Muslims that I knew ... were these crazy fanatics that flew a jet airplane into a building. That, on the surface you could think, well, you know, this guy's going to become one of these fundamental Christians who are railing against Islam and Allah, right, because I already had a background in Christianity. But the opposite is true, I decided to search this religion to find out what it is that would make somebody do that and found something different (Talal 2009).

He identifies a number of factors including timing, place and resources that came together in a way that provided him with the opportunity to research Islam:

All these things came together. I was laid off, had a comfortable place, I had access to all this information. I can remember that actually went through my mind when I sat down in front of the computer one time. I said, 'okay, I got all kinds of time, and I have all the information in the world sitting right in front of me. What do I want to know?' ... And then just something clicked and I said I want to find out about Islam ... I spent days and days and days ... in front of the computer and

research whatever I could find ... Once I got to the point where I was convinced then I accepted Islam (Talal 2009).

Like other converts, Talal establishes the boundaries of his Muslim identity through the deliberate choice to learn about and accept Islam:

You gotta really think about what's being said ... it's something that has to be studied ... I became Muslim because when I read the Qur'an, to me, it was proof. It was exactly what I was looking for ... if something is in the Qur'an, to me that's the word of God ... as far as I'm concerned, my research, what I've done all my life, as far as searching for the truth, the Qur'an has filled every qualification (Talal 2009).

He positions this conscious choice to become Muslim against others for whom Islam is taken for granted.

Because he lived outside of Halifax in a part of the province with very few Muslims, no prayer spaces and certainly no mosques nearby, Talal's journey to Islam was also about finding or creating the space in which to practice his faith. In 2006, he began going to the Centre for Islamic Development (CID) and Chebucto mosque in Halifax to learn more and to practice jummah prayers among other Muslims. During one trip to Halifax, he discovered that there was a fairly large number of Bangladeshi Muslims who lived in his area and came to Halifax for jummah prayers as well:

There was like forty or fifty Bangladeshi guys who were working in [Pictou County] ... they were praying in one of the apartments ... two or three of the guys just moved the furniture out of the living room for prayer on Friday (Talal 2009).

Talal began praying with them but saw a need for a regular prayer space and successfully sought out the rental of a local community centre. Shifting the jummah prayer from the private space of someone's apartment to a public, community organized space, even if it is simply renting a space in a community centre, is an act of claiming space as part of feeling a sense of belonging. By creating a space for Muslims to pray in openly, Talal and others announce the presence of Muslims. These themes of claiming space through the practice of faith are further discussed in Chapter Five, but here it demonstrates an important aspect of his becoming Muslim. In order to be Muslim, he needed the space in which to practice his faith.

Talal's 'before/after' framework maps out the territory he now occupies as a Muslim, drawing boundaries between faith and culture:

Some people have this idea that if you become Muslim you have to change your name, you have to dress differently, you have to wear this cap on your head, or you have to wear this rag on your head [laughs] or whatever, right? They think it's part of the faith. They don't understand that I can look just like anybody else, any other Western person ... a few exceptions that you wouldn't even notice, like, I like to wear my shirt untucked or I wouldn't like to have tight pants, that kind of thing (Talal 2009).

More generally, he discusses everyday life before and after becoming Muslim in terms of comfort and discomfort. Talal imagines that his experience of becoming and being Muslim is different because he is white:

I think it would be a little more comfortable for someone, like say African American, African Canadian ... through their history ... there's a lot of Islam in there ... like with American Islam and that kind of thing ... so for them I think it might be a little different (Talal 2009).

He perceives a link between Islam and people of colour suggesting that his whiteness does matter in terms of the way in which he experiences being Muslim but does not elaborate further. He does pick up on another change that coincided with accepting Islam. In becoming Muslim, he not only shifted spiritual spaces but also physical spaces:

It would have been interesting if I'd have been in a situation where I stayed where I grew up ... just like thinking about running into people who I used to work with (Talal 2009).

He moved to Halifax shortly after accepting Islam where he has the advantage of anonymity but also must navigate the city as a Muslim man. Talal discusses the impact that becoming Muslim has had on his sense of being in public space revealing an imagined cartographic shift to the 'Muslim World' in which he lives with a different set of views on modesty and gender relations (see Photograph 22 and Photograph 23):

These two pictures, for me, they're about ... like the norms of people's dress and how they behave. How I feel about how comfortable I am with them, now versus before. Like, basically women's dress. How, you know, what used to be considered fully dressed to me now is half naked. And, you know, a lot of restaurants and places where you deal with the public, they do try to have dress codes that are a little more conservative but, you know, when you compare 'conservative' here, it's very, very liberal then in the Muslim world (Talal 2009).

I find it uncomfortable because ... I can't look [laughs]. I have to watch where I'm looking, I have to look at the floor and the ground, I find I have to not look because you got this stuff in your face that is, I mean, as a man, it's hard not to

look. It's really hard. And I've learned that this kind of thing is just, it's the same thing as pornography on a smaller scale (Talal 2009).

Photograph 22: Public Space (Talal 2009)



Photograph 23: Public Space (Talal 2009)



Talal finds himself occupying new terrain in which he negotiates public space, as well as the social relations of gender and sexuality of the 'non-Muslim World', as a Muslim. He reveals the tension between his masculinity and male identity and a Muslim identity that must practice modesty and respect. He draws from his Islamic study and the Qur'an to help make sense of these tensions:

This is the wisdom behind Islam ... to lower our gaze because ... if I'm dealing with a Muslim woman and she's in hijab, then I can look at her in the eyes and have a conversation and we can talk about anything. It's one person talking to another person (Talal 2009).

In more intimate and personal spaces of home and family, he is also able, to some extent, to use strategies to avoid uncomfortable questions or situations:

As far as visiting family at religious holidays I tend to try to go like the day before or the day after just so that I'm not giving the impression that I'm celebrating that particular holiday (Talal 2009).

However, returning for a family reunion, his sister introduced 'Andrew' as 'Talal' in a gesture of acceptance. It raised feelings of discomfort in him so soon after accepting Islam. Moreover, it also opened up the space through which family members directed an anti-Islamic tirade toward Talal:

It felt uncomfortable there ... my uncle ... put his arm around me said, 'Talal, how did all that come about?' ... he had his hands around my neck, he was actually squeezing, it was hurting me, he was so mad. But he was able to talk through his clenched teeth in a very calm and civil tone ... I didn't recognize his passive aggressiveness ... So I tried to answer his questions ... [but] I could tell he wasn't listening to the answers ... he was verbally attacking me. I was really upset about it (Talal 2009).

And one of my cousins ... just tore a strip off me and talked about terrorism ... I wound up leaving ... My uncle denied the whole thing ... he pretended as if he was just curious ... I tried to explain to him about how these people, they don't represent Islam anymore than George Bush represents Christianity ... Like to me, I find you got to make the effort ... if you're confronted with ignorance, you have a responsibility to make the effort to try to make people understand (Talal 2009).

Talal is repositioned within the space of family since becoming Muslim, however, with his mother and father, he has found acceptance:

To my immediate family nothing's changed really ... My parents are starting to see that this is not just a phase. I'm married now and I'm working steady, I'm responsible and taking care of business ... so I'm hoping that they're kind of starting to realize that this is, this is real ... We feel welcomed in the family. Actually my mother came to visit us, last weekend or the weekend before ... she's never actually come for just a visit or come to stay for a weekend or anything like that. It's never, never happened (Talal 2009).

His marriage to Nasim, an Arab Muslim who wears the hijab, may have impacted his family relations positively suggesting that his conversion to Islam is ‘real’. A recent visit from his mother indicates a greater level of acceptance that he is happy about.

Perhaps we see a reconstruction of family homespace represented by a pair of ‘memory pictures’ of his parents’ garden (see Photograph 24 and Photograph 25):

Photograph 24: Childhood Home: The Garden (Talal 2009)



Photograph 25: Childhood Home: The Garden (Talal 2009)



There was nothing I loved better than taking my shoes and socks off and walking in that. Especially when it’s just been tilled. I loved it (Talal 2009).

This reminiscing of his childhood homespace is one of the few expressive sentiments of emotion and connection Talal provides to any place: this place where he grew up and still calls home.

Talib

Talib is a 21-year-old university student, who identifies as black, but notes that he is of mixed racial heritage – “half white, half black” (Talib 2010). Born in Dartmouth we was raised there until his family moved to Bedford in his teen years. He admits to a relatively average upbringing in a fairly stable home, but for a time his personal life was unsettled by very ‘un-Islamic’ behaviours – sexual activity, drugs, and listening to rap music before becoming Muslim. During high school in Cole Harbour, Talib became interested in learning about Islam through a Pakistani Muslim friend. He visited the Dartmouth mosque for the first time with his friend’s family observing but not understanding the practice of prayer. When his family moved to Bedford, he met more Muslims his age in a much more diverse high school and at his new job in a fast food restaurant. A Muslim friend invited him to jummah prayer at his new high school where he met and listened to an Imam he calls ‘Coach’.

Coach encouraged him to become Muslim; Talib shrugged him off by saying that he was too young. Coach responded by saying, ‘hey, you never know when you are going to die.’ Talib shrugged this off too, thought it was a bit crazy and didn’t think too much more of it. He was still interested and was learning the prayers and the practices but had not seriously considered converting to Islam. A short time after this, a friend of his died in a car accident. Attending the Muslim funeral, he saw Coach: the coincidence of Coach’s comment, his friend’s death, and his increasing interest and belief in Islam motivated him to tell Coach that we was ready to accept Islam and become Muslim.

It took a week for Talib to tell his parents that he had become Muslim. They were aware of his interest in Islam but not that he was seriously considering it and certainly not that he had already accepted Islam. One night during dinner, he had left his ‘call to prayer’ CD in the stereo and someone turned it on. As he says, “the cat was out of the bag” (Talib 2010). His parents responded in anger; his father used the Internet to show Talib negative images and things associated with Islam and being Muslim. His stepmother, a non-Muslim Serbian, was intensely angry. No one spoke to each other for a week and they still do not openly speak about it but are more accepting as they come to better understand his relationship to Islam.

Telling his biological mom was harder. As he says, ‘the pork gets you every time’, so when pizza was ordered, he insisted over and over that they get something else so that he didn’t have to explain why he suddenly wasn’t eating pork. In the end, he told his mom who was more accepting and interested in his faith.

He emphasizes the conscious and intentional choice to become Muslim accompanied by what he calls a ‘zeal’ for information and education about Islam:

We didn’t accept it for no reason right. We learned about it, we were convinced ... so when we entered Islam, we had a zeal. Like Allah says in the Qur’an, ‘enter Islam completely’. Like don’t put one foot in, one foot out. Jump both feet in. Come all the way in (Talib 2010).

Talib distinguishes himself as a convert against those who were born into Islam and suggests that an important aspect to his commitment is in his faithful practice and performance of his Muslim identity:

I think I take things from before I was Muslim and apply them to Islam and I think that all Canadian Muslims do that. [We converts] grew up in a more open society, a more free society in ways, more education based society ... we kind of just apply that to Islam in ways of studying, for example. I think you’ll see us study Islam a lot more, actually read books ... So I think we just take certain things that we’ve grown up with that are ingrained in us and just kind of apply that to Islam in a way ... Whereas most of the other people ... it just comes like second nature sort of thing. It’s just always there, it’s on the back burner, you know? But for us, it’s in the forefront (Talal 2009).

His mapping of the differences between converts and Muslims-by-birth suggest a more active terrain through which converts find a sense of belonging in relation to faith and practice.

Talib’s ‘before and after’ discussion demonstrates how the practice of Islam changes everyday life. Many of the things associated with youth like drinking and attending clubs and bars are no longer permitted as a Muslim. Smoking, and occasionally selling marijuana were activities woven into the social fabric of his life:

A lot of my friendships and relationships with people were built on that ... for people who smoke constantly, it gets literally involved in everything. You want to go to the washroom, you’re going to get high before you go to the washroom [laughs] (Talal 2009).

Obviously some things I completely cut out, like weed for example. There’s none of that ... a lot of things didn’t change at all. I still play sports, maybe play sports now more than I did before because when I want to use my time up in a good

way, I use sports to do it. And a lot of my friends play the same sports I do instead of going downtown Friday nights (Talal 2009).

He lost contact with many friends he associated with through smoking but continues other friendships through alternative activities such as sports and with those whose interests and activities do not conflict with Islam:

Some of my childhood friends I've kept onto ... we have other things in common, like basketball ... and other people, non-Muslims, who just don't do those things. They don't smoke weed, they don't drink, these sort of things ... [But] I didn't lose any friendships [because I became Muslim] ... nobody was like 'oh you're Muslim now get away from me' ... Everybody's pretty cool, pretty open ... [but] like I was saying before, we as Canadians don't always express everything that we think or that we feel ... to each other's faces. But as far as I've seen, as far as I know, a lot of people are really cool, to each their own, 'oh, you're doing your own thing, that's cool, no problem' (Talal 2009).

Some activities like smoking 'weed', no longer permissible as a Muslim, were 'completely cut out' while other activities such as sports took on new meaning. DJ Albatross also suggested that as a young practicing Muslim, sports becomes an important outlet to expend energy. While neither DJ Albatross nor Talib speak directly to this energy as 'sexual energy' their references come alongside and refer back to (e.g. by saying 'you know what I mean?') discussions of dating and relationships with women. Talib, in particular, suggests that playing sports or working out at the gym are good uses of time opposed to going to bars and clubs.

A significant change occurred once Talib understood that music was 'incompatible with Islam': "horrible when you're thinking from an Islamic aspect: the content is very bad" (Talib 2010). Although he no longer listens to music of any kind, he has found a 'halal' way to channel and enjoy creative expression through poetry, which also introduced him to another community in Halifax:

In Islam we always say that whatever may be prohibited there's more things that is allowed ... as I left the music scene I got much, much, much more into the poetry scene and the spoken word scene so now I am actually pretty deep into that now. I don't do any poetry myself but I know probably every poet in Halifax (Talal 2009).

Amy

Amy is a 37-year-old Canadian-born wife and mother with First Nations heritage who converted to Islam in 2004. As a child, Amy's homespace was disrupted by drug use and

alcoholism, and perhaps, to some degree by a sense of dislocation from her First Nation heritage and eventually her Catholic faith. She found refuge from her troubled home in church:

I took it upon myself to go to church ... for about four to five years, every Sunday ... I did my first confession, and my first communion all by myself ... when I got older and moved [to Halifax] I didn't go to church anymore ... My parents drank a lot so there was a lot of fighting, you know, the verbal stuff, and physical. So for me, it was more of a safe haven, a safe place to go, right? ... everybody's good, and everybody's happy, and everybody's friendly [in church] (Amy 2010).

In her late teens, Amy moved out of her family home and out of Halifax moving to New Brunswick for two years where she got married, divorced, and then returned to Halifax. She then married the brother of a Muslim woman she met and befriended at a local convenience store. Her husband, Asad, is Muslim but does not practice Islam in everyday life and becoming Muslim was not a requirement of Amy in the marriage. Shortly into the marriage, the events of 9/11 took place just two weeks after her son was born:

I had no problems with [raising him Muslim] at all ... September 11th happened ... and then the hatred that started happening towards Muslims. That really made me question how I was going to raise my son. And that was the huge pinnacle moment for me, and I thought, no way. I can't raise him to be that way, right? ... So for me, it was a huge thing being a new mom, going through all the emotions of being a mom and then thinking I got to get the hell out of here right [laughs] because I don't want to raise him this way. But like I said, talking to people, learning about the religion, I come to find out, of course that's not what they condone in their religion ... so it calmed me down in that aspect thinking, 'okay, I'm not going to leave my husband now' [laughs] (Amy 2010).

A more serious journey to Islam began because of her concerns, which now shifted to her son growing up Muslim in Halifax:

I knew there was going to be a lot of hatred, especially for him growing up, I knew he was going to have a stereotype, I knew right after September ... even though he was young, I want to prepare him so he can defend himself in these things, so I began to study [Islam] (Amy 2010).

Amy's journey to Islam was accompanied by a resurfacing of a First Nations heritage that only as an adult became important to her:

I didn't grow up as a First Nation, like on a reserve ... back then it was very much not cool to be a native ... My grandparents were the Natives, totally kept it quiet, kept it shunned, so they could live their lives as non-natives ... I'm the third generation so it's a little farther back than directly being native, right? ... We

always knew we were native, [my husband] knew I was native too. Um, part native. But ... I didn't engross myself in it. I didn't go to the events, or the powwows and that type of thing ... But around the same time that I was going through this transition ... my brother became very involved our native culture ... So he was going through this whole identity-finding himself as well ... It's a part of our people, right? So it was definitely interesting for me to know that you belong somewhere ... We were always hidden from it, right, growing up, and then ... it was kind of like, okay, this is my belonging, this is my roots, you know? It was very exciting to get into that ... So I had all these sides ... I was thinking, what do I do, you know? I have agreed to raise my son as [Muslim], however, I'm not following it myself ... and at the same time I believe in my native heritage, which was hard too. That's a part of me, it's in my blood, so I didn't want to give that up ... and at the time I thought I had too (Amy 2010).

She reveals several lines of tension in the multiple journeys through which she sought belonging. First, Amy believed that becoming Muslim required 'giving up' a native heritage she was only beginning to accept and understand and indeed cherish as a central component of her own self. Second, with her son's father being Muslim, she assumes that by not accepting Islam herself this creates a conflict for her son as he negotiates his own path to Islam. Third, and related, are the more general tensions between culture and faith, belief and blood. These tensions continued to shape her journey to Islam. For example, when she returned to work after her son was born, his grandparents, who spoke Arabic in the home, provided day care:

I would come home and he would be completely speaking Arabic ... I don't know what he wants ... I thought, I gotta do something ... I'm going to have to learn Arabic or something (Amy 2010).

Her son's use of Arabic was creating an exclusion through language that Amy wanted to eliminate by learning Arabic for herself.

At the same time, in 2003, another First Nations Muslim convert in Halifax died in a house fire. Because Amy was First Nations but known in the Muslim community through her husband's family (though not yet Muslim herself), she was asked to mediate between the two communities as far as ensuring that a proper Muslim funeral took place without causing tension or making offence against the First Nations community. In the course of doing this, she went to the Centre for Islamic Development for information on a Muslim funeral where she learned Arabic classes were offered:

I was very welcomed there. I was a little intimidated, you know, should I cover up when I go in? But I don't feel comfortable covering up because it's not what I do

right? ... It was very difficult to learn. After the first class, that was it, I wasn't going back ... it was totally foreign to me ... but I did end up going back ... I eventually learned how to read and write Arabic ... James, I have no idea what I'm reading, I can read it but I don't know what I'm reading. It's very strange (Amy 2010).

Taking Arabic classes was one way for her to belong within her own family matrix but her journey to Islam took place over several years and at times it was a struggle. She sought answers on a trip to the Middle East; instead of waiting for Islam to come to her, she thought she would go to where Islam began:

That definitely wasn't it. I was really sad when I got back, really, really sad. Um, Because I thought, I'm hopeless, you know [laughs] what am I going to do? ... If anywhere, it was going to be there, it would have made sense, and it didn't at all. I saw a complete opposite, which was really sad (Amy 2010).

She hoped for an epiphany but instead came home with a negative impression of Islam based on the cultural expressions and interpretations she witnessed on her trip and with feelings of sadness over a perceived lost opportunity to embrace Islam.

Amy also reveals that as she learned about Islam herself, she encountered a range of different ideas and interpretations and sometimes mis-interpretations that made the road that much more difficult to follow:

A lot of Muslims ... totally discouraged me from it. In the sense they've got their culture mixed up with their religion ... [Some Muslims] that I would talk to, maybe they're a little bit more extreme in Islam ... it's like a puzzle you got to navigate, even through the Muslims themselves, to find out where the truth is ... A lot of the times I found myself going back to the Internet ... finding out from the scholars ... and even in the Qur'an ... but at the time I had no idea what it was saying, so I would read the transliterations ... [which] give a little bit different of opinion [and] context ... I would take all the different translations and kind of formulate my own consensus of it (Amy 2010).

[For example] Do I have to change my name? ... well no I don't ... it's not mandatory that I'd change my name but it's preferred ... I didn't want to do that ... I was like so on edge about it, especially covering up too, I mean I really had to look into that ... Same with the men with the four wives. You find all these things out and it's like, I grew up in Canada, I don't want my husband to have no four wives [laughs] ... there was a lot of navigation (Amy 2010).

As she says, the journey to Islam is a process of navigating through religious texts and scholars as well as stereotypes, cultural interpretations and inaccuracies.

In Amy's 'before and after' discourse the hijab is an important faith practice through which she defines her own Muslimness while also the site through which others challenge her right to belong. She reveals the complexity of making such a decision for herself:

Does it state in the Qur'an that we should cover ourselves? Absolutely, 100% ... but is it my personal choice as a woman, and any Muslim woman, yes it is ... I know that if I didn't do it, you know, the first Madonna concert that came up, I would have been there [laughs], right? ... So for me, I put it on because it kept me in line, so to speak ... If I knew I was a strong person, yeah, I probably would take it off (Amy 2010).

Her decision to wear the hijab is an important aspect of negotiating her new identity and a sense of belonging through it:

I wanted to know what I'm doing it for and make sure that this is something I have to do. Because you hear different conflicts, even with Muslims, some will say you don't have to wear it some say you do ... it was three and a half years of a journey ... I took my shahada April 13, 2004 ... it was only a month after that I put on the hijab (Amy 2010).

Wearing the hijab for the first time in public, and then specifically to her place of work, were challenging accomplishments:

I prepared the people I knew because ... it's something completely different for them ... But going out the first time was really nerve racking ... I was more self-conscious of myself than anyone else was ... I made sure I went to a place that I don't go often. It was a public place ... just because I didn't want anyone else seeing me ... I was sweating the whole time ... the rest of the weekend I didn't wear it. I was like, ah god, that was just so hard (Amy 2010).

While her immediate colleagues were prepared for the change, some of the outside activities of work, such as making deposits at the bank, posed greater challenges:

The week after I put the scarf on I had [to] go to the bank as I usually do, but I was stopped. They're like, no we have to put a hold on this. What do you mean you got to put a hold on this? I'm like no you don't ... I've done this a million times before ... and I started to say, okay, now I know why. I'm like, I want your manager ... and I went into the back I said, you don't remember me do you? And she goes, no, you don't look familiar. I said, I was just here last week. I've been here for many years, coming here. And I had to explain, and they were like, ohhhh. And I said listen, I'm really, really upset that this happened now, after I've covered my head ... of course, they were apologizing, no, that's not the reason ... I was starting to see the differences that my sister-in-laws and some of my friends, would complain about and I used to think they exaggerated ... And I feel bad now that I thought that (Amy 2010).

Before becoming Muslim, she always felt there must be some exaggeration among her friends' complaints of discrimination because of the common nature and frequency of such occurrences among them. She now understands these as part of negotiating everyday life as a Muslim woman:

I was pretty pissed off [about the incident at the bank] ... [but also] ... I didn't get asked for spare change anymore ... which is a bonus. I didn't get the 'yo, yo, babies' anymore walking down the street (Amy 2010).

Amy interprets this as respect I think rather than hesitation or fear of the other on the part of panhandlers and men in general. In some cases, her visibility provides others the right or opportunity to interact with and patronize Muslim women:

The elderly ... don't like that we're covered ... I find more of a negative reaction from them ... They'd be like, 'you're in Canada' right? You know, old ladies, they're very sweet about it, they're like 'dear you know you can take that off', you know? [laughs] (Amy 2010).

Implicit in these kinds of reactions to Muslim woman is that they are forced to wear it, are foreigners and furthermore, lack the intelligence or information available to know better now that they are in Canada. For Amy, however, the visibility of the hijab and her Muslimness is an important part of her efforts to inform and educate across the boundaries:

One of the biggest things that we do is dawah and dawah is preaching [or] telling the religion to other people ... that's commanded upon us ... I'm around a lot of different people ... so I knew putting [on] the hijab, [they] automatically knew that I was a Muslim, then they can ask the questions ... that was part of the reason I also put the hijab on, so I could do dawah in a way that I don't have to physically come up to people (Amy 2010).

Despite her intentions, there are times where the space created by her visibility becomes the site for unbridled aggression and ignorance. These experiences, too, are part of everyday life and may sometimes have a more serious consequence:

I don't mind, even people when they call me names ... it doesn't happen a lot, James, especially here in Halifax ... when I go downtown Halifax to the fireworks, to many different things, I mean, there's a lot of Muslims out there, [but] you do get the odd person that says things, but it's only ever really bothered me one time, and it was one time my son was with me ... You know, yelling at me to go back to my country, and ... I'm not one to just ignore it, so him and I had gotten into a fight, and my son was there. It probably wasn't the best, but I was like what do you mean go back to my [country], you know, especially being native, we totally

got into it. And, James ... it was at the waterfront, many people around were like 'dear don't listen to him, he's just an idiot', they were so on my side. They just thought this guy was being a jerk. But, the next day, my son didn't want to go out with me ... it really upset him ... he was like 'mom, I don't want them calling you bad names'. So it really upset him. So for me, it's okay, but when it comes around my kid, that's when it bothers me (Amy 2010).

Without downplaying the severity of this violence, it is important also to consider that this public attack was also met by the support of passers-by. Several strangers witnessing this encounter stood up with and for Amy and her son, momentarily allying themselves with an unknown Muslim woman.

Becoming Muslim also changes the social landscape which she once shared among friends:

I can't go to the bars with them. I'm not that 'party friend' with them anymore. I'm still with them all the time, love them to death, they're still my good friends ... [and] they so want me to be in that social group with them (Amy 2010).

Changes in this social landscape among friends also has a gendered dimension:

I had a little bit of a hard time with it too ... I had my own place, my friends would come over, if they had a boyfriend, they'd come over with their boyfriends, we hang out, we chit-chat. Well that stopped when I became Muslim ... because, in our religion men and women shouldn't technically be alone in the same place (Amy 2010).

Nevertheless, she finds that social life now that she is Muslim is much more active and satisfying: "I do have a more active social life, but it's more for the good" (Amy 2010).

Amy's social circles have expanded through her husband's family, through the converts met at Arabic classes, through her participation on the board of an Islamic school and through her activities at the CID and other mosques. She has developed significant attachments a number of sites in the city associated with the Muslim community.

Maria

Maria is a 26-year-old, Halifax born Muslim convert married to a Pakistani Muslim immigrant. Maria's entire auto-photography and much of her photo-elicitation interview followed the central thread of her journey to Islam and the meaningful places along the way. Her journey reveals several shifts in and out of having a sense of a comfortable and welcoming homespace. Her search for belonging was as much about finding faith as it was about finding

family and her own sense of self. She sought refuge away from an unsettled childhood homespace, abandoning her biological family in favour of her ‘adopted’ family. Throughout this period she explored, experimented with and educated herself about a range of faiths, from Hinduism to Wicca and then eventually Islam. This journey was coupled by a personal growth journey as well that saw her leave and return to Halifax, attend college, begin a career, and marry Duke, a Pakistani Muslim who had recently moved to Halifax: all during a period of transformation as she accepted Islam and began to wear the hijab.

Maria’s photographs are pictures of places that have anchored her shifting belongings from childhood to the present. Like Amy, Maria sought comfort and safety outside of a dysfunctional home and in faith. Her photograph of the building in which she lived with her biological family as a child represents this dislocated sense of home and belonging (see Photograph 26):

This is where I confronted my mother about her doing drugs with my dad ... I grew up really fast. Lots of bad things happened here. So now we can understand why in Junior High I was looking for bigger answers ... I already had a concept that there was a God and I figured out that he was a better parent than my parents were [laughs]. And that they didn’t know right from wrong but God is teaching me right from wrong ... That is what I had decided here (Maria 2009).

Photograph 26: Childhood Home (Maria 2009)



Because her homespace was disrupted by alcohol and drug abuse she sought refuge elsewhere (see Photograph 27):

I lived at the library [laughs] ... School was my sanctuary from home. I was the best student ... I hated being home. I loved to learn but I think most of it was probably, looking back, more driven by hating being at home than loving being at school (Maria 2009).

Her search for something home-like soon also turned toward religion and spirituality. Maria's childhood home sat near a small house-turned-mosque in Dartmouth and though it would be two decades before she would become Muslim and attend this mosque, she recalls its presence (see Photograph 28):

Photograph 27: Sanctuary From Home (Maria 2009)



Photograph 28: Early Curiosity: Dartmouth Mosque (Maria 2009)



I would walk to school in the morning past [Dartmouth Mosque] ... and see these kids in different coloured clothing playing on the jungle gym at lunch and wondering what they were doing and if I could play too (Maria 2009).

Curiously observing the children on the playground at the mosque she imagined a space in which she too might belong. Although not wholly accepted at first, years later Dartmouth would become her home mosque, a discussion I will again pick up in subsequent chapters.

In stark contrast to her home, Maria includes a ‘memory picture’ that captures an intimate and positive connection to place from her childhood. Outside the chaos of home, she and her brother escaped to a nearby park (see Photograph 29):

It’s really cool, very historic. It was just me and [my brother] on our own, everyday of my summer. We would pack the lunch, we would be drop off around ten or eleven in the morning ... I would spend more time walking the trails and just reflecting ... We would swim at the beach, we would eat lunch, we would walk the trails, there’s plenty to do. I would sit and just be there ... I don’t know what that says about me, but this is what my summers entailed (Maria 2009).

Photograph 29: Sanctuary From Home: Shubie Park, Dartmouth (Maria 2009)



When she was sixteen, her home situation was growing increasingly toxic. She moved into the home of a friend and this ‘adopted’ family provided a more secure and comfortable homespace for Maria. So much so, that when the family moved to Ontario Maria went with them. From age 16-19, she lived in their home and then with her ‘adopted’ brother Matt as roommates in a rented apartment in a small town in Ontario until she and Matt returned to Halifax, a place they both considered ‘home’.

Back in Halifax, Matt and Maria continued the spiritual journey that had brought them together as friends in the first place. They encouraged each other and shared the journey by reading together and having discussions in cafes and libraries. Their interest turned to Islam:

We definitely were learning together ... we would talk about Islam for hours. What we thought was right, what we thought was wrong ... We got really deep as to does this phrase, it could mean this way, it could mean that way, it could mean this way (Maria 2009).

Her photograph of ballet shoes tied to the door latch of her old ballet studio represents this period of healing past wounds and regaining control (see Photograph 30):

Photograph 30: Hung Up Ballet Shoes at the Dance Studio (Maria 2009)



It was a great time in my life ... I started off, of course, paying for my classes and then I ended up without a job ... [the dance instructor] let me come and spend as much time there as I wanted, which helped because I was still depressed and still in therapy at the time. Still going through fixing myself so I could be a happy functioning adult that I am now [laughs] ... Spending five and six hours a day in a studio working on your body, and gaining control over something in your life as

opposed to having control of nothing in your life is very empowering. And it taught me a love of being able to feel that (Maria 2009).

With dance as therapeutic support, she began to take classes in a recreation and fitness college program. She also converted to Islam and began wearing the hijab. Maria felt comfortable and in control, perhaps for the first time in her life. However, reactions to this expression of her Islamic identity unsettled her sense of comfort and belonging (see Photograph 31):

Photograph 31: Challenges of the Hijab (Maria 2009)



I just remember how happy I was then. But when I started becoming Muslim and the first time I went to go and try putting on the headscarf ... [the dance instructor] didn't react too well ... She made a few comments ... she stopped calling me, she stopped returning my [calls] ... that made it hard ... part of why I eventually took it off. Between her and my teacher and the students in the [college] class that I was in. So all this ... got me, got to me. I wasn't strong yet (Maria 2009).

It has more to do with inside you than it does with anything out there. Actually the first time I actually went out with it was a good experience because even non-Muslim people were treating me respectfully and holding doors for me and, 'oh, this is nice!' – headscarf as universal signal for respect – that's cool! But, I don't know. I wasn't ready for it ... [But] I decided to start wearing it just before I had started the classes ... And I didn't feel very welcomed ... until I did take it off (Maria 2009).

Maria's initial experiences wearing the headscarf outside the home were positive and as she suggests, she interpreted reactions as signs of respect. However, inside her dance studio and

classrooms she felt differently. This experience, if temporarily, also shaped her ideas about whether or not she could succeed in her field as a headscarfed woman:

The reason I was able to put it back on was because I had seen this woman in the US who runs and owns her own dance company and she has the headscarf. She was my kind of ‘you can do it’ person (Maria 2009).

This woman provided a model for success as a ‘hijabi’ woman: a person whom Maria does not know, became an important motivator for her to finish school and begin her career and seek success while wearing the headscarf.

Much of Maria’s ‘before and after discourse’ centres on her choice to wear the headscarf and how that has impacted on everyday life. She accepted Islam in 2006 but only made the decision to wear the headscarf permanently in 2008. Feeling more connected to her Muslim identity and to the Muslim community had a lot to do with her decision wear the hijab again:

I was volunteering [at] Multicultural Festival [2008] ... people were being nice ... I’m like, this is really awesome I’m feeling really good with Muslim identity and being Muslim and I’m answering questions and this is cool and I was really enjoying being part of the community, being a help in the community ... For months I had been constantly researching the different debates for and against the headscarf ... And I don’t know, the next day I just woke up with this desire to wear it. And I haven’t gone back yet. Funny enough, the day that I had woke up with the desire to wear it was the day I had to go to a conference ... my boss and her boss saw me for the first time in my headscarf at the conference [laughs] It was really interesting. I had a good time though. I didn’t feel shy or anything at all. I was quite happy to be the only head-scarfed woman there, I felt like I was making a statement (Maria 2009).

Maria’s improvisation with the headscarf reflects her own journey to Islam and a history of improvising with different faiths:

I found tutorials on-line and I played with it [laughs] ... [tutorials on] how to tie and wrap and different styles ... the first ones I ever tried on I just made it up as I went along. It turns out I was pretty close [laughs]. I still make it up as I go along (Maria 2009).

Now that she is Muslim, the headscarf more than simply reflects her adherence to Islam. Her creative styles of wearing the hijab are performances of multiple social and cultural aspects of identity. She links wearing the hijab to opportunities to be an “ambassador” for Muslims answering questions from interested non-Muslims. It has also had some negative effect on her social landscape:

A lot of my guy friends don't hang around me anymore ... Since I've become Muslim and since I've covered ... suddenly they disappeared. They don't write on my facebook, they don't email me, they don't message me. We don't hang out, we don't have movie nights, we don't have anime nights ... the way that some of my old male friends interact with me now is different ... it makes me question what their friendship motives were before (Maria 2009).

She alludes to sexual tension that sometimes occupies gendered relations between male and female friends suggesting that some of her male friends may have been interested in more than a friendship and that her Muslim identity marks her as no longer available in a sense. On a more positive side, she says, wearing the headscarf also means that unwanted attention from men in public has disappeared: “ I don't have to be afraid of men's glares and men hitting on me and men being disrespectful ... it's definitely affected my lifestyle” (Maria 2009).

Part III: Creating Home: Recent Arrivals to Halifax

Thus far, I have examined the mappings of different dimensions of belonging that emerge for those participants for whom Halifax has been home for all or much of their life. In this last section I turn to the narratives and photographs of participants for whom Halifax is a relatively new 'home'. A variety of reasons characterize why these Muslims are in Halifax, including work and educational opportunities as well as having migrated with family. I focus on the memories and experiences of arriving and 'settling in' as part of discussions of feeling belonging in Halifax and how living in this new city may have changed their journeys in faith. In each case, they reveal the multiple and diverse experiences and expressions of being Muslim in Halifax.

Abdullah

Abdullah is a 20 year-old Canadian-Muslim born in Bombay, India. When he was four years old, his family moved to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia where they lived until they moved to Halifax in 2004 when he was fourteen. He has lived in Halifax for six years and is now attending university. Importantly, his journey highlights the way that faith practice and identity changes in a new city.

Abdullah's family moved to a diverse Halifax suburb where he was able to imagine belonging almost before it began to develop through experiences and over time. In his new home, he found familiarity among neighbours:

I found a lot of friends here ... as soon as we moved here we had neighbours who were from Pakistan, many Arab friends, and just people you could relate to (Abdullah 2010).

Perhaps it was this initial sense of welcoming and belonging that continues to shape his own perceptions of living in Halifax:

I find Halifax is very, very open, very, very, accepting for different people ... I haven't found, you know, open racism or something towards me. I didn't feel uncomfortable in the city ... I didn't personally experience anything. I find Halifax, the people are very nice and you know, much more better probably than USA. Much more open to other people (Abdullah 2010).

He talks about Halifax as open and diverse. Having had no personal experiences of prejudice and racism himself, he only mentions these issues through the stories of others. Finally, he orients his mapping of Halifax as diverse and open against his perception of a less tolerant United States.

Abdullah's journey to Halifax is accompanied by a journey through which he also finds a new home in his faith. Born into a Muslim family, and growing up in Saudi Arabia, he says that his faith was not at the forefront of everyday life before moving to Halifax:

I used to watch TV everything else that teenagers do in Saudi Arabia but over here I started moving away from that more ... In Saudi Arabia, I took my religion for granted ... I didn't know much about it ... I just learned the very basics and just what my parents taught me. And when I came over here I saw the diversity and all the different people from all the different backgrounds and ... I just started looking into Islam and learning more about Islam and attending more gatherings and lectures ... I found that I'd like to be more like the prophet, peace be upon him, and closer in terms of action and dress and everything so, I thought that I should start wearing the thobe and everything (Abdullah 2010).

The inspiration to renew his faith came from Canadian converts and other Muslims he met at school:

Many of the people who came from the Muslim countries who didn't have a strong base in the religion, they kind of shifted more towards the Western culture ... [but] I used to have conversations with some of my practicing Muslim friends about Islam and it increased my faith a little bit, hamdullallah (Abdullah 2010).

I found Canadian Muslims (converts) are much more stronger ... much more practicing, more devoted to the religion ... they're not just born into their parent's religion and follow whatever the parents tell them, they actually did the research and they left their whole lifestyle. So I think that's why it's understandable that they're more practicing and they're more devoted. I got a lot of inspiration from that to research my own religion more (Abdullah 2010).

As with converts, his journey also began with research and reading, lectures on line and in town, and adapting to the everyday practice of being Muslim. In an ‘untaken photograph’, he represents his increasing faith through clothing:

I didn’t wear this clothing [he is talking about his thobe and kufi] before I moved to Canada. I just ... thought this dress is more respectable and more modest ... Before I just used to wear shirts and pants, but you know, a couple of years ago, I decided that I’d like to start wearing these (Abdullah 2010).

Abdullah recently attended a ‘Reviving the Islamic Spirit’ event held in Montreal that furthered his commitment to the everyday practice of Islam. He reflects on the significance of being Muslim and deriving a sense of belonging among other Muslims gathered at the conference:

I found so many Muslims from all over different places. You know, Canadian Muslims, Arab Muslims, all kind of people from everywhere, and the different scholars, and I just understood my religion better ... I just kind of thought about my purpose in life ... I found that I need to strengthen my relationship with god (Abdullah 2010).

Sara and Jane

Although I interviewed Sara and Jane at different times and during different research visits, I bring their narratives together here because they share a common journey to Halifax while also demonstrating the ways in which they individually experience that journey in ways that begin to shape their connections both to the city and to their faith differently. Sara and Jane are 21-year-old Canadian Muslim twins born and raised in Kerala, India until at age five their family moved to Saudi Arabia for two years. Their family moved to the United States until they were thirteen when they moved again to New Brunswick where they both completed high school before moving to Halifax for university. They have both lived in Halifax for three years while attending university and their parents have since returned to the United States. From age seven to thirteen, Sara and Jane lived in the United States, an experience that strongly influences the ways in which each of them have developed a sense of belonging in Canada.

Their journey to Halifax included a number of moves, multiple countries, different cities, and a number of schools. For the first time in Jane’s life, mobility was replaced by a more permanent homespace in Moncton where she was able to develop and maintain friendships and attend and graduate from one school:

I lived in about four or five different countries when I was growing up. And I went to a different school every year until I think grade nine ... [laughs] ... so I never had a place ... Moncton was the first place that I could call home, because we didn't have a lot of permanence growing up in our life ... When I first moved here, I remember the car drive from the airport ... I thought I would hate it and then in the end it ended up being one of the most favourite places I have ever lived in ... My parents lived there until my second year of university ... it was the first place that I actually called home. I felt comfortable there, I felt accepted there. And then they moved to Illinois about two years ago. But whenever I go home [now], it doesn't feel like home to me (Jane 2010).

Living in the United States had provided the framework for the ways in which Jane experienced arriving, settling in, and forming new social relations in Moncton:

Especially in the States it was really hard to make friends right away. But when we moved here, I found that people are very accepting ... there's a bigger difference ... I don't know how to explain it, they were much more welcoming (Jane 2010).

In one of the more powerful moments that grounded Jane's experience in Moncton and her connection to it, and Canada, as home, she reveals the significance of feeling wanted and welcomed:

I remember when my sister and I became citizens [laughs] ... it was broadcast on CBC. And we didn't know about it ... I was 17, grade 12 ... like we're obviously embarrassed [laughs], right? And our teachers saw it and we didn't ... We had Friday assemblies, so we're at the assembly, I think we had about two thousand students in the auditorium, and the vice principal was like, can Jane and Sara please come down. And my sister and I were like, what's going on? [laughs]. So we went down and they were like, these two girls just became citizens [laughs]. And then they made us sing O Canada in front of everybody [laughs], but the whole school was singing with us. But, as much as it was embarrassing at the same time it was, it was really good to see how accepted you were, and how they were celebrating getting new people. Whereas in the States ... I had a friend who went there when he was two. He became an American citizen when he was 20. Right? And it was just so much struggle where here like you feel like, you feel like you're wanted here (Jane 2010).

The event and the memories of acceptance, recognition and celebration cemented her connection both to the city and as a Canadian.

Even though Jane is happy now, moving to Halifax was not a straightforward decision. She wanted to go to Ontario or Quebec for university; she liked Moncton but not necessarily the

Maritimes. Before making any decision, Jane and Sara took a trip to Halifax that would change her perception:

I just saw the diversity and everything and you can't see that kind of diversity in Moncton ... and it wasn't just the Muslim or the Arab, it was the diversity compared to Moncton ... It was more bustling and everything. But now that I've been here for a while, I think I've gotten kind of immune to it ... Halifax is a little sleepy now [laughs] but back then, I thought it was really good (Jane 2010).

Jane's experience in Moncton continues to frame her views of everyday life in Halifax:

There's a large Muslim population there at UDM, University of Moncton ... a lot of Algerians, Libyans, , Moroccans, Tunisians ... Other than that, there's probably about ten of us that are like in high school. [So] not as big as in Halifax. But I found it was more close-knit because there was not as many people. In Halifax, there are a lot of people but not everyone knows each other (Jane 2010).

Without a home in Moncton to which she can return, Jane focuses on creating a sense of home in Halifax. When she and her sister moved out of residence and into an apartment together after their first year at university, Jane took great care in constructing a comforting home space:

I searched for months and months and months to furnish my apartment ... that's my home, and I need to feel comfortable ... I need it to feel cozy otherwise I don't feel like I'm going home, I feel like it's transient ... I think it's probably from moving around so much. I needed to feel like I'm going to be here permanently (Jane 2010).

In one of her photographs, she connects her personal homespace to a feeling of belonging in Halifax:

I love my view, that's obviously what I see out of my apartment every morning ... this symbolizes all of Halifax because it isn't just once place that I feel safe in ... it's the whole place, the whole city, I love the whole city. So that's why I took it. And the harbour, I love going to the harbour. That was actually one of the first places that I went to when I came to Halifax (Jane 2010).

For both sisters, there has also been a journey of faith that coincided with their move to Halifax.

While Sara, as we will see, embraced Islam and donned the hijab as part of the transition to university life, Jane's faith remains less structured:

When I was younger I would try and pray and then I went through the longest time without ever praying ... In the beginning of university ... I think part of it kind of scared me. I wasn't sure because I didn't really understand it and I just thought it was a lot of commitment and I was like I don't have that much time,

things like that. But once I actually started doing it I found I felt more well-balanced and grounded. Now I'm happy with it and sometimes I'll miss a prayer here and there, but I don't make myself feel too too guilty [laughs] (Jane 2010).

An important part of Jane's journey to Islam was negotiating her own feelings towards other Muslims, women who wear the hijab in particular. New in Halifax, and eager to meet people, she attended a social function for Muslims arranged by the Muslim Student Association and held at the multifaith centre on campus:

I think it was more in my head than anything else, I just felt not accepted [laughs]. I was sitting there, and I was like, oh, it's probably because I don't wear the hijab or whatever. So I ended up never going back [laughs] until my third year. For almost two years I never was involved in anything MSA (Jane 2010).

I think another reason why I probably felt that way is growing up in Moncton I never had a hijabi friend ever in my life [laughs] (Jane 2010).

Her preconceptions of women who veil constituted an internal exclusion. She felt excluded by what she perceived to be religious Muslims who looked down on her for not being Muslim enough. In Jane's experience there were no hijabi women in everyday life and so her perceptions would have been contoured by a myriad of sources – the media included. Meeting another practicing but not covered Muslim girl on campus began to challenge her assumptions about what it meant to be a Muslim woman:

She's like me. She doesn't wear the hijab or anything but she tries to pray most of the time and she's kind and things like that, right? ... So I saw her and I was like 'hey, she's Muslim, and she's doing like, whatever, you know, you should too, and she's happy and she's normal' (Jane 2010).

Jane perceived the hijab as a kind of wall that kept her from engaging with many Muslim women:

I wasn't sure if I could be friends with them because I wasn't sure if they would accept me because I didn't wear the hijab. That was more of it than me accepting them. Because I really respected it (Jane 2010).

When Sara decided to practice Islam more faithfully, the issues of wearing hijab and practicing Islam became more personal:

It was kind of hard for me. My sister's the only one in my family that wears the hijab ... when she first went into it, she was kind of serious, and I think she was trying to really find herself. So, I kind of felt like I lost a part of my sister because

she kind of became introverted for a while ... once she figured out who she was, then she was herself again. But I think initially it was a little uncomfortable (Jane 2010).

Jane's preconceived notions of Muslim women had influenced her relationship to Islam and ability to identify as a Muslim woman. As she continued to meet new Muslim friends, the limits of her assumptions were challenged:

I started meeting some of my sister's friends and a lot of them wore the hijab but once you actually get to know them, they're normal girls ... they're just normal, like fun girls, and they're actually one of the most active and outgoing people that I've ever met ... and so I started hanging out with them (Jane 2010).

It was very slow process, I didn't - 'bang' - prayers five times a day. I would pray with them once in a while. They would study, they'd go out, they'd play, they'd go to restaurants and things like that. But at the same time whenever they'd go pray, it's like, they won't miss a prayer, they'll do all those things. But they have their life too. And I saw their balance and I was like okay, maybe I could try this. And once I started doing it, it didn't become too too hard (Jane 2010).

Now that her parents have returned to the United States, and her sister is applying for graduate school there, Jane draws strongly from the comparison between living in Canada and the United States. As a Muslim, it has become an important framework through which she feels 'culturally' at home in Canada:

Sometimes when we go to Indian parties and things like that, we wear our Indian clothes. I remember being extremely embarrassed [when in the United States] ... Just being extremely uncomfortable doing just that thirty-second thing from the car to the building or something like that. Where here [in Canada], I'm like, chill, I can do whatever I want. It feels like home and I feel like no one can question me because this is my country as much as it's theirs. And so I'm very hardcore Canadian [laughs] (Jane 2010).

She reveals part of a conversation she had with her sister in which her Muslimness surfaces as a key marker that distinguishes between living in Canada and the United States:

I asked my sister ... do you ever feel like you won't get accepted into medical school [in Canada] because you wear the hijab ... and her answer was no ... Like she feels completely comfortable. She's assuming she won't be discriminated [in Canada] because of that. But if you ask her the same question about the States, she's very uneasy ... Why would you want to live in a country where you don't have your fundamental human rights and where you're judged for something that really you should have a right to do (Jane 2010)?

Jane questions a much less accepting terrain for Muslims in the United States where true belonging means sacrificing some of your own beliefs and practices.

Sara picks up on her own journey at the time during which she began to practice Islam and self-identify as Muslim by wearing the hijab. Where Jane demonstrates a sense of belonging, particularly in Moncton, Sara reflects on her faith journey alongside the move to Halifax for university:

[As a child] I was kind of iffy religious ... my dad is not very religious. But my mom would teach us Muslim values and tell us to pray and things like that. And I'd pray on and off but then I guess it's when I started more delving into and researching by myself ... four years ago, if you met me I would have said, no, I'd never wear the hijab (Sara 2010).

I decided to wear it in grade 11 or 12 and I thought I'd take some time and really just make sure I do want to do this because no one else in my family does ... my dad wasn't too excited about the idea ... I thought that when I was away from home, where I'm more independent, it might be a little bit easier on me. And also in a university environment where there are other Muslims that might make it little bit easier for me ... I only started wearing the hijab a week before I came to university ... Halifax was a big important part of shaping that ... helping me with that process (Sara 2010).

Sara spoke to friends and explored the notion of modesty, the veil and its importance to Islam and to Muslim women through online research. Social media facilitated her ability to ask questions of other women who wear the hijab:

When Facebook and all these things started popping up ... like you'd start talking about tennis or sports or something you're interested in, and then, just like out of curiosity I would ask them [about Islam and the hijab] ... the answers they provided me with I guess just sparked that initial interest (Sara 2010).

However, one of the most powerful experiences shaping her decision to wear the hijab came out of a personal encounter with a woman she met at the 'Reviving the Spirit' Islamic conference in Montreal:

I met a really great friend there ... I guess I connected with her. It was more of finding that I don't have to change as a person [if I chose to veil] ... She said that 'the core of who you are doesn't change, it's just a matter of preserving your dignity' ... That really appeals to me. Like this is how women are supposed to be respected. You take women for who they are, for their personalities and less for how they are physically ... That really appeals to me ... I've always been someone who wants to be taken seriously (Sara 2010).

It was in Montreal, after meeting this new friend, that Sara tried the hijab for a day:

Because Montreal has a huge Muslim population I didn't feel strange at all ... when I was walking back into the building I ran into my sister ... I don't know what she was thinking, I just still remember that look on her face, but I guess when she realized that this is something that I wanted to make a big, honest commitment to, then she just kind of took it (Sara 2010).

Returning home to Moncton after her trip to Montreal, she decided that wearing the hijab was something she wanted to do as part of her journey to becoming a practicing Muslim. Knowing that she was soon moving to Halifax, a spatial shift that offered the opportunity to introduce her new identity, she again tested the waters by wearing it in Moncton:

People aren't used to that at all in Moncton, [in] Halifax there's a bigger Muslim population. so I did get a little bit of, you know, stares at the mall. And I went to high school with a lot of those people ... some of them were cool and then some of them sort of, you know, not rude at all, but just a little shocked or surprised on their faces because, you know, it's not something they'd expect from me (Sara 2010).

Ultimately, wearing the hijab provides a frame for her Muslim identity but also for personal growth:

I used to be quite shy, just a studious person ... and wouldn't really put myself out there, but now I think this has lended me more confidence in some way ... I feel like I am taken for my ideas and for what I stand for ... In Moncton I did have a lot of friends, I felt completely comfortable in the environment ... I was a good student and I liked to play sports ... but I never took initiatives to start things. I never took initiative to actually pursue things that I wanted ... I don't know if [wearing hijab] has anything to with it but either way (Sara 2010).

At the end of the day, she says, wearing the hijab has not changed who she is but rather that she gives it meaning: "It's just a piece of cloth on my head, it doesn't really define me, I give definition to it" (Sara 2010).

Sara moved to Halifax just after being in Montreal and deciding to wear the hijab as part of everyday Islamic practice. Her initial impressions of Halifax were muted but her experience at university has been positive:

There was not a lot of thought put into coming here ... when I first got here, I remember being a little bit depressed, you know, like I just come from Montreal, it's a bigger city and you kind of expect that [in Halifax] ... so I was a little bit disappointed ... Given a choice now, I would definitely have come to Dal (Sara 2010).

More than any other place in Halifax, the university provides the context in which Sara continues to explore her Islamic identity among other Muslims (see Photograph 32):

For me it's the centre of the university so it kind of represents all of those emotions for me when I was here ... I've met a lot of wonderful people who I think kind of help me reinforce what my identity is (Sara 2010).

This photograph represents a very social space, a place to meet and hang out with friends, to have some coffee and relax, to study and work. However, it is also a memory picture representative of her decision to wear the hijab once she left home. Despite feelings of belonging, particularly at the university and among the Muslim community there, she does not really call Halifax home:

I mostly interact with the university crowd who are open, more liberal ... I don't really interact with [the Halifax Muslim community] very much (Sara 2010).

I would prefer to get out of here [laughs] ... I really want to get out of here ... I've always had this thing for bigger cities I guess because I did grow up in New York, Louisiana. I like the diversity of it ... there is so many more things to do. I like the excitement around that. Halifax doesn't quite do that for me. I don't find it as multicultural enough for me ... it's a great environment to be Muslim. There are mosques and there are resources but I want the cultural gap to be filled too you know, I want, more Indians and more Pakistanis ... (Sara 2010).

Photograph 32: On the Centre of My Universe (Sara 2010)



In part then, wearing the hijab is way to anchor identity; in Halifax, she now feels at home in her faith and identity as expressed through practice, including the hijab:

I do think that, okay, this person might be looking at me weird because I am wearing the hijab, but it doesn't really bother me at all ... I am very comfortable with myself and if you have a problem with that, that's your problem [laughs] ... it's not something that sticks with me (Sara 2010).

Over the course of her life, she has lived in India, the United States, and Canada and while she identifies strongly as Canadian she maintains attachments to each of these places:

I do feel strongly about my Indian culture ... and the same with America and Canada. More than anything else I would consider myself a Canadian by nationality, but beyond that, because of all of this movement I think it's hard for me to be at one point: this is who I am. So that kind of influenced it, but I think it has a deeper level, like a spiritual level to it as well. And it's my way of connecting with God (Sara 2010).

By wearing the hijab and foregrounding her faith, she maps other aspects of identity onto her Muslim one. She also notes that wearing the hijab anchors her to God and strengthens her relationship to her Islam.

In Sara's photographs and interviews, she reveals less about her journey to Halifax and more about her journey to becoming a practicing Muslim. One of Sara's photographs was taken during a camping trip she took with several other Muslim girls, some of whom also took part in this project. While checking in to their campsite, she took a photograph of a video game in the lobby (see Photograph 33):

I've had this intense love for video games for a long time. And I grew up playing a lot of them ... it was just a lot of fun and it just reminded me of the stuff I used to do when I was a kid ... I was obsessed with it, I played it all the time ... you just had to play until you get to the last level. Come right after school. It kind of relates with, I was a huge fan of Yugioh growing up ... It's a TV show with those cards ... google that, it's pretty famous, I can't believe you've never heard of it (Sara 2010).

She reminds us that everyday life was as ordinary as any other kid growing up in Canada. She engaged in everyday youth culture, such as playing video games, and was consumed by other typical pop cultural crazes in which other kids were interested. It is a reflection on her identity as more than a hijab-wearing Muslim but also as just another young Canadian with memories of growing up that are deeply entrenched in the ordinary.

Photograph 33: On Being a Kid in Canada (Sara 2010)



Harrie Podder

Harrie Podder was born in Karachi, Pakistan and lived there until age eighteen when her parents sent both her and her sister ahead to Halifax to attend university and then, a year later, followed suit. She does not discuss much about her initial experiences of adjustment in Halifax. However, she does discuss her changing relationship with and practice of Islam in recent years. Like Abdullah, Harrie Podder began to grow into her faith only after moving to Halifax and meeting other Muslim women to which she could relate:

I never prayed when I was in Pakistan ... But I think that's the one thing that made me feel like I belonged here ... I just became more religious. I can't point to one thing. But one of them was just realizing that if I call myself Muslim maybe I should go read the Qur'an just to see what it says [Sara] gave me the copy of the translation of the Qur'an ... I owe that to her (Harrie Podder 2010).

Practicing Islam, participating in faith-based activities and events, and meeting other Muslims through faith practice all became important ways that she feels a sense of belonging.

While Sara, and many of her Muslim friends wear the hijab as an expression of faith and identity Harrie Podder has chosen not to:

It's not something I'm against, but I just don't think I can do it. I know why they wear the hijab ... I know that I should but I just don't want to [laughs] ... My experiences would be different if I wore the veil because my friends have relayed stories ... people I guess are less likely to be rude to me then to someone who wears the veil ... some people are inclined to think that a person who wears the

veil is necessarily oppressed and she was forced to wear the veil (Harrie Podder 2010).

She recognizes the significance of the hijab, both to Muslims and others for whom it signifies a range of meanings. However it is unclear from our interview whether their experiences have an impact on her decision not to wear the headscarf.

Lulwa

Lulwa is a 21 year-old Canadian-Muslim who was born in Saudi Arabia. Relocating at age six with her family, she spent most of her life in Vancouver, and only recently relocated to Halifax. Too young to have memories of, or attachments to, Saudi Arabia when she moved, she called Vancouver home until she graduated from high school: “I hardly remember anything [of Saudi Arabia] ... all of my childhood memories are in Vancouver, yeah, all my memories are there” (Lulwa 2010). After she completed high school, she and her family moved to Singapore for two years where she worked as an English language tutor. Her older brother was the first to make the move to Halifax; both Lulwa and her sister and then their parents soon followed. Now the whole family is together again as she and her siblings finish university.

Lulwa’s experience growing up in Vancouver provides the lens through which she views life in Halifax. Specifically, the move to a small suburb locally known as ‘Little Arabia’ was in stark contrast to growing up largely among non-Muslims:

[In Vancouver] my family lived in a neighbourhood where there were no Muslims ... I actually didn’t come into contact with Muslims per se, like friends, until I was in high school. And even then, I didn’t go to high school with them, I just saw them maybe over the weekend once in like two months. [In Bedford] it was not comfortable at all. I hated it ... I was not used to a lot of Muslims and a lot of Arabs in one small place. That totally shocked me. Yeah, my first time ever living with so many Muslims [laughs] (Lulwa 2010).

Despite a larger and more visible Muslim population in Halifax she says her Muslim identity was singled out in ways that she did not experience in Vancouver:

It’s bizarre, you see them everywhere here ... It’s just really, really different. Good different, but different ... But then, they see you wearing the scarf and they automatically assume first of all, you speak no English. Two, you’re some rich Arab coming just for school and you know nothing about the Canadian way of life. Like, it kind of irritates me [laughs] but you can’t really blame them because all the Arab students here and stuff ... in Vancouver I’ve never, not once, been asked where are you from. Here? All the time. All the time. And I’m used to

saying Vancouver because that's all I know. And they're like, no, no, no, where are you really [emphasis] from? And it's so weird to me ... it's not, you know, you sound different, it's you look different. You can't be Canadian 100%, you know? It just a little bit hard to get to used to (Lulwa 2010).

This excerpt highlights a few interesting points about the meaning of home. For Lulwa, home was not synonymous with Muslim community or based on the proximity of an extended Arab family. In part, she notes that finding other Muslims in Halifax is easier because it is a much smaller city. The Muslim population stands out more and from her experience this is accompanied by some assumptions. Several stereotypes about Muslims, and Muslim women in particular, emerge including the notion of perpetual immigrant or forever foreigner; that you do not speak English; that you are ignorant of everyday Canadian life. In Halifax, she is assumed to be a non-English speaking Arab immigrant international student attending university; in other words, decidedly not-at-home. Interestingly, she never felt these things living in Vancouver. As she suggests, it may have to do with the prevalence of international students attending university in Halifax. Lulwa picks up on two markers of difference that reveal that one is not 'local'. But because she was raised in Vancouver and therefore speaks English fluently and without accent, it was her appearance that marked her as 'outsider' in Halifax.

Finally, Lulwa explains some of these differences between the two cities in terms of the geographies of Muslims living in them:

Eighty percent of the Muslims, at least students, in Halifax aren't Canadian. So I think Halifax got used to people just coming for school ... But in Vancouver, there's no such thing as student Muslims. You either live there with your family and you've been there for a while or you're just not there. [And] Vancouver is bigger ... the Muslim population is spread out. So it's not like they're all in one space where people are used to seeing a lot of Muslims ... I think that's the difference (Lulwa 2010).

Lulwa lives with her family while she attends university but she sees Halifax as home only for the time being. I ask her if Halifax is beginning to feel like home:

Oh, hell no [laughs]. It feels like I'm here temporary ... when anybody asks what are you doing here? I say I'm just here for school. I don't know where I'm going to go after [laughs] but I know I'm not going to stay here [laughs]. It just doesn't feel like home. It doesn't feel right ... I don't know. I guess it's just a feeling, you either connect with a place or you don't. I honestly don't ... I want to leave here. Really, really badly. And my parents don't [laughs]. So I have to find a way to like [tell them] [laughs] (Lulwa 2010).

Her connections are through the university and through social relationships but not in ways that have resulted in feelings of belonging to a local community or to Halifax as home:

If you live here and you're just here for school, your life revolves around school ... there's nothing else to take pictures of that's not something to do with school ... I don't have any attachment to the campus, I have attachment to the people I met here ... most of my friends are Muslim ... It's not university itself, it's the people who I see when I come to university, you know? ... I have no community except for at school (Lulwa 2010).

Yet, it is precisely the community of Muslims, absent in Vancouver but integral to everyday life now that makes Halifax a kind of 'homespace':

If I talk to [another Muslim friend] about religion it doesn't matter where they're from, we'll always help each other, comfort each other in that sense. So that's what I really love about Halifax. That I actually found Muslim friends that understand everything that you go through religiously ... I think that's the better aspect of Halifax ... if I had this kind of connection with these kinds of Muslims, amazing people here, when I was growing up, it would have been amazing, and I had an awesome childhood but I've always kind of felt a little bit lost (Lulwa 2010).

Despite feeling disconnected from the community and the city in which she lives, and her desire to leave Halifax once she graduates, it is home at least temporarily. Lulwa's photograph of Bismallah prayer beads hanging in her home, and that have hung in every home in which they have lived, reminds her of this homey intimate space that also links her to a broader Muslim community (see Photograph 34):

I've been looking at this ever since I can remember ... it's always been on our walls ... it's actually comforting. Every time I look at, I feel, okay, this is actually my home [laughs], this is my house [laughs]. My parents are here it just makes me feel more comfortable and above all just reminds us that we're all Muslims (Lulwa 2010).

Islam has always been an important aspect of her identity. Though her mother wears hijab there was no expectation that she would wear it too. Rather, at age twelve, she says she simply decided to put on a headscarf:

We were the only Muslims on our block, so everyone was so interested in, oh, you know, my mom's all covered up and stuff, and yet she's still friendly, she still speaks English, you know, it was really weird. And I saw that growing up. And then one day I was like, I wonder what it would feel like to go out with the scarf.

So on the weekend, it was summer grade six, I decided to go to the mall with my mom and I put on the scarf. And it wasn't different (Lulwa 2010).

She wore it on and off over the summer but once school came, and a more regularized daily schedule, she felt she needed to make a decision about whether she would or would not continue to wear the headscarf. The reaction and response from her 12 and 13 year old classmates was similarly curious but short-lived until the normalcy of school and play took over:

I don't remember noticing a difference, but I liked it ... I didn't wear it properly per ... I still wore shorts, I still wore t-shirts, you know, I just put on the headscarf. And, I did this throughout the summer ... and then September came and I decided to go to school with it ... My friends, at first, they were like whoa, what's this? But, didn't matter, I was still me. I was actually still really mischievous [laughs]. So honestly no difference for me (Lulwa 2010).

Since then, it has been integrated into daily life and has become an important aspect of her practice of Islam and she has never considered taking it off.

Photograph 34: On Marking Home (Lulwa 2010)



Now older and living in Halifax, she reflects back on wearing the headscarf in Vancouver and in her high school years as a positive experience:

Honestly, honestly, it made me a better person ... I didn't actually sit down and think hmm, now I'm going to be a better ... it just happens. People start to respect you. Way more ... I'm talking about non-Muslim people respect you more ... people treat you differently but not worse. Sometimes they do, like I've been called a terrorist more than one time ... I almost got run over by a car while being

called terrorist ... but I think the benefits out weigh [that]. I just think that it makes me a better person and it actually frees you in a way, it's empowering because you have the choice to wear it or not to wear it ... just the fact that I chose that I want to live my life this way, I think it gives me more power (Lulwa 2010).

For Lulwa any negative attention brought on by wearing the headscarf is far outweighed by the everyday benefits of choosing to veil.

I think to wear the scarf it has to be your personal choice otherwise there's no point in it ... the most important thing is that it's not forced ... [It] bothers me that Muslim women are oppressed, that's why they have to cover up. No. They are not oppressed at all ... it's our choice. You know, I'm still president [of a student association], I still play sports. You know, I still go to school. I'm still travelling. I still have fun. But, I do it at my own time, at my own pace, the way I'm comfortable. I go to beaches, yeah I don't wear bikinis because that doesn't make me comfortable but it doesn't mean that I'm oppressed. I still enjoy the sun ... So I think that, that's the beauty of wearing the hijab, is even without talking, you can still impact others. Do you know what I mean? And people just look at you, you know, this is the way you dress, you don't do certain things, you're still happy (Lulwa 2010).

DJ Albatross

DJ Albatross was born and raised in Pakistan until the age of nine when he and his family moved to Toronto. When he was sixteen years old he lived in Halifax and attended high school for a semester prior to a move to Baddeck, Nova Scotia. He lived there with his parents and family and completed high school. When it came time for university he and his brother headed off to Halifax and lived in residence. His brother came first and then two years later DJ followed.

He undertook the journey to Islam on his own becoming closer to his faith by reading books and researching on the Internet:

[It] was something totally personal ... Most of my religious knowledge I found was due to my own research that I did as well as the Internet. That wasn't really something that I turned to my family for. It's kind of been my separate independent studying (DJ Albatross 2009).

DJ Albatross lived in residence when he first moved to Halifax for university and experienced some difficulties settling and negotiating social life and his faith:

Very often I was asked, you know, come to this club or come drink with us. I couldn't avoid it ... I never made excuses, I told them 'listen, this is something which is not really encouraged in my way of life and I don't do that kind of thing. And I'm sorry about that but if you want to do something else then maybe'. I had to just respectfully refuse. At times, you do feel loneliness. You do feel alienation,

because you do feel like you're quite different ... You feel like, you don't really have that sense of belonging with them. And you sometimes feel that you're a strange person because you don't do these things that everybody else is doing. But also, when you actually do meet fellow Muslims or you do meet other people who are like you, you get refreshed, restrengthened (DJ Albatross 2009).

But I think, [laughs], and this may sound funny, but I found that the Internet was helpful ... It really helped me ... knowing that other people are facing these obstacles ... kind of gave me comfort and kind of gave me the will to keep going ... coping with the loneliness and the isolation (DJ Albatross 2009).

For DJ Albatross, connecting with others through volunteering and socializing in the Muslim Student Association is an important dimension of belonging in terms of both Halifax and his faith:

The MSA had a monumental role helping me network with people ... I prefer not to socialize by drinking alcohol or by going to clubs. I know some Muslims that do, but personally I like to socialize in alternative ways ... get together or play sports or talk with my friends. What the MSA really helped with, is helping me find a good contact base, people I can go to if I want to really do something constructive ... [And] I wanted to help out my community so I was attracted to the things the MSA was doing. I feel a sense of belonging with them (DJ Albatross 2009).

The Friday prayer organized by the MSA is a highly spiritual practice that helps renew and ground his faith every week and helps to ground his identity:

I've been going to jummah there since first year so I felt that it was important. And kind of been a source of advice that I get every week. Like I look forward to it every week because I find that it's rejuvenating ... helps keep you grounded in your principles (DJ Albatross 2009).

Only near the end of our interview does the conversation turn to the notion of home:

I think it's just one of those things, you take it for granted things ... I guess I just didn't take a picture of my home because I spend a lot of my time on campus ... like not just for studying. I like to come here to go to the gym or participate in some kind of activities and stuff. So, I just didn't because over the past few years I have come to identify my home as a place of sleep [laughs] (DJ Albatross 2009).

He does not talk about Pakistan or Canada in terms of 'homeland' or of Halifax as home. Nor does he discuss more emotional and intimate feelings of belonging in relation to home or family. He lived with his brother for a couple of years at the beginning of university but their apartment was little more than, as he says, 'a place to sleep'.

The Bangladeshis: Tarek, Kuyasha, Sabir, And Trishana

The Bangladeshi students demonstrate very different experiences of being Muslim and feeling a sense of belonging in Halifax compared to the participants already discussed. As international students from Dhaka, and without the support of family nearby, settling in could be an isolating and lonely experience. However, they each found a sense of belonging among the Halifax Bangladeshi community despite feeling excluded from other cultural groups of Muslims. Tarek is a 27-year-old graduate student completing his Masters degree in engineering. Kuyasha is a 25 year-old Masters student also in engineering. He has been in Halifax for nearly two years. Sabir is a 21 year-old Bangladeshi who moved to Halifax two years prior to our interview to complete his undergraduate degree. He is the only Bangladeshi to discuss the way his faith changed after coming to Halifax. Tarek, Kuyasha and Sabir have all been in Halifax for about two years. Lastly, Trishana is a 26 year-old Bangladeshi student completing her Masters degree in International Development Studies. She has been living in Halifax for nine months.

Kuyasha and Tarek describe a difficult period of settling in to everyday life in Halifax. Before leaving Dhaka, they had known little about Halifax or Canada. When Kuyasha arrived, it was raining and cold and he says he felt that Halifax was a ‘village’ compared Dhaka. For Kuyasha, the most difficult part of adjusting to life in Halifax was ‘being away from family’ (Kuyasha 2010). For Tarek, it took some time before he really began to settle in and feel a sense of belonging in this new ‘homespace’:

In the first semester ... I didn't do anything ... so first four months I haven't been to anywhere except for the campus and my home ... it wasn't good at all. Everyday I was thinking about going back [to Bangladesh] ... cause it's very difficult cause you don't have any kind of conversation with anybody mostly cause I was new around here. So hardly any friends (Tarek 2009).

When I was back home ... I have like lots and lots of friends ... [and] in our part families are very important ... they're very close so we used to hang around a lot. But after coming here, it's like the first thing, you have to make friends, you have to go to a lot of places right? [You have] to be places for meeting people. But you don't have that opportunity that much because I'm busy with [school] work. So most of my friends are people of my community. There is a small Bangladeshi community here (Tarek 2009).

This sense of dislocation, the absence of friends and family, makes everyday life in Halifax challenging. On the other hand, Kuyasha is quick to note that Bangladeshi students in other places that do not have a Bangladeshi community have it tougher:

For the first few months I can't adjust with this country's culture ... I always feel I need to go back to my country ... [But] some of my friends, they're in maybe Germany, or Newfoundland. So they don't have something like this community, so they are feeling more, much more than me (Kuyasha 2010).

Kuyasha's sense of belonging is anchored in the Bangladeshi community of Halifax as it is for Tarek, Sabir and Trishana.

Tarek and Kuyasha represent home through memory pictures that represent a meaningful connection to Bangladesh. Kuyasha reveals the way that the waterfront in Halifax, reminiscent of Dhaka, has become an important social space for him and his friends (see Photograph 35 and Photograph 36):

Photograph 35: Of Friends and Home (Kuyasha 2010)



Photograph 36: Of Friends and Home (Kuyasha 2010)



There is a place at Harbourside, between two buildings ... and there is a dock there ... it reminds me the place that we meet with my friends [in Dhaka]. We started go sitting there (Kuyasha 2010).

More intimately, Tarek photograph of St. David's Church on Grafton Street in downtown Halifax was taken because it brings out memories of his childhood home in a small city outside of Dhaka (see Photograph 37):

I spent my childhood in Sylehet ... So in Bangladesh, like the Christian community is not that big you know, it's very small, but that part there are many Christians and there are churches. So, there was a church nearby my home when I was young ... it's a very old church. So that building looked like this one ... and in front of that building we used to play ... our playing field was in front of the church (Tarek 2009).

Photograph 37: St. David's Church, Halifax (Tarek 2009)



The historical architecture of Halifax is a site through which he recalls memories of childhood, home, and homeland. While not necessarily an important everyday place, this church is a marker that shifts him back to an emotional and nostalgic memory of home.

Sabir's experience was differentiated by his status as an undergraduate student who lived in residence for his first year. Because tuition is high for international students at the undergraduate level, he is one of the few Bangladeshi undergraduate students at Dalhousie. He was only 18 or 19 when he came to Halifax and his mother felt that having family in nearby New Brunswick would help him feel 'at home' while away:

I got an offer from Toronto also ... but there is no relative there. So my mom said like you have a relative there [in New Brunswick] ... because you are going to a new country, new people, so if you have a relative, maybe near to you, it would be good for you ... [I know there is a large Bangladeshi community in Toronto] but you know the country people from there and relatives are different thing. The country people and your relatives, it's a different thing (Sabir 2010).

In his decision-making process, he also cites differences between Canada and the United States since the events of September 11, 2001 as to why he preferred coming to Canada:

I don't choose USA because some people don't like [Muslims]. After the 9/11 there is some fallout for the Muslims. But in Canada? The Canadian people? There is no problem. That's the difference in Canada ... I have some cousins living in the USA ... they face some problems. But in Canada ... people are so friendly. They don't have that much problem. So that's why I choose Canada ... In Halifax, I never face any type of problems. Like I used to go to prayer, even in our religious day, I wear the Muslim dress, go anywhere, people are so friendly, never face any problem (Sabir 2010).

Unlike Tarek, Kuyasha and Trishana, the three graduate students who live off campus, Sabir lived in residence during his first year. Unable and unwilling to take part in many of the typical first year social contexts such as drinking, bars, clubs, and dancing, he spent much of his time alone and feeling 'homesick':

It was so tough ... In Bangladesh I never saw people drinking. I never saw alcohol ... and when I came here, in the residence, every weekend, people gather into one room ... they're drinking, they're enjoying, they're dancing. I can't do these things, so I'm just sitting in the corner, sometimes I just stay in my room alone ... I feel bored ... I'm doing nothing, lonely, you know? Like loneliness, that's the thing I felt ... There was no Bangladeshi's in the residence ... That year I think just me came from Bangladesh. The next year there's no one from Bangladesh, even this year there is no one from Bangladesh in the undergrad (Sabir 2010).

As a practicing Muslim, eating halal presented some difficulty within the confines of the pre-paid residence food plan:

[In residence] most of the items is pork item and I can't eat the pork ... The first two months was a tough thing ... sometimes like for one week I am just eating the salads. Or one week I'm just eating the cheese pizzas and nothing else. In the morning sometimes I leave my food, like I don't eat anything at dinner because I'm fed up with the food. It's better to don't eat anything (Sabir 2010).

Even after moving out of residence and in an apartment shared with roommates, he had difficulty maintaining a halal diet:

I had some problem ... because they used to cook pork ... you can't cook in the same pot you cook pork. So it's a tough thing. Even in the freezer, they are putting their pork beside my beef or something. It's tough, a problem for me, so that's why I moved. It is good to stay with a Muslim roommate rather than a non-Muslim ... First one year is tough for me, but after I live with a Muslim roommate, things are getting easier to me (Sabir 2010).

The choice to practice faith, in this case to eat only halal, is one made difficult by the limitations of residence meal options and living with non-Muslim roommates. and feelings of isolation and loneliness for the first couple of terms living in Halifax.

One of the most difficult things Sabir faced in those first months of living in Halifax was the absence of using his own language in everyday life. The ability to express oneself within in your own cultural community and convey your thoughts and emotions to others in a meaningful way is an important factor in belonging:

[When I am with other Bangladeshi students] I can talk about home. I can talk about what's going at my home ... the past two years I couldn't find anyone to talk in Bangla, I was just thinking maybe I forget Bangla [laughs]. Because ... all my friends, Arabic or Pakistanis or Canadian or Chinese are talking English ... one month I didn't speak to anyone in Bangla ... A whole month ... Yeah, it's strange ... Sometimes I used to talk with myself in Bangla ... standing in front of the mirror, because I couldn't find anyone to talk in Bangla so I start talking to my self [laughs] (Sabir 2010).

You can't share your feelings with some other country's people. They don't understand your feelings ... I am missing my mom. I am missing my parents. I am missing my country ... They don't understand the feelings. And if you are Arabic, they have their own community. There are lots of Arabic students that came here. Lots of Indian students came here, lots of Chinese students here. And they have their own friend circle. And me, just the one Bangladeshi. So this was so tough. You can't share your feelings. And, you can't talk to anyone in your own language (Sabir 2010).

The only opportunity to speak his language was through phone conversations with friends and family back home. This inability to speak in his own language created a challenging boundary that maintained his initial feelings of isolation and loneliness in Halifax.

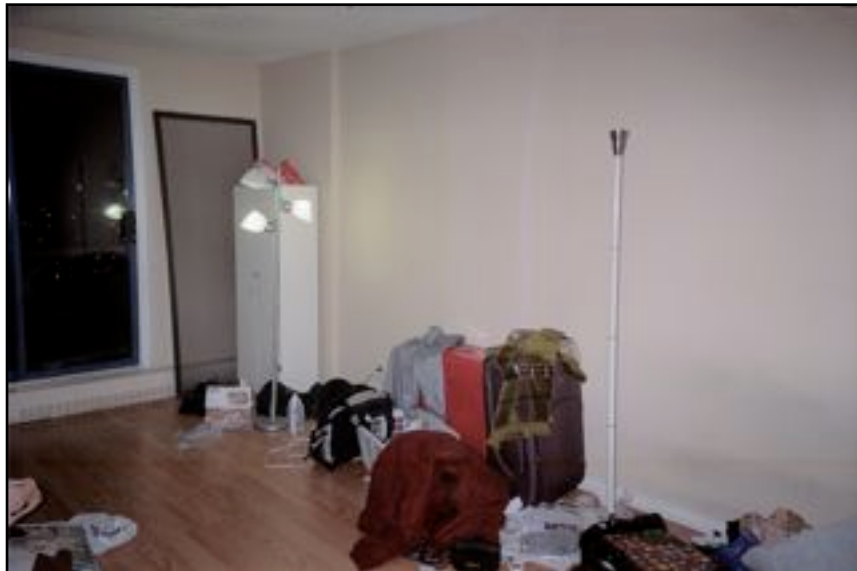
Living in residence did not provide a homespace for Sabir nor did he develop a strong sense of belonging among the friends he met there:

The first two years, most of the time I was in front of the computer. Because I had nothing to do. Just watching movies, that's it. Games, playing games. That's the only thing I do (Sabir 2010).

These initial experiences of non-Muslim culture and social activities had an influence on his relationship to Islam and his identity. A photograph of the green prayer mat that he brought from Bangladesh, represents this shift in Islamic practice (see Photograph 38):

I try to be a religious man ... when I was in Bangladesh I wasn't that much religious ... When I came here I get involved in the religious things a bit more than in Bangladesh. And I think the reason, because you know, when I came here, I saw that this is a different culture. People, they can drink alcohol, you can go club. My friends start going to the club every night, every weekend. They are drinking in front of me. So I need to learn to control myself from doing these things. I had to follow the religion more and more. So that's why I try myself to get involved in the religion more compared to Bangladesh (Sabir 2010).

Photograph 38: A Prayer Mat From Home (Sabir 2010)



In order to combat boredom and loneliness and to find some common interests and a social life, he sought out other Muslims:

The first thing I did when I came here, I tried to find the Muslim people ... there is a prayer room in the library, I used to go there and then I find some Muslim people ... I find the Muslim circle first, because it's easy for me. In the weekend night all the Muslim friends sit in the coffee shop or somewhere to talk because they also don't want to go to pub or bar. So at first I find some Muslim friends because, at least their culture and my culture is Muslim, the religious thing is same. That helped me a lot ... I pass the weekend with them (Sabir 2010).

For Sabir, to feel like he belonged at school, and in Halifax, is to be able to say one has friends and a social life. It meant he could take part and socialize among people in culturally and religiously appropriate activities and therefore be himself and feel at home.

In his third year of university, Sabir began courses at Sexton campus where there are a larger number of Bangladeshis in various engineering graduate programs; it was here that he would tap into the social networks of Bangladeshi students and the wider Bangladeshi community:

It took one and a half year to find the Bangladeshi community here for me. Like, I have no Bangladeshi friends, there's no Bangladeshi here ... [then] I started to know the Bangladeshi community ... Now everything is really easy for me. I am known around in the Bangladeshi community ... So now life is really, like, almost feels like home. Just without parents [laughs] ... Yeah, it's feeling like home (Sabir 2010).

After three years in Halifax, he says “now, now it's feeling like home” (Sabir 2010) because he has formed important connections between himself and the Bangladeshi community. He now lives in the city's north end with several other Bangladeshi Muslim students and finally feels comfortable in his home, in Halifax, and in the Bangladeshi community that he now knows well. Nevertheless, he still longs for his return to Bangladesh, home and family:

I just want to go back. I have no plan til now to stay in Canada or anywhere, any other country ... I'm not concerned that much about the money things. Like, I prefer to stay with my family first. So money is the second thing for me ... because I know they are getting older and older, so I just want to stay with them. Then like at older age I'll think different. So when I am finishing here I just want to stay with my parents (Sabir 2010).

Trishana was born and raised in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She applied to graduate studies programs in Canada like many of her friends were doing but ultimately accept admission in Halifax where she was offered funding in a program that she favoured.

Trishana discusses how important it was to recreate a homespace through relationships with other Bangladeshi students. For the most part these are men because there are few Bangladeshi women coming to Halifax for university. One of the first things she did in Halifax though was begin to network at a university orientation in order to find other Bangladeshi women:

I was looking for a girl because I am not that comfortable going out or hanging out with boys. So I was thinking I wish there was any girl that can be my friend. So he said that yeah, there is a girl who came from Bangladesh to study here in electrical engineering ... I met her and she introduced me the guys (Trishana 2010).

In the process of finding other women with whom she might strike up friendships, she found a wider Bangladeshi community and, more importantly, developed an intimate sense of belonging among several young Bangladeshi male students whom she now considers her brothers (see Photograph 39):

I used to go to their place everyday because I didn't have anyone, any friend, in Halifax ... they consider me one of them ... whenever they go out, if they say 'we', then I'm included ... always. They are just like my brothers ... they are always there. If I feel lonely, they are always there to talk to me. Because here, that's the only thing that I miss, that I feel lonely, or I miss my family. So that's the only thing I want from people, like, they give me company, or they give me time. This is the most important thing that they give me ... they never consider me someone outside, like a guest. They just take me as one of them ... they are full of life ... always makes me feel like I am with someone who are very close to me. Who are my really friends. So all of them are like, I look up as my brothers, like my brothers (Trishana 2010).

Trishana took a photograph of the entrance door to the apartment in which these Bangladeshi friends lived. This group of guys, including Tarek, Kuyasha and Sabir, have been an important part of Trishana's social and cultural life in Halifax providing connections to the Bangladeshi community and everyday contact, communication and social life in her own language and cultural framework. But more than this, a very familial relationship has developed over a fairly short period of time. After living in the same building in which many of the guys were living in, she moved to a rooming house closer to school. The guys organized a moving out party for her:

They just wrote something for me, what I was for them. Like I was a great help to them ... Sort of like, they were admiring me ... They just wrote something to me, they just recited that, and they gave me a crest [card], they gave me chocolates and they said, just 'don't forget us ... just come to our place whenever you want to' ... I was totally surprised. What was that? They wrote something for me? And they recited that, and they just gave me a crest [card]? That was really nice. You know, my life here in Halifax, I shouldn't complain, because I've got some really good friends. Whenever I feel lonely, I just go to their place. Or I just call them and ask them, are you making any plans? Let's do it (Trishana 2010).

Photograph 39: A Home Away from Home (Trishana 2010)



Saladin

Saladin is a 23 year-old Egyptian man who five months previous to our interview moved to Halifax looking for employment after spending a year finishing a degree at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Despite his short time in Halifax and difficulty in finding work and making social contacts, Saladin reveals several important moments and events through which he has developed a sense of belonging in Halifax and as a Muslim living in Canada.

Saladin arrived from Cairo for a one-night stop over in Halifax before moving on to Sydney. Reflecting on an 'untaken photograph' that represents a special moment of pause, he reveals a sensitivity to the importance of even small moments shared with friends in a park near the hostel in which they were staying, in an unknown city:

The first time I came to Canada, I stayed there for one night. There's a park in front of the VIA rail, in front of Westin Hotel ... After putting the luggage in the international hostel ... I went there with my friends and stayed there for a couple of minutes. And it was, um, important moments, you know? After getting from one flight, another, from one airport to another and finally to destination (Saladin 2009).

This moment in a city park on a coolish September night would have held secret conversations, desires, hopes, anticipations, and perhaps even a little nervousness. So short was their time in Halifax that the memory etched into his mind, the moment in which feelings and thoughts must have raced through all of their minds, was a restful respite in a public park in the near night. His

sensitivity to the intersection of place, emotion, and memory will resurface later in connection with several everyday encounters through which he derived a significant sense of belonging in Canada.

Many of Saladin's experiences of Halifax are mediated through a comparative geography that traces back to the year he spent in the much smaller city of Sydney, Nova Scotia:

I thought maybe [Sydney] would be ... a little less version of Halifax. Without tall buildings and stuff, but even in Sydney, very few houses are there and I can say that maybe I expected that a little bit because when I opened Google Maps, [laughs] and tried to find Sydney, it was at the very end, very far part of the east ... the last spot on the map of Canada ... After a couple of weeks ... you find that you have done everything that you can do [in Sydney] ... nothing new and nowhere else to go and it's raining outside or snowing or you know, it's weekend and you can't go to a club or drink or some stuff like that. That is the only entertainment that there is. We as Muslims can't do that, so it was very boring (Saladin 2009).

Saladin describes a somewhat bleak picture of life in Sydney, in particular for a young Muslim man. However, he and the other Egyptian students who came for school with him created a kind of homespace in the residence apartments they all shared. In another 'untaken photograph' he discusses an important personal and social space:

So the only place that ... has very good memories and maybe I would like to take a picture for is an apartment, which have five of my friends who were staying there and at that apartment we were doing everything that we can for entertainment, right? Like we can play cards, playing computer games, anything, even we go study right there so it was a meeting point for all of us (Saladin 2009).

This community of Egyptian Muslim students relocated from Cairo to Sydney helped a homespace in which Saladin felt comfortable. He has been unable to recreate that sense of home and belonging later in Halifax, in part, because most of those other students have either stayed in Sydney for work or returned to Egypt.

Saladin also draws from his experiences in Montreal in order to map out his belongings in Halifax:

[I liked] seeing the busy streets again [laughs] ... Seeing an actual downtown [laughs]. Downtown Sydney is very small and can only see a couple of cars and a couple of people moving here and there ... I met some other Egyptians, other Arabs and getting to know new people is very good and, you know, having a talk here and there ... and, of course, eating Middle Eastern food. Because for the whole year at Cape Breton University we didn't have the chance to get any of

these foods. It is not available in Cape Breton because the population of Arabs and Muslims, there are very few. But here in Halifax ... you can find easily Middle Eastern foods here (Saladin 2009).

By the end of the excerpt, Saladin re-routes us back to Halifax. His experiences in Montreal, food, mosques and conversations with other Arab-Muslims, represent the things he longed for in Sydney and the things, he says, that make Halifax a more comfortable place to be. He reflects on the importance of having these cultural and religious resources in Halifax:

It's my religion and it's my culture so it's important ... It's not like I'm keeping those things because it's something meaningless. No, that's me. I want to stay in a community where I can find Muslims, and where I can find people who are good enough to accept that because you know a lot of people are racist. But I never met any in Nova Scotia so far. People are very good. So I think Halifax is very good for me (Saladin 2009).

Notwithstanding such qualities that make Halifax more 'homey' than Sydney, Saladin's choice to come to Halifax was about finding employment within his field and outside of the call centres in Sydney that many of his friends worked in following graduation:

I just didn't know that [it would] be so hard here to get a job. Especially that I know most of people who graduate from here, they don't want to live here. They look for a job in Alberta or Ontario or in Quebec. So I thought maybe the market right here will have a lot of vacancies (Saladin 2009).

He spends a lot of time searching for employment at job centres and networking through the mosque and events such as the Fast-a-thon held during Ramadan and, therefore, has Saladin has little time to develop attachment to specific places in the city. His insights on immigrant belonging in Halifax provide a framework for understanding how spontaneous interactions become part of how he feels comfortable and 'at home':

I think there are three cases. One case, that you are not welcome here, which sometimes happens for those who immigrate [sic] from Mexico to the United States illegally or when someone immigrates to some other country and he doesn't even know the language of that country ... So that would be the first case, when you are not welcomed at all or because people there are very rude or very unfriendly or not having hospitality. Second, [the] people just doesn't care. I mean, okay, some people here, okay. That's cool, that's it. And the third thing when they are really welcoming, and they are really appreciating and they are really, how do you say, being friendly and hospitable. It's amazing (Saladin 2009).

In Sydney, Saladin's experiences are framed by the third point, mapping out a space of comfort and acceptance:

I've found that people here are really welcoming ... As I told you, I'm not really social but people are very friendly and are trying to learn, you know, where do you come from, how was it going, do you like [it here] (Saladin 2009).

In Halifax, Saladin reflects on three important moments where interactions with people he does not know influenced his sense of belonging in the city. In the first example, he tells me about a speech given by a government representative at jumma prayer one Friday during Ramadan:

He stayed for our prayer and the speech and he said, of course, a short speech after the prayer. And, so it's really amazing that these people are friendly and are, what's the expression to describe that? They have a lot of hospitality (Saladin 2009).

In a second example, he discusses the impact of a casual conversation in a convenience store (see Photograph 40). During Ramadan, he attends Chebucto mosque each day for Iftar to break fast and pray. He recounts the interaction he has with the store clerk one night after prayer:

Photograph 40: Moments of Belonging, Needs Store (Saladin 2009)



Maybe it's not very important and maybe we are not going to talk about it but it's some sort of the hospitality and the appreciation and the being friendly [here] ... So I went there and the guy asks me 'did you just come back from that mosque?' So I said yeah. He told me 'Happy Ramadan!' I said what? 'Happy Ramadan!' I said thanks, how did you know [laughs]? He said 'you must be kidding, you guys are a lot here and I've seen the cars go here and there each night. How's it going, how's fasting?' I said, it's okay, thanks for asking. Then I got my stuff, paid for it

and he said, 'good luck fasting'. So, I just liked that. That guy was really friendly (Saladin 2009).

The clerk's comments conveyed to Saladin that Muslims were recognized and accepted as members of Halifax.

The third example took place at the mass prayer and celebration marking the end of Ramadan and the beginning of Eid:

After the prayer there was a speech by the Imam. And after the speech, there was another speech by ... someone from the minister of immigration and he congratulated us for Eid and for finishing Ramadan, and thanked us for our contribution in the community ... He has very sweet words ... I liked that a lot (Saladin 2009).

Saladin's description of the speech as 'sweet' suggests that he interpreted it intimately as a gesture of appreciation and a personal extension of hospitality to himself and the community to which he belonged as a valued part of Halifax and Canada. Relating back to his framework of belonging, he analyses these encounters:

That guy [from the convenience store] should have just, go to the case number 2, but that guy was the third case, showing an amount of hospitality and being friendly ... as Muslims, we really appreciate this ... because of one important thing: we are the most discriminated ... The New York Times ... was saying Arabs are the new blacks ... We are suffering ... because of misunderstanding and because of ignorance ... The locals doesn't really know who we are, or what we are doing or how do we feel ... So that's why we as Muslims really appreciate some stuff like that. That guy from the government who came to the mosque or that guy from the immigration office who came to the feast or the other guy from [the convenience store]. And you can find lots of stories like that here in Canada. That's why Canada is one of the really loved countries to go as Muslims (Saladin 2009).

Saladin has taken these moments to heart, as reflections of his own sense of belonging, not only as a Muslim in the Muslim community, but as part of a community of belonging at the national level. Saladin maps the space of the Canadian nation as a terrain of hospitality against other nations where being Muslims is more problematic. Together, Saladin demonstrates a sense of place and belonging mapped out through even the small moments of everyday life.

Duke

Duke is a 30-year-old Pakistani-born Muslim married to Maria. He moved to the United States at age eighteen to attend university and then lived in Ontario prior to being transferred by

his employer to Halifax. The journey he narrates revolves around experiences at work and the challenges he has faced in terms of making social connections in Halifax.

In Ontario, Duke was hesitant to reveal his faith at work. Based on past experiences, he worried about being judged on faith rather than performance:

The last thing that I wanted to tell them was that I'm Muslim, I was afraid ... in my previous jobs where they did know I was Muslim, perhaps that had encouraged bias in management or among the workforce ... The last thing I want is my faith to get in the way. And then ruin everything. So I kept a low profile, nobody knew that I was Muslim; on my breaks or lunch I would go pray secretly, so nobody would find out that I am praying (Duke 2009).

After I established my credibility as a solid employee that's where I became more relaxed. And I openly told my boss, I'm Muslim I need to take these days off for Eid, or a I need to go pray ... I need to attend my weekly Friday prayer. And she was accommodating ... I would pray openly [at work]. I would walk into this medical room at the back of the building, and of course, this entire passage you've got all the people sitting there, right, and they see Duke walking back and forth five times each day (Duke 2009).

Transferred to Halifax in 2006, it was made immediately clear to him that he need not worry about his faith all over again:

The first thing [my boss] showed me was a place where I could pray. Not my desk, not where his desk was or anything else ... Of all the places he could have shown me ... he chose to show me the praying area. He said, 'Duke this is a place you can pray' ... at that point I had no apprehensions (Duke 2009).

Across his journey to Halifax, there have been changes in the ways in which Duke practices Islam on a day-to-day basis:

Since I have left Pakistan [in 2000], I have not been able to enjoy the Islamic month of Ramadan ... where you focus solely on worship and your connection with God ... thirty day intensive training, if you will. It's easy to do in Pakistan because the whole country follows it ... But here you have to create that environment. And part of creating that environment is to worship ... I've not been able to enjoy it simply because I could not get to the mosque, it was a pain. Taking a bus two hours to go there and come back, two hours. Impractical (Duke 2009).

In Toronto ... I used to walk to the local mosque once a day and pray and reflect, because it was in reach ... and when I came to Halifax that accessibility became difficult. So with the car, my intention is to go at least once a day if not then at least once a week ... I can also be more active now, because I have been active in

this community since I showed up and it's been a huge struggle ... I can't afford to spend that much time, so the car makes it easy for me (Duke 2009).

Mapped alongside other places he has lived, Duke's initial experiences in the city reveals, not only how he feels about Halifax but also how he envisions the kind of place in which he ultimately wishes to live. Initially, he lived in downtown Halifax until moving to a suburban neighbourhood where he now lives with his wife Maria. While he does not reveal much about living downtown, Maria provides a sense of his feelings:

Duke zooms through downtown ... when he first got here, him and all these [other employees who were also transferred] lived in this apartment building that [the company] paid for downtown. And all of the guys would go out to the bars and things and Duke would sit at home by himself and feel lonely. And this is his feelings of downtown ... this is what he remembers. So he hates downtown (Maria 2009).

In Duke's words:

It's crowded, half the time you don't know where to park, you don't know where to turn, driving conditions are difficult and pedestrians are equally difficult. And unpredictable. I don't like the noise (Duke 2009).

For Duke, living in a Halifax suburb represents a kind of balance between what he calls the 'urban jungles' in which he has lived and the idyllic peaceful and pastoral image he has of the 'good life' (see Photograph 41). He maps his relationship to Halifax comparing it to his experiences living in Pakistan, the United States and Ontario:

[Before Halifax] I've lived in Toronto since I've come to Canada, concrete jungles, pollution ... but this is something that I really want to connect myself at some point in my life. I want to live in a place that is quiet and peaceful, notice how the trees are still, the air is still, there's not a lot of wind or, the waves are rippling through, very peaceful scenery ... I lived in Karachi, was one of the top ten biggest cities in the world, and I have missed this in my life, it's a very calm and peaceful atmosphere, it's something that I want to enjoy ... a place that I would like to live ... [When I moved to the US it was] the first time that I came into contact with something that is serene. I'd never seen valleys of trees before, I'd never seen, you know, these beautiful mountain ranges, peaceful small towns. And I like the peace and quiet not having buses screaming, or peddlers peddling or whatever (Duke 2009).

[Halifax is] a perfect balance in the middle ... I asked some people who had been living here for a good 20-25 years ... they all said to me, 'you should go back to Toronto, you should not stay in Halifax' ... From their perspective this is a boring place ... They didn't realize that I don't want the rush and I don't want the stress. I

want something like this that is peaceful. So, Halifax is a perfect balance; accessibility and privacy. I can have my own private paradise, get out there to the Peggy's Cove, all these small towns and visit the beach. And it's close to Walmart and Sobeys (Duke 2009).

Photograph 41: Describing Paradise (Duke 2009)



Socially, however, he has difficulty feeling a sense of belonging among other Muslims in Halifax. First, while he has participated at the community level, it has been through project contributions that have not translated to social relationships:

When I first came to Halifax I wanted to associate my self with the Muslims here ... I showed up at all of these potlucks and dinners and events and mosques and centres to find out what's happening. Gradually over time I noticed there are certain areas that I'm being involved more. Most of them involve doing some work or activity (Duke 2009).

I don't feel that I belong here. I don't feel that I fit here ... I don't have no life here. I work at the office and then I work in the community and then I go home ... Whether it's helping raising funds for the new masjid or building the website for the community ... that's my public sphere. But my personal sphere, I have none ... It's only recently, since I've been married, because of her friends who are like mutual friends, that we have invited people over or had a dinner, right, and these kinds of things, this is only happening six months ago. I have been in Halifax for three years (Duke 2009).

He also suggests that the intersection of age, ethnicity and ideology can be mapped onto social groups in ways that he does not identify with:

There are very few people that I connect with. The community in Halifax is entrenched along ethnic lines and within the ethnic lines there's a huge age gap. I'll give you an example. The first Saturday of the month, there is a potluck at the Islamic Association of Nova Scotia mosque, the Dartmouth masjid ... Most of the people ... live in the area or have been established in that community over a longer time ... more elderly people ... They know each other really well, they have good connections established ... I feel like an outsider ... I'll go there to show my support to the community, maybe help out with some project that's happening but if you say hey, let's go there to have fun, I would rather not (Duke 2009).

I would not socialize with them, I would not hang out with them, go out anywhere with them because I did not fit age wise, I didn't fit ideological wise, my idea of fun is not to get wasted ... My idea is not to sit and have tea and talk about politics with senior citizens ... So people our age, I will not find them in the community centres or the mosques. Those areas are strictly for the elderly ... [Muslims my age are] either at work or they're downtown. They tend to socialize in other areas, right? And downtown is a place I would prefer not to be. Not one of my favourite places ... So it's very difficult to find someone my age along the similar lines of interest (Duke 2009).

Though he has participated in and contributed to events held by the Muslim Student Association, here he is a few years older and not a student himself: "I don't fit in because that group is strictly a university group. They're students, they know each other, they hang out on the campus" (Duke 2009).

In the absence of his own connections, Duke anchors belonging through his community volunteering and in longing to build a better place for future Muslims and his own children who he imagines will grow up in Halifax:

I don't feel attached to any of these mosques. I have no affiliation of any kind to anybody here, but the fact is that I'm Muslim, I have a family here, and one day my kids are going to be here, and they may be living in Halifax so, I want to make sure that the community that we live in ... that they may not have to take the same rough road again. So they may be more aware or they may be more prepared. Long term. I'm here to think long term, right. So what is the future of this community? If you got one demographic, the senior citizens here, who are rapidly aging and you got the younger crowd here that are effectively leaving, there has to be somebody in the middle, and it looks like I am the one in the middle that will have to help make the transition to the next phase of Muslim development [in Halifax] (Duke 2009).

Conclusion

The different journeys of faith and routes/roots to Halifax of these Muslim men and women reveal the importance of doing intersectional research to shed light on the complex

narratives of a diverse set of Muslim subjectivities. While I organize their stories along the categories of Muslim converts, born Muslim in Canada, and foreign-born Muslims living in Halifax, in order to highlight common journeys of faith and place, within each there are a variety of routes taken and roots lain (both temporary and permanent) that ultimately shape each individuals experiences and perceptions of their everyday lives as Muslims in Halifax.

Canadian-born Muslims describe multiple deep and meaningful connections to the city shaped by influences from family, friends and the broader social and cultural context of Halifax. At times, they struggle with fitting in and with finding a sense of belonging in these same spaces. As second-generation Muslims, Malcolm X and especially Amira share similar positions in negotiating the faith and culture of their respective homes and communities as well as those in ‘mainstream Canadian’ society that are similarly raised by others (see Arat-Koc 2006; Jamal 2006; McAndrew 2006; Falah and Nagel 2005; Waters and Teo 2003; Amin 2002; Tonks and Paranjpe 1999; Portes and Schauffler 1996; Portes 1996; Waters 1996; Zhou and Bankston III 1996). Canadian-born Muslim converts provide complex narratives of their journeys to accepting Islam and the process of reconciling everyday life in the city in which they have lived most, if not all of, their life before and after Islam. For the remaining foreign-born Muslim participants, their stories of arrival and settling into the everyday routines of life in Halifax, whether at school or work, and their own journeys towards the daily practice of Islam reveals further that there is no single Muslim identity or community. It further illustrates the importance of the methodological approach in this study. I did not limit the criteria for participants in a way that narrows the category ‘Muslim’ opting instead to leave it open in order include the voices of multiple and varied positions. By employing a research process through which data is both produced by and reflected on by participants themselves, the richness of individual experiences from a diverse range of Muslim positionalities becomes apparent. It is clear that there is great diversity in the experience of being or becoming Muslim and living in and coming to Halifax that are critical influences on how participants’ negotiate a sense of belonging.

Chapter 4: Negotiations of Everyday Life in ‘Halalifax’

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored a number of connections and disconnections shaping participants’ sense of belonging both in terms of their stories of coming to Halifax and in their present practice of Islam. These belongings are shifting, especially for those Muslims converting to Islam, and most participants discuss their identities as a kind of ‘becoming’ over time. Their personal journeys are intricately connected to Halifax through a number of scales that provide a rich and detailed mapping of multiple belongings.

In this chapter, I draw attention to the ways in which participants negotiate different dimensions of belonging through the experience, expressions and practices of their Muslim subjectivities. As Pile and Thrift (1995) discuss, multiple and ongoing negotiations of belonging through subjectivity is “rooted in the spatial home of the body, and therefore situated, as composed of and by a ‘federation’ of different discourses/persona, united and orchestrated to a greater or lesser extent by narrative” (Pile and Thrift 1995: 11). In mapping out the subjectivities of Muslims in Halifax, I draw particular attention to the embodied practices and the social and cultural frameworks of being Muslim as expressions and practices of both identity and belonging in the city. The result reveals a complicated terrain of connections and disconnections through which Muslims negotiate everyday life in Halifax.

In Part I, “(Re)Making the City”, participants map out the cultural diversity of Halifax from their own perspective and in ways that contribute to their ability to call the city home. In addition, they reveal that their social use of space and the efforts of some to create space in which Muslims can socialize, also creates a ‘halal’ Halifax. In other words, Halifax is remapped as ‘Halalifax’: a city made congruent with Islamic practices and Muslim belonging.

The remainder of this chapter explores the personal experiences of participants as they negotiate belonging in and through a variety of city spaces. In Chapter Three, I noted several instances where Muslim women made the choice to wear the hijab and particularly their experiences doing so for the first time in public. However, across all the participants, what it means to identify and be identified as a Muslim in Halifax emerges as the most discussed topic. In Part II, “‘Looking Like a Muslim’: Negotiating Practices in Being Muslim”, I expand on the

practices and politics of being Muslim as expressed and experienced corporeally by men and women. There is a politics of visibility that shapes the perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of their own sense of being Muslim and finding a place to call home. The visibility of being Muslim, through markers such as the hijab, the beard, and clothing or in the practicing Muslim body during prayer and other observances of faith shapes the way Muslims see themselves and how others see them. Thus, the Muslim body becomes the site through which participants ground their own belonging as Muslims in Halifax while simultaneously becoming the site through which boundaries of belonging are constructed and maintained.

Subjectivities are formed, in part, out of our interactions among others. Our ‘selves’ are reflected in and constructed out of our social experiences and engagements with friends and family as well as with strangers. In Part II, “Civic, Social, and Cultural Belongings”, I discuss the multiple ways in which participants find their own sense of self through broader civic and social engagement as well as the multiple understandings of the ways in which the Muslims in this study position or locate their ‘cultural’ selves. In particular, I map out the ways in which participants’ self-awareness is realized through social experiences with others, participation in a range of social and political associations, and connections and belongings claimed through a civic sense of self and place. Additionally, I reveal the ways in which participants express and experience a sense of identity and belonging through cultural framings such as language and cultural or national identification. These narratives reveal both comfortable places of belonging as well as those places in which cultural politics create exclusions sometimes pushing participants to find or create their own spaces of belonging.

Part I: (Re)Making the City

As seen in the journeys of participants, Halifax has become home whether through time, experience of place or both. Maria, Kareem and Amira, among others, reveal very deep connections and feelings of belonging within Halifax and these are anchored through memories and experiences, which they capture in some of their photographs of the places associated with them. They also reveal some of the ways that maintaining such connections can be challenging.

While some participants map the city as a space of multicultural diversity, welcoming and accommodating of Muslims at both a personal and community level, others also identify certain places or landscapes in the city that reveal its terrain as racialized space in ways that both discursively or materially anchor belonging. Alternatively, these maps of race also reveal

‘pockets’ of racism and intolerance. In some cases, participants re-present the city as lacking in cultural diversity and in other cases the city is multicultural enough to include Muslims. Aside from the way participants map the city in terms of how they experience and perceive it as a culturally diverse space or not, they also express the differences between Halifax in general and the university space specifically. The term ‘halal’ refers to those things or activities that are permissible for Muslims to use or engage in according to Islamic law. In this section, participants reveal some of the ways that Halifax resonates as home (or not) as well as the ways in which they make it more ‘homey’ by finding and creating ‘halal’ spaces for Muslims.

Maria has a life-long relationship with the city in which she grew up. She now lives in Halifax but much of her life was spent on the other side of the bridge in Dartmouth. She explains her intimate connection to the city both in terms of Dartmouth and Halifax separately as well as together as a key place of home and belonging:

To me Dartmouth and Halifax is one place ... For me Dartmouth was where I was growing up and Halifax is where I grew up. [laughs] Am I philosophical enough for you [laughs] ... Dartmouth is where I grew up; that’s where I was a kid. That’s unfortunately where a lot of bad things happened and unfortunately it’s where a lot of bad things happen for many people. There’s a very depressed and sad energy about Dartmouth because that’s where the majority of low-income families live. But ... it was still my home, and it was still where I grew up, and I still have memories. It’s part of me. Halifax is where I lived when I became a young adult ... to me it’s all one, because it helped shape me (Maria 2009).

Maria discusses many of her photographs as sites of refuge and sanctuary from the stresses of everyday life in the city: dancing and dance class, the public library (untaken photograph), the Halifax Public Gardens (“getting away haunt”; “heaven”), Turkish Delight (“favourite, favourite place to eat”), Second Cup and Tim Hortons (“because to me having coffee is synonymous to relaxing”; for “when I need that mental break” from work). Her photographs also draw from iconic landscapes in Halifax as she narrates her intimate feelings of home in the city (see Photograph 42 and Photograph 43):

That’s the Dartmouth waterfront. And I had planned to have one of the Halifax waterfront too but didn’t get a chance ... because it’s all important to me because this is my home ... The ferry is significantly a part of me. Absolutely. And nobody who ever comes to visit me, who has never been to Halifax before, can escape going on the ferry for a ride. To me the ferry is part of here (Maria 2009).

Photograph 42: Dartmouth Waterfront (Maria 2009)



Photograph 43: Halifax-Dartmouth Ferry (Maria 2009)



Sometimes difficult to put into words, Maria discusses her deep connection to the city through its iconic landscape and a faint childhood memory. In a photograph that includes the power plant stacks and the two bridges that cross Halifax Harbour, she captures her sense of home (see Photograph 44):

My aunt lives up the road from them. One time, they were having something going on with them and they made the ground shake when I was at her house. It was really freaky. Years later I asked them ‘did that really happen?’ because my memory of it is like a dream [laughs] ... We’re on the McKay bridge and that over

there is the MacDonald bridge. So that's the old bridge and this is the new bridge ... [I took the picture] because this is my home. I don't know how to explain it any better. [laughs] ... The harbour, with Halifax and Dartmouth on both sides ... I can't say anything, I can't explain this one. This is my home (Maria 2009).

In this photograph of power plant smokestacks and bridges Maria reconstructs the city as home space through the memory of her aunt's home and their relationship: she is one of the few members of her biological family with whom Maria remains in contact.

Photograph 44: Drive-By Shot: Capturing 'Home' (Maria 2009)



A lot of the detail in Maria's relationship with Halifax, with the city, with public space and life in the urban centre, emerges out of discussions of the differences between her and her husband. Part of that conversation is also about reflecting on the photography. Recall from Chapter Two that many of Duke's and Maria's pictures were taken from the car and, much to the dismay of Maria, these 'drive-by shoots' did not always result in the kinds of pictures she wanted to share with me. Duke and Maria have very different feelings towards the city:

Maria doesn't zoom through downtown ... Maria walks downtown and enjoys every single moment of being there ... when I was younger and I went downtown it was as a young adult ... to me downtown was 'ideas' central. So I would go to coffee houses and literally sit there forever and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and philosophize and whatever else happens in coffee shops. Everyone went out to the bars, fine. You go to the bar. My bar is the coffee bar (Maria 2009).

Maria grew up in Halifax and her husband, Duke, grew up in Karachi, Pakistan and has a very different perception of city life and the 'urban'. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Duke

has an uneasy relationship to the city and downtown Halifax. Maria, however, embraces the city culture as an important part of her identity, her memories in this place and therefore her sense of belonging:

It's really interesting how we have two different perceptions of the same place. He hates it, he hates the crowd, he hates the noise and it reminds him of being lonely because he sees downtown as the bars. And I see downtown as festivals and coffee houses and ideas and people doing weird and wonderful things (Maria 2009).

Recall from Chapter 3, Duke's perception of the city, and downtown Halifax in particular, is that it is crowded, noisy and unpredictable. He also suggests that living in suburban Halifax provides a balance between his rural ideal and the negative baggage of city-life he carries with him:

Halifax is a perfect balance of accessibility and privacy. I can have my own private paradise, get out there to the Peggy's Cove, all these small towns and visit the beach. And it's close to Wal-mart and Sobeys (Duke 2009).

Duke and Maria live in a newly developing suburb on the Halifax Mainland. While Maria does enjoy the street life of the city she is also able to find a new sense of belonging in the suburbs:

I have no problem living here, it's a nice area, it's a quiet area so at least I don't get waken up by boozers ... I'm easy going that way, I adapt quickly. We used to, when I was a kid, we would move literally every two or three years ... usually within the same city until I was sixteen but ... moving to different parts of Dartmouth as a kid is still different. I don't know. I've always, I adapt easily to those things (Maria 2009).

Two separate ideas about the city emerge in this excerpt. First, is that even Maria holds some negative feelings about downtown areas as noisy and associated with bars and alcohol that she does not miss now that she lives in the suburb. Second, she reveals the mobility of her 'home space' over the course of her life. In particular, she suggests that because she moved many times as a child that she easily adapts to new 'home spaces'.

Few have as deep a sense of belonging and home in Halifax than does Maria. Kareem, however, as we saw in Chapter Three, provides a collage of photographs that reconstruct the city with an intimate sense of home. Most of the other participants draw maps that reveal multiple experiences and perceptions of the city highlighting issues around diversity and multiculturalism. One of the ways that participants provide me with an orientation to the cultural and religious

landscapes of the city is through an imaginative mapping of specific sites. For example, as discussed by Amira and Catherine, some of the Halifax suburbs are referred to as ‘Little Arabia’:

They used to call, this might be interesting, ‘Little Arab’, or something like ‘Little Arab World’ or ‘Arabville’ or something like that because Clayton Park is a lot of Arabs live there. Bedford area, that whole area over there. A lot ... Oh, they used to call it ‘Little Arabia’ ... That’s what they called it. I thought you might find that interesting (Amira 2009).

[Laughing] There’s a lot of Arabs there ... Like on my street I’ll see so many veiled people just walking or if you go to the Bedford Sobeys there is more veiled people than there is, like, white people (Catherine 2009).

A common student area at Tim Horton’s at Saint Mary’s University is also remapped through a Muslim perspective:

We call it the Gaza Strip because all the Arabs are there. All the [laughs] Arabs are over there. All the Palestinians and all the Arabs are over there. A lot of Muslims like to hang around over there [laughs] (Abdullah 2010).

And the main floor computer lab at the university’s library is generically referred to as ‘some Arab country’:

I swear you feel like you went to like some Arab country [laughs] ... because I think a lot of guys in engineering are Arab and I think that’s their hang out spot and they study, they kind of live there [laughs] (Jane 2010).

Using these shorthand references allowed participants to give me a sense of some of the ways people inadvertently claim space when their presence over time creates a visibility to others who read those spaces in connection with particular identities. A detailed excavation of the discursive politics of such place names is beyond the scope of my efforts here. But they do indicate the importance of my methodology and of reading the landscape and mapping the city through local and colloquial knowledge.

Individuals also use discursive short-hand to identify and describe spaces in the city as a way of conveying their own feelings, if not experiences. Talal refers to the spaces of intolerance in the city as ‘pockets’:

There’s certainly pockets of anti-Islam here in Halifax. Maybe not anti-Islam, anti-different I guess would be the best way to put it ... the vast majority of people, I think, are willing to learn new things. So ... it’s a changeable thing. But ... there’s a way that things are here and people identify the way things are with the way things should be (Talal 2009).

Talal maps Muslim identity and community against what he calls a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant backdrop on which the taken for granted ‘way things are here’ acts as the normative framework through which ‘others’ are viewed. Talal stops short of expressing any direct encounters within these ‘pockets’ of intolerance but certainly has brushed against them in online conversations with other people in Halifax. Abdullah maps out the area around the Dartmouth Mosque as representative of non-Muslim ignorance (see Photograph 45):

This is just a kind of redneck place in Dartmouth [laughs] ... you see some people from poorer families and I have seen some white people over there, and I was walking by once and someone was saying ‘KKK’ or something, so I was like, okay, these people are really ignorant ... This is close to the masjid ... I don’t see many places like that, that Muslims in general should be scared of. It’s just some places that are more isolated are more ignorant I guess (Abdullah 2010).

Photograph 45: Apartment Block near Dartmouth Mosque (Abdullah 2010)



Abdullah suggests that, not just in Dartmouth, but also across the city and in smaller, perhaps ‘less than urban’ spaces, there may be less tolerance for diversity, and in particular, for the presence of Muslims. Lulwa, who lives in suburban Bedford remaps Halifax as multicultural against its own ‘other’ outside of Halifax, in this case, Sackville: “Like here in Halifax and Bedford and Dartmouth, you see a mix. There? Nothing. They’re all white. You know, Caucasian, Christians” (Abdullah 2010). He suggests that newcomers who want to feel a sense of belonging as Muslims should live in the city close to a mosque:

I just say don't move to places that are far from the masjid. That's because the people [outside of the city] might not understand your practices and what you do as a Muslim. Because near the masjid people are more aware of what Islam and they kind of learn what Muslims do and what Muslim is. So, don't stay where you're far away from masjid. It's better for your own faith and the people around you so they can understand you (Abdullah 2010).

Amira discusses the way in which the city is mapped in racialized ways using well-known local references to compare Dartmouth and Halifax:

They joke around that Dartmouth is the 'darkside' ... they think it's so ghetto ... people are always like, 'do you live in Dartmouth? Like that's so far' or they are like, 'oh, I hear not good things about Dartmouth' ... they think it's ghetto, gangster. It's not like we have a lot of gangs or anything like that. I don't know, we have a lot of black people ... Mind you there's a lot in Halifax too ... and they call Halifax 'Haliwood' (Amira 2009)

These mappings of Dartmouth surface, at least a perceived, tension with difference and diversity. At the same time, drawing from their personal experiences growing up and living in Dartmouth, participants remap Dartmouth in more positive and intimate ways as we saw in Chapter Three. Amira and Catherine, both of who grew up in Dartmouth, ultimately do not see the city as intolerant or racist:

A lot of people see Dartmouth as a very ghetto neighbourhood. Where only ghetto people live. But I didn't have that experience at all. I felt like my neighbourhood was pretty safe. People always feel there's more racism in Dartmouth but I didn't feel that way (Catherine 2009).

That's the great thing about Canada. You can be whoever you wanna be, and look whatever you wanna look. But there's also the downside of that; there is free speech and people can say whatever they want to an extent ... do what you wanna do. Do what makes you happy. As long as it doesn't harm other people. That's my take. But I don't think [Dartmouth is] a racist city. I think maybe it's a little bit ignorant sometimes ... as in they actually just don't know better because they didn't grow up with a city being so cultured as it is today (Amira 2009).

When it comes to mapping diversity in the city, Malcolm X photographs a material expression of race and racism in Halifax in what might be called the post-Africville landscape (see Photograph 46):

[I took this picture] because it symbolizes racism and struggle against the proverbial man ... because of what happened there. It's a largely African Nova Scotian community. It got, basically, ethnically cleansed from one part of the city and sent to this part of the city ... systematically by the government, by the Nova

Scotian government. Put on garbage dump trucks, with their stuff on it, and sent away (Malcolm X 2009).

Photograph 46: Social Housing, Gottingen Street Halifax (Malcolm X 2009)



His photograph of public housing near Gottigen Street, to which many of the Africville residents had been relocated after their community was razed decades earlier is a representation of the racism that has shaped Halifax (see Nelson 2008).

Despite these suggestions of the underlying racial tensions that create these landscapes, that Halifax is perceived to be diverse and multicultural is one of the central features that participants raise in their affection for the city. For those who have lived there for a longer time, the emerging diversity in the city is more palpable:

It's becoming [a multicultural city], it was never one, maybe the last five years. You walk down the street and you will see Asian and you'll see Arab, and you'll see, Irish and Scottish. So absolutely it is more. It is more, but it isn't, multicultural. I don't know, it is more multicultural than it used to be (Amira 2009).

Kareem also suggests that diversity is increasing alongside acceptance of difference:

When people hear about all this terrorism ... there's always a finger being pointed at us ... [but] it seems to me there's a lot more awareness now. People know more about Islam, like when you see a woman wearing a niqab, it's not odd anymore, it's very common. It's like seeing a black person walking down the road in the thirties versus seeing a black person walking down the road now ... back in the thirties for Black people would be like back in the nineties here for Islamic people ... When I first moved here, for example, if I was fasting in Ramadan, people

would ask me all these questions, and they're curious and they're wondering. Now, it just seems like, they just know ... It's very welcoming I think (Kareem 2010).

For, Lulwa, who grew up in Vancouver without a large Muslim community in family or friends, appreciates, not only the diversity of the city in general, but of the Muslim community in particular:

Growing up with non-Muslims, they'll never quite understand. My friends would go swimming wearing bathing suits and stuff. I don't do that. They've never forced me to, but they never really understood ... I think, that that's the down point of Vancouver compared to Halifax, that understanding (Lulwa 2010).

I think Islam is amazing and it helps me every single day with every single problem, small or big. And it feels good when you can talk to someone about that ... So that's what I really love about Halifax. That I actually found Muslim friends, that understand everything that you go through religiously. Like Sara was raised here. So you know we have a lot in common, we actually understand each other. Yeah, she's from India, I'm from Algeria but [we both grow up in the Canadian context] (Lulwa 2010)

For others, the city's relatively small size, as well as its lack of cultural diversity, are reasons enough to move on after graduation:

It's a great environment to be Muslim. There are mosques and resources. But, you know, I want the cultural gap to be filled too. I want more Indians and more Pakistanis ... more of the food and the restaurants and the life and the culture and activities you wouldn't find here. I don't know if you have noticed, there are not that many Indian restaurants, or not that many multicultural restaurants (Sara 2010).

Harrie Podder compares Halifax to growing up in Karachi to explain why she longs to live in a larger city:

There's not much to do except go to the mall or Spring Garden ... I just want to go somewhere else [laughs] ... [Halifax lacks] variety ... In Karachi, there was so many people ... over here you feel like you know everything about everybody, like, there's nothing else to know. No more people to meet ... one of the reasons I was taking up these [volunteer] society meetings is because there is nothing else to do. I just want to have something to do ... There's so many festivals going on in bigger cities all the time ... maybe it's just what I perceive that bigger cities will have something more to do (Harrie Podder 2010).

One of the things she misses about living in Karachi is having a large Muslim community and her family member nearby:

Home is where the family is. We have a house [in Pakistan] but my family is here ... I miss my cousins ... and I do miss my friends but I can speak to them on Skype ... I miss it because I lived there for 17 years, you know, it was sort of my home, and I had to leave it, so I miss that ... I try not to think about it most of the time, but when I do, I do miss it a lot (Harrie Podder 2010).

In addition to the numerous mappings of diversity in the city, participants were quick to point out the significance of the university, in a sense, as a city within. Recall that Jane lived in large, diverse cities in the United States before moving to Moncton. In addition, during a trip to Montreal, that city's diversity struck a cord with Jane. When she moved from Moncton to Halifax, she again appreciated the diversity, particularly in spaces associated with downtown Halifax and the university campus:

That's why I like Halifax, I find it has a little bit of everything ... and I realize, as a university student, you have access to so many different things like guest lectures and things where you might not have access to once you graduate because you're away from it ... so like I like that about Halifax. You have access to so many different things. And not Halifax [but] Dalhousie (Jane 2010).

I like that it's a bigger town compared to Moncton but at the same time it's small. Like it has a cozy small town feel. But at the same time, it's big enough that you have things around ... one thing was, it has a lot of diversity. There are people from everywhere here ... And as far as being Muslim ... I don't feel like a Muslim-Canadian, I feel like a Canadian. And I think if I were in a place where I felt like a Muslim-Canadian ... I would feel uncomfortable there. Because it's kind of like pulling that out, right? ... It's just like you're accepted for who you are; not labeled one thing (Jane 2010).

As Kareem says, the everyday lives of his friends attending university downtown, are disconnected from the rest of the city:

Some of them live on campus, some of them live off campus but close to campus, and this is their life, the peninsula. And when I tell them, let's go to my house in Bedford, it's like a road trip [laughs]. Like they think they're leaving Canada or something [laughs] ...I don't blame them. There's really no need for them to ever leave the peninsula. As a student, every thing you would ever need is right here (Kareem 2010).

Often times, rather than subject his friends to a road trip to Bedford, he would sleep overnight at various university buildings:

We hung out here a lot [Student Union Building]. So just me and a big group of friends, doing everything except school work [laughs]. And when I was in computer science, the computer science building ... I spent a lot of time there, too.

That building used to be open 24/7, so there's been times where I actually slept there [laughs], just you know studying or out partying or whatever [laughs] (Kareem 2010).

Malcolm X suggests that the university contributes to what makes the city diverse, even though beyond its limits, there remains a lack of diversity:

I think any university is different from the rest of the city ... you're bound to get different ideas ... and different people from all over the world. It's interesting ... it makes the city livelier ... A lot of people don't leave the university ... and they're stuck in their multicultural city, I guess ... They don't see the other Halifax. And when they leave it, they see that it's a lot more whiter and it's a lot less diverse (Malcolm X 2009).

These participants reveal a number of ways that the city is both experienced and perceived in terms of cultural and racial diversity and in ways that contribute to their own personal sense of belonging in Halifax. More specifically, they also indicate various ways that places within the city, on the street and in the everyday, become important sites that contribute to their sense of belonging as Muslims. These 'halal' spaces sometimes emerge from the social relations of Muslims using them and sometimes are actively created with the purpose of providing 'halal' social space (see Figure 7).

In Maria's mapping of Halifax, the Second Cup coffee shop in downtown Halifax emerges as an important place both in her journey to Islam and as a 'halal' social space. Lulwa, Sara and Jane discuss the Second Cup located in the library on campus because it represents the everyday spaces in which they escape the busy schedule of university as well as to socialize among friends (see Photograph 47):

This was my first picture, only because [laughs] I'm here so much during the year and when you're here, you forget there's an outside world (Lulwa 2010).

The first picture I took right after you gave me the camera ... is Second Cup, basically my recreation zone in the library. I basically spend all of my time in the library during the year. It's just somewhere I go, take a break, hang out with my friends. It's a source of comfort for me during the year ... something that I really enjoy [laughs] ... [It's] where I spend most of my time on campus ... It's not just a place where I study ... it's a place where we hang out ... It's also where the prayer room is [inside the library] (Sara 2010).

Most of the free time, it's not like we go anywhere. Sometime, it's at school, like we'll just go grab a cup of coffee at Second Cup or we'll chill at the SUB and we just sit around and talk (Jane 2010).

Figure 7: Select Halal Social Spaces



Source: Map adapted from listingsca.com, 2007

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Catherine's Tim Hortons | 7 Maria's Second Cup |
| 2 Maria's Tim Hortons | 8 Lulwa's & Sara's Second Cup |
| 3 Kuyasha's Tim Hortons | 9 Amira's Coburg Coffee |
| 4 Kareem's Tim Hortons | 10 Talib's Panini Kabob |
| 5 Saladin's Tim Hortons | 11 Maria's Turkish Delight |
| 6 Abdullah's Tim Hortons | |

Photograph 47: On Halal Social Space (Lulwa 2010)



Amira, too, takes a photograph of a local coffee shop near the university of which she says, “It’s a really cool place where you can just kinda go and like study or meet with friends and, like, I spent a lot of time there” (Amira 2009).

More than any other place, Tim Hortons appears in photographs and interviews as a favourite place for a quick coffee, a place to hang out with friends, or a retreat from a busy day. There are definite emotional connections made in and associated with Tim Hortons. My point here is that the ways in which participants spoke of Tim Hortons in their everyday lives suggests that it has become a place in which participants develop a sense of belonging on a personal level and in ways that enter into other social and community relations.

For Saladin, who is the newest of participants to Halifax and for whom laying down the foundations for multiple belongings has been challenging given the difficulty of finding steady employment, Tim Hortons represents one of his stronger place connections (see Photograph 48). Tim’s is a favourite among Saladin and his friends becoming part of most social activities:

It’s some sort of a place just to get a coffee and go, but whenever we go shopping or go eat somewhere, McDonalds, KFC, or pizza or whatever, definitely we get Tim Hortons after (Saladin 2009).

In his circumstances, a place to have affordable coffee should not be underestimated, however, it also provides a social space that Saladin re-imagines as part of the Egyptian community to which he feels connected:

Of course, addicted to Tim Hortons [laughs] ... Yeah, all the Egyptians as well. Yeah, all of them. They tried it for a couple of times and then it was something like daily basis for us (Saladin 2009).

Photograph 48: Tim Hortons (Saladin 2009)



He injects himself and Tim Hortons into the local Egyptian community by invoking the collective ‘us’ when he refers to spending time there. Moreover, this everyday local social space is transported through a transnational imagining of its place in Egypt:

We were wondering, something really good and beautiful with such a large quality, why no one had ever heard of it in the whole Middle East ... no one had ever heard of Tim Hortons and, you know, it’s really, really good. And when you see Tim Hortons beside a Starbucks and you see how many people here, and how many people there, [laughs] it’s a huge difference ... Everyone who went back to Egypt in the winter break or after graduation they bring a box of Tim Hortons coffee with them, and give some as a present and save some for themselves (Saladin 2009).

Saladin goes beyond his local Tim’s in Halifax and bestows praise on a corporate Canadian success against a competitor from the United States. The slippage between the corporate and national here suggests that he holds some amount of pride in being part of the Canadian landscape, if only temporarily. Lastly, Tim Hortons becomes a souvenir when returning to Egypt; a representation of Canada and a reminder of a favourite aspect of everyday life in Halifax. That he and his friends might ‘save some for themselves’ suggests they, too, wish to hold on to their own sense of belonging within the Canadian nation.

On a more local and personal scale, Kareem photographs a gas station where there is also a Tim Hortons as a way to orientate himself in relation to work, family, and his own history of growing up in Halifax (see Photograph 49):

Being a cab driver I go through a lot of gas ... so that location in particular because it's a big gas station. There's two Tim Hortons there ... I'm addicted to coffee, really, really bad yeah ... that was my pitstop all the time (Kareem 2010).

Photograph 49: Pitstop for Gas and 'Timmies' (Kareem 2010)



In another photograph, Kareem captures a Tim Hortons cup sitting on the dash of his cab, and further reflects on its importance (see Photograph 50):

Photograph 50: Cab and Coffee (Kareem 2010)



99% of the time when I'm drinking coffee that's the view, I'm always in my cab [laughs] ... Whenever I'm in the cab I have to have a coffee ... it feels wrong when I reach down and there's no coffee there. So, I figured that's a good picture, the taxi meter and my coffee ... it's always been Tim Hortons ... the Tim Hortons in Bedford, down the street from where I lived was a huge spot for me and my friends, spent a lot of time there (Kareem 2010).

Tim Hortons is one of many anchoring memories in his narrative of growing up in Halifax while also tied to the rituals of everyday life in his present sense of belonging.

Tim Hortons is also a favourite place of Amy's, for whom coffee and cigarettes go hand in hand (see Photograph 51):

I smoke so that's a cigarette in the ashtray, and my coffee, because I'm always drinking coffee, and that's my car ... I'm a huge Tim Hortons fan, I should have shares in it (Amy 2010).

A mom working outside the home who spends considerable time in a number of volunteer roles, Amy spends a lot of time shuttling from place to place in her car. The photograph represents other key aspects of daily life, in particular smoking and drinking coffee are pictured in a way that reveals the ordinariness of everyday life and highlights that behind the hijab is a person with quirks and flaws just like everyone else.

Photograph 51: On Coffee and Cigarettes (Amy 2010)



Maria frequents Tim Hortons especially while at work when she needs to take a few minutes out of her day to relax. She also draws connections between Tim Hortons and representations of the Maritimes and Maritime culture (see Photograph 52):

It's not the Maritimes without Tim Hortons ... that's my 'I need a coffee and I'm at work' Tim Hortons. So I cross the street, walk across the tracks up the back street and come out here and come to Tim Hortons (Maria 2009).

Maria distinguishes this particular location from the likely many others she frequents around town. Drinking coffee and spending time in cafes, more generally, is an important aspect, not only of how Maria would prefer to spend her social time, but also of her identity and sense of place and belonging:

If I have a choice ... it depends on the money that I have. I will always pick Second Cup over Tim Hortons because I like it better, it tastes better, the coffee's better. Tim Hortons is the cheap alternative [laughs] ... it's cheap and you can sit there and it's your first coffee shop that you hang out in. ... Now it's more of a convenience thing or a get away thing. When I'm sick of looking at the gym, I'll go here to have a coffee. Because to me having coffee is synonymous to relaxing. I don't have coffee to perk me up and get me going. I have it to relax ... to me it's a relaxing activity. So when I need that mental break from [work] ... I'll go to Tim Hortons because it's the closest coffee shop (Maria 2009).

Photograph 52: Relaxing at Tim Hortons (Maria 2009)



There is a social history to drinking coffee in cafes in which Maria claims a place. For youth, Tim Hortons is often one of the first places in which to spend time with friends, hang out, and

have coffee. In one of Catherine's photographs, she reflects on the local 'Tim's' from her youth (see Photograph 53):

The Bedford Tim Hortons ... that's the central location of where youth meet. When we were in school, that's where we hung out. It's the central meeting point for the Bedford kids ... I'm very addicted and Tim Hortons to me represents Canada. It's like my social insurance card. I see the cup and I feel homey, and I feel okay, everything's good. [laughs] ... [We hung out] a lot and we still do. Like 'I'll meet you at Tim Hortons.' It's such a Bedford thing [laughs] (Catherine 2009).

Catherine connects the Bedford Tim Hortons to a set of belongings across multiple scales. She reveals an emotional landscape constructed over time and through countless experiences and memories, in which she feels comfort and a sense of being 'home' at the local and national scale. In a small suburb of Halifax, where activities and spaces for young people are limited, Tim's emerges as the 'central meeting point' for youth. At the same time, she likens it to her social insurance card as a symbol of the nation. While this particular Tim's in Bedford is remembered as and reflected on through a very specific and local set of meanings ('it's such a Bedford thing'), she simultaneously links it to her sense of national belonging in Canada.

Photograph 53: Tim Hortons Bedford (Catherine 2009)



While some spaces, like cafes, are adopted as 'halal' social spaces, other ones must be created specifically to provide public places in which Muslims can gather and socialize. Talib is an outgoing and very sociable young convert who has extensive social relationships in and out of

the Muslim community. His pictures of the Panini Kabob restaurant near the CID and Chebucto mosque represent an emerging ‘halal’ social space (see Photograph 54 and Photograph 55):

The reason I took these pictures, and the reason it is significant, is because this is really the hang out spot ... the community needs it, you know, a place to hang out ... They serve all halal food. It’s very busy after Friday prayers because it’s right next to the mosque. We go pray at the mosque, then we come here, chill, eat, hang out, go on the computer, ah, TV in the back, you know, just drink coffee, chill. Sometimes we’re there until two in the morning (Talib 2010).

Talib clearly values this space and suggests it begins to fill the need for Muslim social space in the city. Given its Muslim ownership, halal menu, and proximity to the Centre for Islamic Development and the Chebucto mosque, it is fast becoming a popular place for young Muslims to spend time before and after prayers:

The word’s really getting out and a lot of people are hearing about it ... it’s really great to have ... we don’t have too many spots that we can just go chill in a quote unquote Islamic environment (Talib 2010).

Photograph 54: Halal Social Space (Talib 2010)



Photograph 55: Halal Social Space (Talib 2010)



Some of the mosques in the city have adapted to offer space in their facilities for social activities. But as Talib explains, these have been ad hoc and remain inadequate to meet the needs of young people for ‘halal’ social space:

The facilities aren’t great ... no other place is equipped at all. You know, you got to make your own space ... This is a big thing about the new mosque they’re constructing ... [having an] Islamic environment or climate especially for the kids, because it’s so easy to go astray. Especially in a city that’s a boring place (Talib 2010).

Talib notes that the need for these spaces has also been part of the development of the new masjid, which will provide not only space for prayer and Islamic teaching, but also a variety of social and recreational spaces for Muslim youth in particular.

Jane reveals how not only the privacy of her home but also public space can be a ‘halal’ social space for Muslim women, especially for those who publicly wear the hijab (see Photograph 56):

It wouldn’t make sense to go clubbing with a bunch of hijabis [laughs]. So we do culturally appropriate things [laughs] ... We don’t have a TV ... so usually when we go to our friends house, they’re all like let’s watch a movie, but I find when they come to our house, we spend a lot of time just talking and catching up (Jane 2010).

Obviously, none of us drink so we’ll go to places like Fireside but we’ll [order] virgin drinks ... A lot of our friends wear hijab so usually when we go to parties

they're all like covered up and stuff right? So me and my sister are throwing a party for all of the girls at our house ... we had one last year and they all come glammed up and it's just all girls, we'll have mocktails and dinner ... we'll have music and they're will be dancing (Jane 2010).

As international students, the Bangladeshi participants discussed few specific emotional connections to the city. Over and over again in our interviews, their experiences of everyday life in Halifax are expressions or reflections of a longing for home. Tarek, for example, maps out his feelings of connection and disconnection to Halifax through a comparative geography of his home city of Dhaka as well as the imagined experiences of Muslims living in smaller Nova Scotia towns:

I am used to seeing a lot of people in the streets ... Here hardly. If you go outside of downtown you see that there is nothing. So, that's the big thing ... and it's kind of quiet, it's not that noisy. Sometimes you feel for that. Sometimes you'll feel 'this is so empty there should be a crowd here and there' but [it's] not that bad of course ... One of my friends used to live in Antigonish ... I think there is hardly like 2000 people so there is absolutely nothing out there ... there is very few Muslims over there. There are no mosques. There is nothing there (Tarek 2009).

Photograph 56: On Halal Social Space: Glamming It Up at Home (Jane 2010)



Tarek misses the street life of a people-filled city; as he says, 'sometimes you feel for that'. Outside of the city centre of Halifax, he indicates an even more desolate people-less city where there is 'nothing'. Sabir also compares living in cosmopolitan Dhaka to the relatively small Halifax noting what he misses about its urban life and city streets:

[In Dhaka] we used to go out in the nighttime, go for dinner at nine or ten ... go for walk or coffee or something. Here, after eight, everything is closed. If you want to go for dinner at 9, 9:30 or 10 everything is closed ... there is just the bar for enjoyment. There is no other place to go ... But in Bangladesh and in the big cities there's lots of shopping malls ... open until midnight. Restaurant open until midnight ... but nothing here you can do ... In Halifax there is only one shopping mall ... and [for the] last year just going that place ... same shopping mall, same people, same things. [laughs] ... everything closed at eight. That's a very bad thing [laughs] (Sabir 2010).

Sabir values the street life of the city, especially at night, as a social space to spend time with friends. In Halifax, this is limited, especially if one is guided by Islamic principles that exclude much of what passes for entertainment there:

Normally on the weekend, we just go to the Tim Hortons, then go to the harbour, just walk in the harbour, just gossip, that's all ... weekends are really boring here ... usually I just stay home (Sabir 2010).

Trishana draws from experiences in several cities to express what it is she likes about living in Halifax:

Halifax is really nice, I went to Toronto in May and the thing is, I like a place where there are less people, less big streets, and highways, and like you feel like going around Halifax walking on foot, I like places like that. That you can enjoy the nature and all. Like there are lots of beautiful places. I like Halifax more than Toronto (Trishana 2010).

Yet, her perception of Halifax as a small city shifts when she discusses public transportation and her difficulty in going places outside of the downtown core. In this excerpt she recounts a trip out to Bayers Lake, a suburban big box store development and how her perception of Halifax changed:

After going there I found that I thought that Halifax was a really small city but when I went to the Bayers Lake, it was such a long journey and I just found that it's not a small city that we thought of. Maybe it's pretty big. Like maybe bigger than my own city, Dhaka (Trishana 2010).

Dhaka is a city 360 square kilometers in size with a population of 7 million people. Even expanding to include all of the Halifax Regional Municipality, not just the city of Halifax itself, the region is about 260 square kilometers with a population of just under 400 thousand. Her perception of the sprawling city is fueled by the fact that it takes an hour or more once you do

two or three exchanges between buses to get from downtown to Bayers Lake; a trip that would take ten to fifteen minutes by car.

Part II: Looking Like a Muslim: Negotiating Practices in Being Muslim

In this section, participants discuss some of the complexities around being Muslim in Halifax and reveal the diversity of experiences, expressions, and practices of faith and culture in everyday life. I first draw from the experiences of converts before turning to those born into Muslim families to highlight the notion that ‘looking like a Muslim’ has multiple motivations and effects in Halifax.

The Converts

Converts typically make a conscious choice to adopt markers that will convey their faith, in part, as a deliberate expression of pride in identity but also as a way to convey their commitment to Islam. Malcolm X, who is not a convert, suggests that efforts to ‘look Muslim’ are important to expressions of identity but may not always be taken seriously:

My mother always laughs when she sees the converts come in and they wear turbans over their heads and kufis and long beards ... [They] try to show everybody that they’re Muslim too ... I’m sure they face a lot of discrimination in the Muslim community because they’re constantly being asked, ‘oh, are you a Muslim? Where are you from? Well, what’s your name?’ ... So by wearing that clothing it kind of connotes (sic) that they’re Muslim ... that’s why I’m sure a lot of converts wear them (Malcolm X 2009).

Clothing and other ways to make one’s body ‘look Muslim’ is a way to distinguish converts from other Muslim subjectivities including those born into Islam, immigrant Muslims, and the various cultural expressions of Islam.

The converts provide two very different interpretations and expressions of what it means to practice Islam and be a Muslim in Halifax. These differences may be the result of a generation gap: Talib converted in his late teens, Maria in her mid-twenties; Amy in her late thirties, and Talal in his late forties. Talal and Amy provide examples of much stricter interpretations and practices of modest dress and its importance, particularly for a sense of belonging within Islam and as a Muslim, than do Talib and Maria who both practice with more creativity and flexibility. However, there are contradictions and complexities in negotiating a Muslim identity even when,

as in Amy's case, more rigid boundaries are places around what it means to be a practicing Muslim.

As Malcolm X suggests, converts adopt practices and markers in order to identify with Islam but also to allow others to see them as faithful Muslims. For some, these markers become critical to self-definition as well as become the way to define others. Talal embodies the Islamic principle of modesty through his dress and comportment wearing the kufi and beard as a symbol of his faith, is also symbolic of the kinds of social relations with other Muslims that he expects to have:

I interact with other people, like non-Muslims or dare I say bad Muslims, you know, I don't know if I really want to use that term but ... people that don't practice the way that I choose to practice. I don't shun them it's just that the people that I choose to become closer to are the ones that I see at the masjid, the ones that I see at Friday prayer, the ones who ... try at least to practice their religion the best way they can. Very, very big part of my social life is definitely defined by my faith (Malcolm X 2009).

Talal embraces his visibility as a Muslim suggesting that it presents both a responsibility and an opportunity in representing Islam and what it means to be Muslim:

When I go to work ... I try to behave the best way that I can. Hopefully somebody's looking at me and saying 'that guy's a pretty nice guy, I wonder what he's like' ... I know that I leave on Fridays and there's people who ask me questions, you know, 'where do you go? What do you do there?' ... Like one guy said, 'do you wear the thobe and all that kind of stuff' ... If I answer that question honestly maybe the next time it's going to be like a question that's got some substance right? ... I think eventually he's going to ask me something about what is it that you believe, or why do you believe, right? ... [If] I make a mistake at work and somebody sees me and he says, 'okay that's what Muslims are for, that's what Muslims are like'. And he basis his whole acceptance or rejection of Islam on that. that's got more to do with him than it does with me ... I'm pretty sure that when I walk in public space with the kufi and beard, there's probably people who look at me and say well, there's a potential terrorist or whatever (Talal 2009).

As a white convert, Talal's 'Muslimness' is not evident or assumed because of language or ethnicity but rather by the clothes or kufi he might be wearing or by virtue of the practice of prayers throughout the day. As an ambassador, by choice or by default, he presents himself and Islam in the best possible light through his personal behaviour on a daily basis but otherwise recognizes that he has little control over how others read his 'Muslimness'.

Talal is married to a Saudi Muslim woman and adhering to Islamic dress is a crucial aspect not only of his identity and social relations but also as part of belonging within his marriage:

James: If [your wife] made the choice someday to not wear it ... would that pose a problem?

Talal: Yeah, it would. I would be really upset ... One of the reasons I married her was because she wears hijab ... it's a condition of the agreement. A condition of the contract is to be covered. It's the same with me. If I started to behave differently, dress differently, like, we have dress codes too, right? ... For me to say, you know, I can wear short shorts, short tight shorts ... well, that's my choice really, but to do that is, to my mind, coming outside of Islam ... So for her to say, okay I don't have to wear hijab or to pray or to whatever ... you're going outside the faith and it's not what I bought into. It's not what I signed up for (Talal 2009).

Through his expressions and practices of faith, Talal constructs more firm boundaries around his and others' Muslim identities.

Similarly, Amy, who has worn the hijab since becoming Muslim, believes that it is a requirement of being a good Muslim. She wears it, in part, to give her strength on a daily basis to maintain her commitment to Islam but positions herself somewhere between culturally strict and cultural flexible forms of wearing the headscarf. For example, she suggests that more culturally strict forms of the headscarf, such as the niqab, act as a barrier, not only to social engagement, but also to being a good Muslim through the practice of dawah (inviting others to learn about Islam):

Most women who wear the full covering it's because they don't want to speak to men. They don't want to have interaction with people. They want to be very pious, they want to hide behind it in a sense, it closes them off ... I mean to each their own, I don't agree with it, because a part of the religion is having to do dawah and you cannot do dawah when you are wearing a full mask on your face (Amy 2010).

While Amy suggests that cultural adaptations of the hijab can sometimes create barriers within Islamic practice, she also suggests that the more flexible and creative adaptations of the headscarf common among the younger generation is equally problematic:

Amy: As long as you wear it the way I'm wearing it ... you can wear any colour you want ... [but] you shouldn't really try to bedazzle it ... because it's drawing attention to yourself ... Everyone has different opinions ... In the religion, yes, I have to cover this way [indicates her own covering] and you shouldn't show any

of your hair ... A lot of them have it half slipping off or it fell and they put it back on or you know, styled a different way. That's not wearing a hijab ... I'm not cool with that ... I understand, I'm older, and a lot of these ones that do [wear the headscarf more fashionably] are younger ... they're trying to work their own way into society, trying to fit in, and it's a hard time in their lives ... may God forgive them ...

James: Does that stop you from interacting with those folks?

Amy: No. No. No, no, no. No. Even the ones covering their face, I'll interact with them ... and I feel bad saying because it's kind of hypocritical, because, look at me, I'm smoking, right? ... We all do what we can do within our limits and what we feel comfortable with. Nobody's perfect, but to me ... wearing the scarf that way gives a wrong idea to other people as to how we're supposed to properly dress. Even though I know I smoke, and that gives a wrong idea, I know, but [laughs] (Amy 2010).

While Amy reinforces fairly strict interpretations of modesty and how Muslim women must properly wear the hijab, she also acknowledges the limits within individuals to practice faith in absolute ways. She raises her smoking habit as an example of the contradictions that problematize any straightforward reading of Muslim women, whether or not they wear the hijab:

It's a hard thing, right? ... I hope to [quit] one day ... I've smoked for twenty years, I'm not proud of it. So when people [laughs] see me in the car having a cigarette [laughs] and they look at me, they think I'm a nun. And then they think I'm smokin'. And they're like, what? That doesn't make any sense ... We shouldn't be putting our sins out there for everybody to see. We should conceal them as much as possible ... I smoke in my car ... many of my Muslim friends know that I smoke, but when I'm with them I'm not smoking ... and a lot of my Muslim friends don't know I smoke. And it's not that I'm hiding it from them, it's just ... out of respect ... If they ask me, I'll say yeah, I smoke [laughs] ... We're not allowed to have tattoos, drink, drugs, smoke, because you're harming your body ... we think, our body is not ours. It was given to us, it's not for us to destroy and mutilate and ruin ... I should be ashamed of it, but it's what I do. At work it puts me in a different social aspect with people, too. And it's not that I'm giving it an excuse, but it also gives me a reason to explain real Islam to different people ... Cause I'm in that smokers circle [laughs] ... a lot of people ask me 'whoa, what do you mean you smoke, you're not supposed to smoke' ... I'm portrayed to be looking like I'm supposed to be the most pious person. Well, you know, I try, but I'm human, right (Amy 2010).

Talib and Maria represent a younger generation of Muslim converts in Halifax who integrate the principles of Islam into the practice of everyday life with greater creativity and flexibility than, perhaps, Talal and Amy. The photograph of Maria's ballet slippers on the doors

of the former dance studio provide her the opportunity to share with me how much, in her pre-Muslim days, dance and performance provided an intimate grounding of self through the physicality of her body:

Spending five and six hours a day in a studio working on your body, and gaining control over something in your life as opposed to having control of nothing in your life is very empowering. And [dance] taught me a love of being able to feel that (Maria 2009).

When she accepted Islam and began to experiment with wearing the hijab, she was conscious of some of the lines of conflict this might pose:

When I put on the hijab I stopped dance ... I haven't decided now that I have this newer expression of modesty [wearing headscarf], where I'll fit that into my life; if it will ... Some people do not consider dancing ... as a modest behaviour ... I think that dances done artistically but not sexually could be perfectly fine in terms of modesty if you're still following a healthy version of modesty (Maria 2009).

Maria negotiates between the principles of Islam, her choices in how to express her faith and the many interests that preceded her acceptance of Islam as she finds ways to fit her interests into her 'newer' modest self as a hijabi Muslim woman.

One of Maria's photographs, taken in her bedroom but poorly developed, provides a material representation of her creative expression as a hijab-wearing convert:

My hijabi Barbie. I got her when I was in Dubai [laughs] ... It's a real Barbie and her name is Fullah and she wears hijab ... And when I saw her, I had to have her (Maria 2009).

She relates to the Muslim Barbie that sits on her nightstand under her lamp with and its stylish headscarf because it represents both her childhood and her present self as a white Canadian Muslim convert negotiating identity.

Converts, perhaps, are seeking multiple belongings that straddle their social and cultural life both before and after accepting Islam. Certainly among the Muslim community, convert belonging hinges on being accepted by other Muslims. Maria is the only convert to speak about a 'convert community' and the role that the presence of converts plays in the larger Muslim community of Halifax:

With white converts, you notice each other right away and you're the only ones that will say hi to each other. It's really weird ... there's just this instant mini-

friendship ... not quite friends because you probably might never hang out with each other again (Maria 2009).

[Converts] are probably the ones that are more active ... In terms of trying to do Muslim events, doing fundraising and things ... they're the ones that are eager about attending things ... Honestly I think that if it wasn't for the converts there wouldn't be anything going on [laughs]. Because we demand things, we demand learning, we demand knowledge. Whereas people who are born Muslim are happy with where they are and they don't seek to educate themselves as to whether what they are practicing is cultural or religious. And we are the ones always there questioning ... I think we keep things fresh. We keep people on their toes ... Some people don't like our questioning, which is fine. But I think that we keep healthy debates alive (Maria 2009).

She suggests that cultural ideas and practices, particularly within Muslim immigrants communities, are mixed into Islam in a way that is problematic for converts:

In Canada ... [Muslim immigrants] get isolated, homesick or lonely ... they hold on to whatever little bit of themselves ... and they mix it with Islam and they try to tell us and we [converts] say why? So we shake things up. Sometimes they like us for it and sometimes they don't. We don't care because we're not here for the cultural aspect. So we're quick to say 'oh no, I don't think that's Islam, so I'm not going to do that'. And that gets us enemies and we don't care [laughs] (Maria 2009).

Maria speaks with disdain about the ways in which the hijab becomes a symbolic and material boundary that divides, particularly women, in the Muslim community:

If I'm out anywhere ... I'll smile trying to get someone's attention because I'm going to say [Salaam] to them, and they'll avoid all eye contact and they'll avoid me completely ... I don't know what's wrong with the women. Maybe it's just the language barrier, I don't know ... If you were a woman who was veiled and scarfed and all that more noticeable, wouldn't you find someone else who was veiled and scarfed, oh, thank God, you're like that too (Maria 2009)?

Often the case [is] that people who wear headscarves think that they're better than the people who don't wear headscarves. And then [in] the case of the people who wear veils they think that they are more religiously astute than the people who don't ... some people who wear the headscarf and no veil don't talk to the people who are veiled because they think that they are wrong ... I'll be honest, I'm part of this whole thing because the ladies who veil annoy me ... they sound so arrogant because they believe that they should wear the veil because a man could look at them and fall in love with them and lust after them. And I find that very self-centred and arrogant [laughs] (Maria 2009).

Maria laments the divisive use of the hijab while at the same time reinforces the divisions with her own frustrations located in her perceptions of women's motives for wearing certain forms of hijab.

Talib positions himself and the expression of his identity in relation to the black cultural context within which he grew up and the various aspects of Muslim cultural identities in Halifax, in particular, of those raised in Muslim immigrant families. As a convert, these comparisons help describe and give meaning to the ways in which he embodies Islam in everyday life. In an interesting narrative, mapping out personal connections between race and religion, blackness and Muslimness, Talib locates his sense of self-identity within a black community familiar with Muslim culture:

I usually like to wear something so that they know that I'm black but they know that I'm Muslim. They'll, like 'Salam!, what's up?' You know, you'll see a different vibe than white Canadians ... I find a big, big, huge, huge, difference between black Canadians towards Islam than white Canadians towards Islam ... From the black aspect ... It's hard for them view me or other black people who become Muslim, as less black, or question my blackness, because ... most of the black people ... have somebody in their family who is Muslim ... or they know another black person who has converted ... there's a lot of cultural differences between Islamic culture and Black culture, but there's a lot of connections too (Talib 2010).

Talib provides further insight into 'convert identity' and the practices and struggles of finding a home among other Muslims as a new convert. In comparison to those who were born into Muslim families and raised within that context, he says that for converts like himself, Islam is an embodied practice of everyday life and not just a set of rituals within a religion:

As Canadian Muslims we kind of live our lives more Islamically ... we refer to Islam as a Dīn ... A Dīn is a way of life, it's not a religion, it's something different, it controls all aspects, it encompasses everything ... The Canadians put a lot more emphasis on [Islam as] a way of life. It's not like we just pray five times a day ... We really incorporate as much as we can into the food we eat, the way we dress, the way we act, the way we talk ... Most of my friends who are immigrants ... came from Muslim countries and they never practiced Islam in their countries ... perhaps because they're born with it and it's just in the norm ... But when they come here, they feel like an outsider, they're a minority so they kind of want to maybe hold more onto their [Islamic] identity (Talib 2010).

Talib exercises a lot of freedom with the way he practices his Muslim identity in terms of clothing style. As he says, since he was born in Canada and converted to Islam, he does not have the same expectations that other Muslims might be held up to in terms of faith and culture:

I've never thought about it before, but I like being able to play with my identity because there's several ways that I can dress. When I dress like this people assume I'm Arab, even Arab's assume that I'm Arab. I can dress to look, you know, black. I don't really think I can dress to look not black, but I can dress in a different style I guess [chuckles] ... I can honestly wake up and be lazy ... put on my sweatpants and a ballcap ... and that's what I do ... Actually my friend just told me yesterday, I was wearing shirt and pants and he was like, 'man, you look weird like this. When I see you like this I feel like there's something wrong with this guy, like, this doesn't look normal' (Talib 2010).

Talib says that as a convert his expression of Muslim identity is flexible and creative rather than fixed within the cultural frameworks that influence the identities of some immigrant Muslims:

They're just trying to fit in ... Muslims come here, for example, their name's Mohammad, but when they come here they become Mike ... As Canadians, we become Muslim and we change our names from Mike to Mohammad ... As Muslim converts ... because we come from Canada ... not so much here in the Maritimes, but it's a multicultural country ... we don't really have an Islamic culture so we kind of blend into whatever we like. For example, what I'm wearing right now, this is kind of strictly South Asian, Indian-Pakistani this sort of thing, you would never see an Arab wearing this ... But as for me, I'm mixing. I'm wearing that with something you would wear in the Middle East, right? ... People say the people who become Muslim are much better Muslims than people who were born Muslim. That's not always true, it's a misconception ... [But] I think it has to do something with identity. And something to do honestly with a feeling ... we're not immigrants here, we were born here, we were raised here, our families have been here for generations, so we don't really feel like we have to fit in ... I kind of find it funny how, Muslim immigrants ... although they look completely different from the majority population, their name is different, their accent is different, everything's different, but they try desperately to fit in ... they try to assimilate themselves a lot even though they're so obviously different ... A lot of them view me as more Muslim than they are ... just because I made the conscious decision to become Muslim ... because people have told me no matter how religious they are, they kind of just have the feeling they're following their parents. Whereas for me it's the opposite, I went against my parents, which is, especially for a lot of the cultures that the Muslims come from, an unthinkable thing to go against your parents (Talib 2010).

Talib's practices and expressions of identity and faith are a collage pasted together from multiple sources including his experiences growing up in Canada, a cultural framework derived from Nova Scotia black heritage and a broader black culture, and through interactions with other Muslims, converts and immigrants alike. This everyday mixing of self-expression disrupts any simple religious, racial or cultural reading of his identity:

They're like 'what is this guy doing? He's got turbans on, he's got a hoodie on, he's got a thobe on?' ... They're confused. He's mixing cultures ... it's because of the kind of style I had before Islam ... sometimes I dress completely Canadian, sometimes I dress completely non-Canadian ... when I do this, go back and forth, I notice a big difference in the way people perceive me, the way people interact with me, the way I'm treated, the way I'm looked at, the way I'm talked to (Talib 2010).

It's more of a pride [thing] ... we want to show people that we've become Muslim ... For me, because I'm half white, half black, my skin colour is - people don't get it that I'm not from away. They don't get that I'm 100% Canadian ... I guess it's a good way to kind of give a good image of Islam in a sense, I mean we're not criminals, we're not [terrorists]. People can readily identify us as Muslim, so any good thing we do, it can at least be attributed in some sense to Islam. And it can also help prevent us from doing things we shouldn't do, we don't want to give a bad image (Talib 2010).

In part, he suggests that his active and outward practice of Islam and his choice in displaying his Muslimness are strategies not only to find a sense of belonging among other Muslims but also to 'perform' Muslimness in ways that serve as counter discourse to negative and stereotypical representations. Since becoming Muslim, he says that although they are few, any negative interactions he has had have been with other Muslims calling to question his 'Muslimness':

They might look at you and they might think a certain way but nobody says anything. In Canada, generally, we don't say anything to people, you know what I mean? ... but for Muslims, that's not the case. If I'm a Muslim and you're a Muslim and you see something that you don't agree with you're going to say something. Just the fact that we are both Muslims gives you the absolute right to criticize my life. So, from that aspect I've had, not big challenges, but I've had challenges, kind of explaining myself, if you will, to Muslims. As to why I do certain things, why I have a beard, why I dress a certain way, why I act a certain way (Talib 2010).

Born Muslim

DJ Albatross suggests that different practices and embodiments of culture and faith, such as one's accent, skin colour or modes of dress, provide sites at which the boundaries of difference are clearly evident and through which Muslims might experience discrimination:

I'm a little bit different than the stereotypical Pakistani immigrant [who] would have an accent, would perhaps dress differently ... I've been here for twelve years, I can say that being Canadian is just as much a part of my identity as being Pakistani. If not so more now because, think about it, I've lived more in Canada than in Pakistan ... [AND] when you have a language problem as well as you're visible minority, I really think that increases your vulnerability ... makes you more likely to be discriminated against ... I wear western clothes so maybe that's why I also have not been at the persecution end (DJ Albatross 2009).

While he says he has not experienced discrimination directly, noting that he speaks without an accent and wears Western clothes, he shares a story of discrimination against two acquaintances:

A sister I know who wears hijab ... told me that somebody abused her ... just a random person. Or my friend, who likes to wear the thobe, people would drive by and say go back home ... Xenophobic things. I definitely think that when you either speak a lot different or look a lot different it definitely opens you up to discrimination. And it doesn't necessarily have to be from people outside your group. Sometimes the landed Muslims here are like persecuting or discriminating against the new ones that come (DJ Albatross 2009).

At the end of this excerpt, he reorients the lens to within the Muslim community highlighting the ways in which differences between Muslims are read at the site of the practicing body. He suggests that his visibility as a practicing Muslim in Halifax may also be read and judged by other Muslims:

I know certain Muslims would ostracize other Muslims if they do something un-Islamic ... some people ... they'll do anything to assimilate, just to feel belonging. And they'll sacrifice Islamic ideals ... you shouldn't totally withdraw yourself or you should not totally try to give up who you are just to fit in to a group. You should maintain a balance (DJ Albatross 2009).

As a Muslim, I have a higher principle ... God is watching you. Don't worry about what people are saying or thinking ... it should not be the primary concern of any true Muslim. It first should be your obligation to God (DJ Albatross 2009).

It becomes clear that, particularly for those participants who were born into the faith, 'looking like a Muslim' is far less important than embodying the principles of Islam in everyday life. Both

Duke and DJ Albatross suggest that modes of dress and other embodying markers of Islam do not necessarily reflect the spirit of, or commitment to, one's faith:

People attribute scarves or the beard as an attribute of faith, which is wrong, because Islam doesn't measure piety by the length of your beard or your scarf. It's what is inside your heart ... It's the spiritual relationship between God and yourself (Duke 2009).

You can dress ... and look a certain way as much as you want and think you're a good Muslim and that you're a better Muslim than the other guy ... but what's important is how you feel in the inside. What your connection is with god. If you're just superficial and you have no connection with god and you dress so religiously, have the long beard and have your kufi on, have your abaya, it's just a complete façade (Malcolm X 2009).

Amira believes faith is personal and that what you believe and how you practice what you believe is a personal matter between yourself and God. However, she argues that the various forms of the hijab are cultural expressions of a religious tenet of modesty. While she adheres to the principle of modesty, there are limits:

I absolutely do not agree when people cover their face. I think that's absolutely wrong, and that's not religious and that's 100 percent cultural ... a couple of months ago ... something happened in Halifax where a woman wearing a niqab, her face was covered, was not allowed on a bus, because the [bus driver] was oblivious and ignorant, didn't know what that was and didn't want to let someone on the bus covering their face just because out of the safety of the other people. It became this huge ordeal. And I was like, you know what, I'm 100 percent behind the bus driver. There's no need for it. That's not religious. She claims that that's religious. It's absolutely not religious. When you go to the holiest place known to the Muslim world, which is known as Hajj, you are not allowed to cover your face. No. You're not allowed. So, 100 percent cultural (Amira 2009).

She points out contradictions in 'looking like a Muslim' and the way people practice Islam:

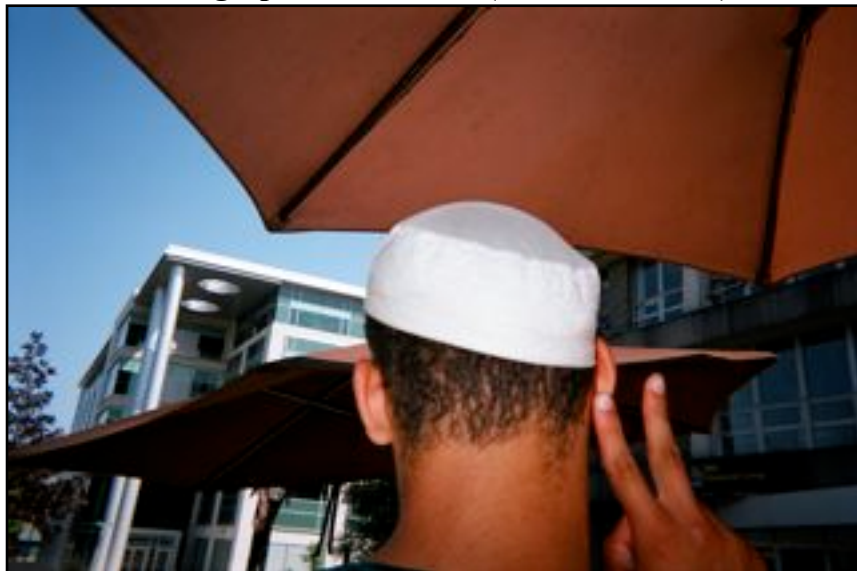
Wearing the scarf should come after you're the perfect Muslim. Because I find people are wearing these beards and wearing these scarves to show like, 'I am Muslim, I am Muslim, I am Muslim' but they are doing things that aren't Islamic. Because people aren't going to say 'oh like that's Mohammad he's swearing and oh my goodness', they're going to say 'oh my god, that Muslim has a dirty mouth'. [So] I feel like that's something that should come up later when you as an individual have decided that you are going to follow the religion as perfectly as humanly possible. And I'm not there yet. And I don't know if I will ever wear it (Amira 2009).

The superficiality of wearing the beard or veil as evidence of one's faith becomes a material site of tension when it is read from another's perspective. Amira suggests that 'poor' performances of Muslim-ness will further entrench stereotypes and misrepresentations of Muslims as a single, uniform, community.

Similarly, Malcolm X attempts to draw a boundary between culture and religion when it comes to visible expressions of Islam in Halifax. He represents a cultural connection to Islam in a photograph of a friend wearing a kufi (see Photograph 57):

It's important because it symbolizes dress, culture, and I find that very important to me ... especially Islamic culture ... I would wear it because I'm showing my culture, not because I'm for religion. 100% I'd wear this, you know ... if I ever live in the Middle East or I lived in Africa, I would definitely wear it ... I'd be so happy to wear it too. But you know, I wasn't raised in that culture, I wasn't raised wearing that. They sure as hell don't wear it in Lebanon (Malcolm X 2009).

Photograph 57: The Kufi (Malcolm X 2009)



He begins to map out the differences between cultural and religious expression that are often conflated into assumptions of what it means to be Muslim. Modes of dress, such as the kufi or the various forms of wearing the hijab are not expressions of Islam rather they reflect cultural and geographical connections to belonging 'in place':

It's not religious at all. It's culture. Some people will agree with me ... some people that I know, they'll wear burqas in their country and they tell me, you know, 'I live [in Canada] I wear hijab, wear a hijab no problem., but I feel more comfortable wearing the burqa so when I travel to Afghanistan, I wear a burqa. I

go on the plane wearing a burqa.’ Some people will agree that it’s completely cultural. Some people don’t (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X says that others read some cultural expressions in ways that come to represent all Muslims. In particular, he discusses the visibility of Muslim women, suggesting that certain representations may not be responsible but rather a missed opportunity to portray the diversity within the Muslim community. In this excerpt he discusses a Muslim woman volunteering at the Islamic Association of Nova Scotia’s booth at the annual multicultural festival held in Halifax:

She was completely covered, it was an abaya. only the eyes are showing. I can think of maybe three or four women in this city who wear those things. It’s very noticeable. And I was just thinking to myself, was she the best person really to be handing out Qur’an because that really shows ... that this is what all Muslim women wear. No, that’s a very small minority ... very few women wear the abaya. Or the burqa which is when you have a big thing over your head, a big curtain over your head. Very, very few women. And I think that it probably wasn’t a good idea having her doing it because that would probably give non-Muslims misconceptions about Islam and how Muslim women dress (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X suggests that certain cultural forms of the hijab are a problematic, extra-ordinary representation of Islam. For Muslim men, too, the representation of Muslim women impacts identity and an imagining of what the Muslim community looks like in Halifax. In the end, it is clear that he is unable to see himself or his Muslimness reflected by more conservative, cultural expressions of modesty and demonstrates the complex politics of the hijab within his own narrative:

I have nothing against [women wearing the hijab] ... If you want to be a modest person and that’s how you’re dressing, that’s cool. I’m not against it ... I don’t think somebody has to wear hijab to be a modest dresser. To be a modest person, you don’t need to wear the hijab at all ... There is nothing in the Qur’an that says women have to wear ... curtains over their entire body, you can’t see anything, their face ... Modesty is completely religious. Completely Islamic. But the notion of being overly modest and covering yourself is not religious at all ... That’s cultural ... The hijab, I think, is religious. I think, the abaya, the niqab, the burqa, those things are all completely cultural (Malcolm X).

At the beginning of this excerpt, Malcolm X creates open boundaries for wearing the hijab as a personal choice and disconnects the principle of modesty from various cultural forms of the headscarf. However, he exposes the limits to these open boundaries in his characterization of abaya and other body coverings as ‘curtains’. While they are welcome expressions of culture, he says, they should not be mapped onto faith-based principles of modesty: “If you’re showing your

culture then that's completely cool. Like if that's how your culture dresses ... That's 100% cool" (Malcolm X 2009).

For Sara, who began wearing the hijab when she moved to Halifax for university, the hijab is a matter of personal choice, freedom and civil liberty. Yet, again, the limits of these surface in different parts of her narrative. Sara had to re-negotiate the terms within her family given her choice to wear hijab:

When I did start wearing it I think [my sister Jane] didn't know how far I would take it. You know, how Islam is portrayed in the news and everything. And I guess, she was just kind of like, 'okay, how far is she going to take this' ... [With my dad] it just boils down to concern for me ... if I would face, you know, the stereotype ... or be discriminated against ... concerns that any parent really would have ... My family has never been accustomed to ... [it's] something my mom has never done ... When his daughter was going to wear it, it was hard for him to accept. He's more liberal ... he is Muslim but he doesn't observe the rituals. So it was kind of hard for him to take it at first. He was concerned with how far I'd take it, like what kind of sources is she listening to, you know? Is she going to go and break out the AK-47 [laughs]. I'm joking (Sara 2010).

Within her family, the concern was for Sara was twofold. First that she would face discrimination in Canada, in terms of school and employment especially, as a Muslim woman wearing the hijab. Second, that she might be adopting a politicized Muslim identity or practicing a more politically conservative version of Islam. The mention of the AK-47, while used jokingly, was an indication that some of the fear or hesitancy on the part of her father especially, was that she might become radicalized. Negotiating family relations was difficult:

I was more sensitive to how my family dealt with it. That was kind of hard on me at first. Like, my dad and his denial of it. During the first year he would basically [laughs] every time I came home, he would be like, 'so, are you thinking of taking it off' ... It really did bother me at first ... because I am so close to my dad. In every other way, he's very supportive and I love him to death ... that was a little bit hard for me ... I told him, 'if you look into my eyes I don't think I've changed at all, dad ... I'm exactly the same person. I have the same interests, I'm still passionate about the things I used to be passionate about'. Now I think he understands that and he's learned to back off and respect [my choices] (Sara 2010).

While her choice to wear the hijab prompted negotiations with the family, Sara also discusses the right to wear the hijab in the broader context of faith, culture, and personal rights, exposing her own personal boundaries of acceptability:

It is civil liberty ... I mean it's okay if a girl wears a hoodie but it's not okay if a girl wears a hijab? ... If you walk around naked you can get arrested for that. What's the problem with wearing more clothes? A niqab, it's something that I wouldn't personally ever do ... but at the same time I completely respect someone else's decision or right to do that ... [The niqab] is more cultural ... Islamically it's not something that is obligatory on women ... I wouldn't wear it and I wouldn't encourage anyone to wear it ... but as far as telling someone that you are not allowed to dress this way, I don't feel comfortable to do that, because for someone else [my head covering] might be too extreme and they could tell me I'm not allowed to dress this way ... [but] ... I just frankly don't see the necessity to [wear the niqab] (Sara 2010).

Sara's sister, Jane, who does not wear hijab but practices daily, reflects on her collection of photographs during our interview, initially concerned that she has not 'represented' herself as Muslim enough but stating that she wanted to demonstrate a range of subjectivities as a Muslim woman:

I do practice, I try very hard, you probably wouldn't be able to tell, if, you know, look at me and be, 'oh, she prays five times a day' but I try very hard ... I'm sorry if I like deviated away ... but the thing is, that's what I wanted to show, I am a Muslim person but at the same time I don't live my life, 'oh, I do this because I'm Muslim or I do that because I'm Muslim'. I live my life because I am me. And I am a person (Jane 2010).

Jane explains that being a good Muslim does not hinge on the practice or performance of modesty or prayer per se but on how one leads their life. She also suggests being environmentally conscious, volunteering in various organizations and being a student in university are part of her identity as a practicing Muslim:

It's your way of life. I was watching a documentary yesterday and there was a convert and he was a firefighter and to him being a firefighter was practicing his faith ... and there was a nurse, and she was like, 'being able to give someone dignity and being able to take care of someone when they are their weakest. That's practicing Islam, for me, right?'. ... You don't need to be like 'oh, my God, Islam, I'm going to surround myself with nothing but Muslims, all I'm going to do is read the Qur'an all day, and like, all day, every night' ... Islam is always seeking knowledge ... to better yourself and learn. The first verse, is like recite, learn ... and, that's the first verse that was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad in the Qur'an. So, knowledge, going to school is faith (Jane 2010).

As these participants suggest, although markers of Islam should not be, they are often read as evidence of an individual's commitment to Islam or as the sole expression of who they

are as Muslims. A “Muslim at heart”, Catherine has chosen not to wear any form of head covering:

It really doesn't have any meaning to me ... It's a choice in my family. You don't have to wear it if you don't want to. And your religious beliefs are private. They encourage you to do the right thing but your choice is private ... But other families, they're not like that, they're a lot more strict ... even my parents discussing with other families the idea of the veil, they're a little bit alienated because they're just a little bit more open-minded (Catherine 2009).

Not wearing the veil creates a division between herself and others who believe you must wear it; but it also causes a conflict with her parents who are viewed as liberal, open-minded and perhaps translated into being lax by some more strict followers. At least by some, Catherine is perceived to be less Muslim because she does not cover:

I am [seen as] less good ... a lot of my friends that are veiled have been told by their families not to hang out with me. Especially when I was younger ... I mean I was a lot less connected to my religion when I was younger. If you're growing up here it's so hard ... I have been viewed as the more open Arab girl. But I think I compensate for that with my achievements. And I'm young and I'm in Grad school, I have a good job. They respect me in that way but if I wasn't veiled and I didn't have any achievements and I was more focused on my social life, I would definitely be viewed as the garbage of the community ... [But] especially because I'm married. Because if you're not married then they're going to assume that you're sleeping [around] but if you're married then ... you're protected that way (Catherine 2009).

Catherine used to live in a Bedford, a community where she says there was a very visible Arab-Muslim population. One of the reasons she moved from there was because of how other Muslims viewed her:

If I'm out and I'm wearing shorts ... all the Arabs will like look out their window and be like 'oh my god she's naked' ... they tell me in my face. Like, why are you dressed like that? ... And it really bothers me ... Like, just little comments that make me feel uncomfortable ... I'm just, you know, an unveiled young person and they're not scared to be rude to me or say mean things or just disagree in a disrespectful way (Catherine 2009).

As part of a school research project, Catherine explored the origins of veiling and using only the Qur'an as a source of information argued that while the principle of modesty was based in Islam, specific modes of veiling are cultural:

There's a verse that says you have to not show cleavage, you have to cover your breasts. That's clear ... There is reference to dressing modest. But there is no reference to hair ... I became so interested that I started studying all the verses about women. I really wanted to know ... I think it's completely cultural. I think even dressing modest, it's cultural because if I went to Saudi Arabia then I will wear the veil. And I will wear the abaya because everybody else is wearing it. So dressing modest really depends on where I am. It says dress modest in the Qur'an, I dress modest in accordance to my environment (Catherine 2009).

Catherine's uses the Qur'an to support not having to wear the veil but suggests that the interpretation of modesty is place specific. While she considers her style and mode of dress in Canada as modest, at least by Canadian standards, she admits that elsewhere modesty is differentially defined and that this would impact her choice to veil or not in those contexts.

Like Amira and Malcolm X, Catherine suggests that markers such as the hijab or the growth of a beard are culturally encoded practices that distract attention, not simply from the lived practice of Islamic tenets, but also the diverse ways that people can practice Islam in everyday life:

I'm really confident in what I'm saying. If you read the Qur'an, it's so clear. Islam means submit your soul ... to God. And to me it means don't litter, don't lie, don't plagiarize. It doesn't mean the irrelevant things, that to me are irrelevant, that people think, that extreme, like, 'oh my god you're not veiled you're going to go to hell' ... Like they take it to such extremes ... and instill this fear, and I'm thinking, 'you're veiled, okay. Do you pray? Or even if you're veiled and you pray, are you racist? Are you sexist?' ... If you think that that Indian person is inferior but you're veiled and you pray, I'm sorry but I don't agree with you' ... people focus on the tangible stuff like praying and being veiled and fasting because those are the obvious things ... but won't focus on the other things that you do on a daily basis (Catherine 2009).

For Canadian Muslim women, Catherine says that the veil is a detriment in terms of social relations and economic belonging. Because she does not wear the hijab and considers herself a more open-minded, liberal, and progressive Muslim, social relations of belonging, even among peers, is something complexly negotiated:

Sometimes, if I'm talking to another Muslim person that's my age, I'll feel like I'm really an alien. Like I really am different than them in the way that I think. And that causes a big problem because then I'm just avoiding them ... it really does interfere in my daily life because there are so many things that I won't bring up ... I'll just avoid discussing. It does come up in my daily life ... certainly with peers and family (Catherine 2009).

She also suggests that her choice not to veil has had a positive impact on her ability to negotiate opportunities such as employment:

I think it's been an advantage to me that I am not veiled. Because there are opportunities that I have that I wouldn't have if I was veiled ... I know that that would have somehow influenced my interview [for work]. The veil is a very visible thing ... especially after 9/11 and it does really put a constraint on the opportunities you have ... wearing the veil is a risk to your career as a woman in Canada ... I think that it's possible to wear some sort of veil in some professions ... But I think a full veil, that's when it starts becoming a problem. And covering your face or only showing your eyes that would definitely be a constraint. Not only on your career but on your social [life]. It would just be so odd (Catherine 2009).

Wearing a beard or a certain style of the headscarf is neither representative of one's faith to Islam nor reflective of the quality of one's Muslim identity. But it is clearly an important part of one's subjectivity and certainly implicated in the construction of boundaries both within and outside of the Muslim community. 'Looking like a Muslim' has implications for the negotiation of everyday life both inside and outside of the Muslim community. As Jane says,

I really think you need to show Islam in a good light ... I think a good Muslim needs to be a good spokesperson ... It's really important for [my sister] because she's like, 'I am a visible representative of my faith. So I wouldn't do anything that would make my faith look bad because that's what they would connect to instantly' (Jane 2010).

Duke reveals the considerable responsibility that comes with being Muslim and being readily identifiable:

I try to encourage Muslims here to be socially aware because if you make a mistake, they don't care if your name is Mohammad or your name is Duke, they just know that you're Muslim or your Desi. There is a dangerous precedent of stereotyping. So, not just you committed the mistake, the entire faith has made a mistake. So, we are all ambassadors. And actually the Qur'an tells us, you are ambassadors of the faith. The Qur'an is telling all Muslims they are ambassadors of the faith. How they present themselves to foreign places is how the faith will be judged (Duke 2009).

As Duke reveals, Muslim's bear the responsibility of representing Islam whether or not it is their intention to do so. But this ambassadorship is not necessarily a burdensome responsibility at all times. He suggests, in fact, that this responsibility not only comes from the, often times, stereotypical assumptions of others, but from the Qur'an as well.

For some participants, like Amira, not looking like a Muslim (primarily, she says, because she does not wear the veil but also because of the perceived ‘lightness’ of her skin) provides a kind of anonymity. She discusses a particular instance at work where neither her faith nor cultural identity was immediately read:

There was an Egyptian girl who had come in with her mom ... and she was saying how she was going to Egypt ... and I was like, ‘oh that’s great, you’re going to be there for Eid’ ... and she was like ‘what? how do you know?’ And I was like, ‘I’m Muslim’. And she was like, ‘you don’t look Muslim’ ... and I’m like ‘I’m Egyptian actually’. She’s like ‘you’re Egyptian? I never even thought’ ... I get this a lot. People are like ‘oh, well we just thought you were from here ... we just thought you were white’. I’m pretty sure this isn’t white [points to her skin] (Amira 2009).

In this case, it is not the practice or performance of being Muslim or her appearance that identifies her as Muslim or Egyptian to others but her ‘inside’ knowledge of Eid. In another example at work, Amira’s ability to understand Arabic gave her away to an Arab family visiting Halifax and touring the university:

It was hilarious, these two [came in to the store] with their mother ... I was helping them buy a pair of jeans ... the mom said something in Arabic like ‘oh, I think they’re too tight’ and I was like ‘oh, would you like me to get you a bigger size, what size do you need’ in English. And they looked at me like ‘man, you’re good, how did you know’. And then, she said something else and I responded in English again and I knew what she was saying, I like to play that game it’s kind of fun ... A lot of people don’t know that I am Egyptian or Muslim (Amira 2009).

Amira, for whom English is a first language and who was born and raised in Canada, is often taken for someone ‘from here’ (which she is) and this also sometimes means white (which she is not) and all of this is surprising to some Muslims. Furthermore, not looking like a Muslim might also result in lesser experiences in racial or faith-based discrimination:

Like even the whole September 11th ... I was in Grade ten and at the universities there was like, people would walk by Muslims and they’d be like ‘you terrorists’, blah, blah, blah. I’ve never felt anything. Not even an inch of hatred. Didn’t even understand like why, maybe it’s because I’m not that visible Muslim minority ... I have never in my life, like seriously, never really experienced someone saying something to me to make me feel hurt about my race ... But if you talk to someone who’s veiled, yeah. If you talk to someone who maybe has a big beard who screams Islam, yeah. But I don’t bring it upon myself ... not that they bring it upon themselves, but I don’t think people would look at me and say, ‘oh, well

that's Muslim I have some built up hatred I'm going to let it out on her.' I don't think they see it (Amira 2009).

As revealed in Chapter Three, Amira feels dislocated from the Muslim community and other Muslims in general. She conceives the practice of her everyday self in terms of the one she represents in a photograph of her friend sitting on the waterfront (see Chapter 3: Photograph 13):

That girl represents who I am ... Because I don't socialize with a whole clan of [Muslim girls]. They all stick together, you know? These are the people I hang out with. They look like that girl. Mind you I don't dress like that, I don't have blonde hair, I don't wear short dresses ... Out of all my friends, I dress the most modestly. But I think that we are very compatible in the ways that we think and I think that culture and difference is something that you should embrace and religion is something that really never comes in to the conversation with my friends (Amira 2009).

Amira and Catherine have suggested that not wearing the hijab has been a positive experience for them and note that for women who do choose to wear the hijab, their experiences would be less than positive. Both cite examples of women they have known or heard of who had experienced discrimination and/or verbal and physical assault based on being identified as a Muslim through the marker of the hijab. Lulwa, who has worn the hijab since age twelve, tells me about a camping trip that she, Sara, Harrie Podder and two other Muslim girls recently took on the outskirts of the city. Three of the girls wore hijab while the others did not:

In Halifax and Bedford and Dartmouth, you see a mix. There? Nothing. They're all white ... and every time somebody passed by they're almost in shock ... you can honestly tell they've never seen a group of Muslim girls camping ... it was really fascinating because every single person who passed our cabin stared at us ... even little kids [laughs]. It was like a bizarre sight for them to see us barbecuing and having a good time [laughs] ... They weren't like rude ... but they all stared (Lulwa 2010).

When Lulwa and her friends rented a canoe to go out of the lake, a very 'Canadian' thing to do I suppose, the reactions of campground employees suggested that these Muslim women were 'out of place':

I've been camping ... it's not like it's a new concept for me ... and the guy looked at us and he was like, 'are you sure you want to do that?' And I'm like, 'yeah, yeah, we want to take out the canoes' and he's like, 'okay, go really slow, but stay only this far so I can keep an eye on you' [laughs]. And then right behind us, these guys are going 'yeah, we want a canoe'. He didn't even give them a life jacket ... We come back [from canoeing] and the guy is like, 'are you guys okay,

what happened? Did you guys get lost?' And I was like, 'yeah, we've been canoeing before'[laughs]. Weird things like that (Lulwa 2010).

These kinds of reactions are connected to both gender and faith identities:

If my brother went, guaranteed they won't say anything to him. I think it's a combination: not only are we Muslim but we're covered ... I think it's a combination because when people think Muslim women, they think oppressed, can't get out, don't do anything, stay at home kind of thing (Lulwa 2010).

During their camping trip, there were less humorous examples that reflect deeper racist, anti-immigrant, or anti-Islam sentiments that the women encountered:

These guys, they were harsh drunk, passed by and they assume, okay, we're wearing scarves, so we don't speak English, so they start making all these noises at us as if it's our language and then they start laughing. My friend, she recently came from Pakistan, was so angry ... And I was like, 'why are you mad? ... did it make us worse Muslims or worse Arabs, or worse people? Or does it make us not have fun because that's what they think? First of all, they're drunk ... Second of all, who cares? It's not like they are coming to us and assaulting us' ... It doesn't bother me. The only thing that bothers me is when people attack Islam or Muslims, not knowing the reality or the truth of what they are attacking (Lulwa 2010).

She explains that she does not allow the actions of others to penetrate her identity or belief in her faith. While others around the campfire, understandably, grew upset, Lulwa reoriented the group back to their own sense of self, identity and faith. She suggests that her visibility, while sometimes inviting unwanted attention and even violence, also offers opportunities for bridging gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims:

I'm all covered up, it's not a very usual sight ... [So] it also means that people are interested and they come talk to you and you explain it to them ... I've never had a conversation with someone about Islam and they've left angry or disgusted. They always go as if, 'ah-ha, now I understand'. And that's such an amazing feeling, especially after what happened with 9/11. Like I almost got run over four times after that ... we were called terrorists to our face ... [so] I love people coming and asking me about my religion, I love it (Lulwa 2010).

What many of the participants suggest is that 'Looking like a Muslim' (or not) is a distraction from more meaningful expressions and practices of belonging. They suggest that faith, identity and belonging should be understood not according to the surface maps provided by externalities, such as clothing or ritual practice, but rather in the ways that individuals orientate themselves within these maps and in the ways these orientations sometimes disrupt and

challenges our assumptions about what it means to be Muslim in Canada. However, they also understand fully that ‘looking like a Muslim’ matters in the ways one experiences everyday life in Halifax.

Part III: Civic, Social, and Cultural Engagement

For most Muslims, the everyday practice of Islam is an important part of not only identifying oneself but also being identified by others. But it is not the only or necessarily the most important part. All the participants discuss a range of sites and activities with which they engage and identify in the city as important parts of who they are as people and as Muslims. In this section, participants discuss the diverse ways that their sense of identity and belonging take hold in the city through a range of activities, associations and affiliations. First, I focus on how Muslims develop a sense of belonging through social relations at work, school and the organizations for which they volunteer their time. Second, I draw attention to some of the cultural affiliations that participants reveal are important ways through which they feel connected in the city and beyond.

Work, School and Community Involvement

In the previous chapter, Saladin discusses his difficulty in finding employment since moving to Halifax. Weighing heavily on his mind and clearly shaping his everyday activities, employment issues were evident in many of his photographs and elaborated on during our interview. Not only did he take photographs of previous and current places of work but also of the ‘Job Junction’ employment and career support centre at which he searched for jobs (see Photograph 58). For him, getting a job in his field is his central concern:

I’m really concerned of having a good career right now rather than staying in a place full of entertainment ... [not being able to find work in your field] of course, [is] the worst thing in the world. I can’t imagine anything worse ... And, it’s horrible doing something that you are not good at (Saladin 2009).

Photograph 58: Working to Belong: Job Junction (Saladin 2009)



Other participants took photographs that included previous and present workplaces as well discussed in terms of feeling a connection in Halifax over time, a sense of pride in making a contribution, and a sense of value in themselves through their work. For Kareem, several photographs, including ones of his car/taxi and a portable music device, reflect the importance of his spaces of work, past and present (see Photograph 59):

Photograph 59: Belonging through Employment (Kareem 2010)



I worked at Rogers for about five years, it was a big part of my life ... I was just known as the Rogers Guy I worked for Rogers for so long ... and this is the case of my MP3 player. It just says Sony right there ... I worked at Sony for two years. And that was my last job as an employee. After that I started doing the cab ... it's

actually one of the best companies I ever worked for. It's a very good company, they treat their employees very well ... I spent a lot of time there (Kareem 2010).

Amy discusses work with a lot of authority and pride that conveys her sense of attachment and belonging among her employers and co-workers before and after becoming Muslim:

I've been here 13 years, since they established it. I used to work with them at another firm ... and ever since that I pretty much stayed on and worked my way up, to the top. So I've been with these guys, these guys know me from [before I was Muslim] (Amy 2010).

She talks a great deal about work throughout the interview because it serves as an interesting site at which her acceptance of Islam plays out. As discussed in Chapter Three, the significance of accepting Islam and beginning to wear hijab became very much apparent at work. Her claims of belonging through the work space are anchored, not only to the length of time she has been there but also that she started at the bottom and worked her way up to office manager.

Maria and Duke discuss the spaces of work in much greater detail and offer some insight into how and why these spaces are central in feeling a sense of belonging. Represented by an 'untaken photograph', Maria's first job at a local fitness centre presented challenges in terms of negotiating her identity as a white, hijab-wearing Muslim:

[It] didn't work out too well. That was one of the pictures I was going to take but I didn't get the chance because time was so short ... they were not very Muslim-friendly, encouraging (Maria 2009).

Although this was an all-women's gym, men could enter to pick up or make payments for clients and to make supply deliveries. As there were no barriers between the front counter and the workout area, this proved problematic for Muslim women, including Maria, concerned with modesty. She says that other employees were not diligent in either stopping men from entering an area where the clients could be seen or notifying women in the fitness area. She compares this with a photograph of her current workplace, also an all-women's facility (see Photograph 60):

The ladies there are really good that if a delivery man is coming they'll yell down to me or they'll come find me and they'll let me know so I can throw [my scarf] over top. They're great. My experiences with [the other gym] were not so good (Maria 2009).

While challenges remain at her current workplace in terms of protecting the privacy of all, but especially Muslim women, Maria sees it as an opportunity to educate, make change, and claim space for Muslim women through work:

Women's gyms are still learning how to adapt to their Muslim clients ... There are [Muslim women who come to the gym] but there are just as many Muslim women who have gone there and who have quit because men keep walking in ... I used to have many, many more fights with this issue when I was at [my previous employer] ... Here, I keep giving little reminders and for the most part most of the girls are really good. Sometimes I think they just don't tell me, not so much out of being spiteful but just because it's time consuming and annoying for them which is in itself a little rude, but it's not purposefully rude to me. I think it just takes some more time and effort ... It's slowly improving but it takes somebody to have the guts to say something ... [Women-only gyms], as a Muslim, it is definitely a more halal option. I can actually take my headscarf off if I want too. At a co-ed gym I would have to keep it on and keep all my layers on (Maria 2009)

Photograph 60: Creating Halal Space at Work (Maria 2009)



Moreover, Maria suggests that her current place of work is accommodating in terms of practicing daily prayers:

[I practice] prayers five times a day which is sometimes hard to manage but, easier to manage at this job than it was at the other. They get that I pray. And I pray in the office and it's cool. They're so good to me at this place (Maria 2009).

One of the ways that Maria struggles to make certain spaces 'halal' for Muslim women is through her role as a fitness trainer. Women's only gyms certainly can accommodate women in

an environment outside of the gaze of most men, however, there are times it seems when men do enter such premises which becomes problematic if Muslim women are working out without the headscarf:

I had a talk with my boss. They're going to put a doorbell on the door. It's not the best thing in the world but it's a step towards betterness than just letting some guy walk in and having this girl who's run full tilt on a treadmill see this guy walk into the front desk, flip out, jump off the treadmill, run towards the back, trip on something, fall, and pass out because she didn't cool down properly. And that has happened (Maria 2009).

Maria suggests that the gym can be made a safe space for all women, including Muslims who wish to work out with or without the headscarf, only when Muslim women themselves make the demand for such space. According to Maria, the responsibility is, at least in part, on the shoulders of Muslims in Halifax to make claims, to work at creating acceptable boundaries of belonging and to produce the kinds of spaces that are inclusive and that represent belonging in material ways, such as being able to work out in a gym without compromise or without tucking away your identity in a locker for a 45 minute workout.

For Duke, the workplace is one of the most important sites of belonging and one of the most emotional of connections and attachments he has with Halifax. From the photograph of the building in which he works, he reveals deep layers of meaning found in employment work (see Chapter 2 Photograph 5):

It's a very unique building because if you look at all of the [company's] buildings ... they are pretty much the same ... cookie cutter type buildings. This one was made from the ground up and it was made in a very distinctive style so if you were to see this building you know this is [in] Halifax ... I wanted to show not just the building itself, but what it stands for, because this is very close to me. I work in this company not just as an employee but as a very active partner ... there is a lot of pride and association ... the fact that it is Canadian-made makes it that extra special for all of the employees. We're highly motivated (Duke 2009).

Duke derives much of his sense of self and identity from his employment but also an emotional sense of value and accomplishment beyond the pay cheque:

My identity is strongest tied to [work]. The time that I spend in this building and efforts that I make reflects a very close satisfaction to me ... there's a very, very high sentimental value ... It's not the money ... It's very satisfying to me. At the end of the day ... you go home feeling that you have accomplished something ... it's very gratifying. And that's what makes me come back everyday ... [It's] not

just a pay cheque but ... something special to me and not just a job that I put in eight hours and go home (Duke 2009).

Duke's photographs and descriptions of work reveal a strong affective dimension of belonging derived not simply through being employed but in his relationships with employers, customers, and the products and services for which he is responsible.

Unlike Duke's and Maria's experience of workplace accommodation, some Muslims must negotiate with themselves, sacrificing both religious beliefs and personal feelings in order to work. By the time of our interview, Saladin had spent several weeks searching for a job in his field only to settle for a string of sales jobs in order to pay the bills and was now working at a fast food restaurant. Hoping he could work the front counter, he found himself assigned to cook in the kitchen, which presented a challenge:

I have lots of bills due soon ... I needed just to get myself inside and then after that I can do whatever I want. That's what I thought ... No offence, but I can't just work with bacon and ham and stuff like that. And it's not just that religiously I'm not supposed to do ... It's uncomfortable to me. I feel like I'm doing something that harms people. And I feel that it's not healthy and overall it's really disgusting ... I started on the grill, and from time to time, I get some initiative to learn it by myself [and ask to be trained on counter] ... They train me for a little bit on the front counter and hopefully I can get a shift there (Saladin 2009).

He did not tell management that he is Muslim and that cooking bacon was difficult for him. He assumed there is a policy about how they train employees that would not be accommodating of religious or personal considerations. Fearing losing the job, he continues worked in the kitchen.

Given that many of the participants are university students it is not surprising that photographs taken in and around the campuses were plentiful. The same spaces on campus showed up in several participant's photographs particularly the Student Union Building and the library as places frequented often both for school and for social gatherings. In addition, the Muslim Student Association, located within the Student Union Building where meetings and most events are held, was identified as an important site for social connections and support in terms of negotiating different aspects of Muslim identity (see Photograph 61):

I still spent a lot of time in the SUB ... just hanging with friends, talking to people. Having conversations, eating lunch, meeting new people. That's where a lot of it went down, Still does ... and we [the Muslim Student Association] have meetings there every week. That's where I do my praying at. It's an important, integral part

of the university that I spend probably a quarter of my time, 30% of my time (Malcolm X 2009).

Photograph 61: Student Union Building, Dalhousie University (Malcolm X 2009)



DJ Albatross also describes the importance of the SUB through his photograph of the location of Muslim Student Association meetings inside (see Photograph 62):

This is definitely significant ... we've spent countless hours on these chairs ... talking and debating ... pondering and ideas exchanging and I felt definitely important to include because this is where all the fast-a-thon work, all the iftar organization, all the Islamic awareness week, all the movie nights, all these things, we plan them all through this venue and it just represents another aspect of my life (DJ Albatross 2009).

In a photograph taken at the annual Fast-a-thon event held during Ramadan, a charity event to inform non-Muslims about the reasons Muslim fast and raise money for the local Feed Nova Scotia Food Bank, he again reveals the personal significance of the Muslim Student Association (see Photograph 63):

This event is meaningful to me ... it really helps me express my identity to my friends that are non-Muslims ... And also it's just a way for me to really educate people about Islam, like just let them know ... don't listen to all you hear on CNN and BBC [laughs] we're just regular people ... It also shows how we're not just Dalhousie ... we're kind of integrated with the larger community in Halifax (DJ Albatross 2009).

Photograph 62: Student Union Building, Dalhousie University (DJ Albatross 2009)



Photograph 63: Annual Fast-a-thon Table (DJ Albatross 2009)



The Muslim Student Association serves not only as a space to practice and enrich one's faith but also as an acceptable venue through which Muslims can socialize:

The MSA had a monumental role in really helping me network with people ... I prefer not to socialize by drinking alcohol or by going to clubs ... I like to socialize in alternative ways. I like to get together or play sports or, you know, talk with my friends. [It] helped me find a good contact base, people I can go to if I want to really do something constructive ... One event, in particular, that really stands out ... is the daily gatherings during the month of Ramadan at the chaplaincy. I really have to stress that ... everybody comes out and it's really a

common gathering point and it's really a good way to be introduced to people (DJ Albatross 2009).

Daily iftars, at which fasting Muslims during Ramadan break their fast for the day, are a "common gathering point" (DJ Albatross 2009) for Muslims. For the university community of Muslims, the event is held at the Multifaith centre ('chaplaincy'). Sara echoes his endearing connection to these gatherings:

[The MSA] was the first society that I was involved with and it's how I met most of my friends that I have today ... it did play quite an important role ... [Iftars are] my favourite part of what the MSA does, because you're all hungry, you come together in a room and you eat and that's something that's very special. You ask about each other and you catch up on life and just that environment where you're collectively doing something ... [praying and] sharing a meal together afterwards, that's kind of special (Sara 2010).

Moreover, through its meetings and activities, the MSA provides an important space where young Muslim men and women, can interact in a socially 'halal' manner:

When you're having group meetings it's a way for a guy to get to know a girl and vice versa [laughs]. So the MSA has now gotten to be known as the Matrimonial Student Association [laughs] ... it's a 'halal' way to meet people [laughs] Do you know what I mean? A 'halal way' to social network (DJ Albatross 2009).

Many of the participants also spoke in terms of a more general feeling of belonging within the university community. Jane has few connections beyond the university:

The Dal community is my community right now ... it's different for other people living here because they have their families ... I have no friends, I have no family here ... and so my community is my Dalhousie friends and their family ... Eid dinner is always at Harrie Podder's [and her sister's house]. They are like my closest thing to family here. Their mom's like my mom, right? They're closer than friends; they're like my sisters (Jane 2010).

Not all Muslim students, however, develop a sense of belonging through the MSA. Amira has never felt connected to the Muslim community beyond her family and this sentiment extended to sites of Muslim belonging such as the MSA when she began university:

I wasn't interested in hanging out with all these Arabs. That never interested me. Exclusively hanging out with a group of Arab Muslims, Egyptians, whatever? That never interested me. So I never really got involved (Amira 2009).

Amira and Catherine keep their faith private, neither seeing a need to publicly express that identity through associations and memberships with Muslim community organizations. They also both feel that culture and faith often become problematically mixed and therefore, they strive to keep the two separate. Catherine's involvement with the Egyptian Student Society, conceived as a non-religious group to be inclusive of all Egyptians, reflects this:

Anytime someone brought anything up that was religious I would just say no ... I didn't want any affiliation with any religious anything because the point was that it was a society that invited anybody to be a member. It didn't matter who they were. So I didn't really want any religious affiliation plus there are some Christian Egyptians (Catherine 2009).

Catherine's perception of the MSA as a space that would not accept her particular expression of faith furthers her sense of dislocation from more organized forms of Muslim community:

I think that I would be mocked if I did [attend the MSA] ... because I don't think that I would be accepted as somebody that could advocate Islam ... I don't think I would be accepted ... I don't think I'd fit in very well ... I think there'd be some strong disagreements [laughs] (Catherine 2009).

She suggests that members of the MSA would read her as not religious enough, in part, because she does not wear the hijab but also, and perhaps more importantly, because she perceives there to be a gap between her ideology and the ideology of the MSA. These self-drawn boundaries map out internal exclusions where the MSA becomes a space in which Catherine's faith and her Muslimness might be called into question and where her liberal beliefs might conflict with a more conservative Islam. Jane's experiences with the MSA were similar:

I went to this [MSA] barbecue and I think it was more in my head than anything else [but] I just felt not accepted [laughs]. It's probably because I don't wear the hijab or whatever. So I ended up never going back [laughs] ... For almost two years I never was involved in anything MSA ... I had a stereotype against Muslims [laughs] as a Muslim myself ... I just felt really out of place (Jane 2010).

Jane's feelings of exclusion are also partly based on her perception of how others read her choice not to wear hijab. Importantly, she suggests that differences in the way people express their Muslim identity create boundaries but so too do differences such as age and status within certain groups. Jane reflects back on her initial experiences of attending iftars at the Multifith Centre as a new, young, and inexperienced first year student:

I have gotten more involved, because right now the MSA is a bunch of my friends [laughs]. So it's not as intimidating anymore ... I remember there used to be iftar dinners every night of Ramadan at the chaplaincy. And I remember going there and getting really uncomfortable because I just kind of felt like this little, first year and like intimidated in that sense, age I guess. But then now, like you know [laughs] ... like we intimidate other people in their own first years [laughs] (Jane 2010).

Engaging with and participating in social and community activities as well as volunteering are also important ways that Muslims are creating a sense of belonging in Halifax. Several participants speak about the importance of spending their time constructively while calling the city home. For a number of participants, volunteering their time was a way to be social while also building personal skills. Trishana volunteers with the Dalhousie International Student Association in order to meet other students who share her experience as student new to Halifax but also sees the value in taking part in such activities for future social and employment opportunities on campus. Similarly, participating in the Model United Nations was something Harrie Podder felt passionately about, providing the opportunity to volunteer alongside her friends while also improving her confidence in public speaking. DJ Albatross, for example, draws a link between volunteering at a physical rehabilitation centre and developing a sense of place through community contribution:

I thought that was very relevant to my career, as well as general Islamic principles, like you know you should be doing deeds of charity right, so I found that there's a green light both sides ... just contributing, giving me a feeling of contribution, you feel productive and that's rewarding in itself (DJ Albatross 2009).

Thus, while much of his volunteering is credited with improving and building a personal skill-set, such as time management and interpersonal social skills, community involvement and volunteering also help anchor belonging. One of the most important places he does this is through the MSA:

I've just been attracted to the idea of community involvement. I wanted to help out my community so I was attracted to the kind of things that the MSA was doing. So, I feel just a sense of belonging with them (DJ Albatross 2009).

While Trishana, Harrie Podder and DJ Albatross, volunteer as part of their desire to help others while also contributing to a project of self-growth and improvement, other participants link volunteering to their faith and a desire to impact not only their own experiences of living in

Halifax but perhaps others as well. Abdullah developed a strong sense of his own identity by volunteering to help others strengthen their commitment to Islam through the activities and executive structure of Muslim student associations as well as one of the Islamic associations in Halifax. From two photographs of Dartmouth mosque and the lake on which it sits, he describes the youth camps he once attended, and now helps organize, as a space in which young Muslims can socialize and grow closer to Islam (see Photograph 64 and Photograph 65):

We used to go swimming over here, had some good memories of that so I thought I'd take a picture ... When I moved to Halifax I started coming to the masjid more and spending some time ... in the youth camps over there and also at Chebucto ... I found in the beginning, many youth were attending these camps, and they were more interested, but slowly I've seen in recent years there's only a couple of people come, a few kids. I try to go there whenever there is a camp to help out [with] the different activities and do whatever I can over there (Abdullah 2010).

Photograph 64: Dartmouth Mosque (Abdullah 2010)



These youth camps are an important space, he reminds me, because there are few spaces for young Muslims to interact in an Islamically appropriate and permissible manner:

Right now social spaces for Muslims are just the masjids. If we have some dinner or something in the masjid ... a lot of people attend. If there's some programs, like Qur'an study and different things like that, many people come. Just as much as we can, we try to have, every week, the gatherings ... So we invite them for that and hopefully if people come they come and I guess that's all we can do right now ... gatherings at the masjid are, I think, very important (Abdullah 2010).

Young Muslims were losing interest in events such as potlucks and Qur'an study so Abdullah also served as a youth representative with an Islamic association as part of a strategy to get more young Muslims involved with Islam and the activities at Dartmouth mosque. In addition, he joins fellow brothers from several different mosques and prayer rooms to visit students at university or the homes of Muslim families in order to encourage, not only the youth but also parents and family members, to make use of the mosque, especially for Friday prayers and remind them of other activities, talks, and functions held at various mosques. For example, when visiting university dormitories, Abdullah informs new students about the spaces and opportunities for maintaining their connection to Islam through prayer and mosque activities while in Halifax.

Photograph 65: Lake Albrow from Dartmouth Mosque (Abdullah 2010)



Efforts to keep people involved with the mosque and to revive the Islamic spirit locally extend beyond the community of university students. Abdullah and others also go to the suburbs of Halifax to reach Muslim families further away from the mosque:

Because over there it's much more important. Now the youth are second generation and they've grown up and ... they don't know anything about Islam and it's very important to go over there and ... talk to them and tell them about their religion ... because it's just the culture is so mixed right? They're so far away from each other, they don't have a strong base, so we tell them to come to the masjid, you know, talk about the religion a little bit. So we do that in the localities around Halifax (Abdullah 2010).

Abdullah dedicates a considerable amount of time to this social and religious outreach connecting it to his own sense of faith:

I kind of started to understand my religion much more when I was here ... because they are brothers, it's our responsibility, you know? We feel concerned for them. If they're going away from Islam they will be finding more problems, and these kinds of things so I think that it's our responsibility to first look after our own brothers ... it just opens their eyes and they're so thankful that, you know, ' Oh, I didn't feel this before'. It really helps you in terms of living your faith and pleasing your Imam and pleasing your faith (Abdullah 2010).

Abdullah volunteers his time to help others maintain their connection to Islam but in so doing is developing his own spaces for belonging by feeling valued within a broader community and by feeling a sense of accomplishment.

Social and political engagement is an important aspect of everyday life for Sara and Lulwa who both volunteer with a number of organizations within the university including the MSA. Lulwa volunteers with a number of organizations engaged with both local and international fundraising and volunteers her time to help new immigrants improve their English language skills. Moreover, she dedicates a significant amount of time and energy to the MSA at both as an active member and on its executive. This kind of civic engagement and social participation forges connections in Halifax and to making a difference beyond Halifax:

It actually makes me feel, okay, even though I'm spending a lot of time in school, I'm still trying to make a difference, even though small differences, but this is all I can do right now. Because the only reason I'm in school, and I mean this 100%, is because when I graduate I want to go to third world countries, places in Africa and Asia, even in the Middle East, South America, and help out as much as I can. And that's the only reason I'm going to medical school. I hate medicine, I can't stand blood [laughs] (Lulwa 2010).

Furthermore, she connects her desire to help others and her desire to make the most of her time in Halifax during university with her faith:

Obviously as a Muslim I believe in the day of judgment and when the day of judgment comes, I want to be able to say, you know, I did everything that I possibly can to help those less fortunate. You know, I've been very blessed (Lulwa 2010).

Though she has no intention of staying in Halifax, she actively creates a sense of belonging in the ways in which she makes contributions of her time and knowledge to help others in need. These experiences of engagement come together to enhance her own everyday life and sense of place while living in Halifax. They also add value to her life and bring her satisfaction – all things that will be associated with future memories of her time in Halifax.

Similarly, Sara began to volunteer when she began university because it fits with her goal to help others and provides a deeper purpose for her self while in Halifax. For example, she contributes a significant amount of time and effort with an organization called Circle K helping to raise thousands of dollars for the ‘Spread the Net’ campaign to provide bed nets in Africa to protect against malaria. She also took part in a group called ‘Friends for Refugees’ which raised money to help local churches sponsor several Iraqi Muslim families to come to Halifax (something in which Amy also took part). In addition, she began a campaign against bottled water on campus in light of concerns over BPA. While her efforts certainly make a difference in the everyday lives of those who receive help, Sara reveals the benefits of participation and engagement to her own sense of self by reflecting on a photograph she took of a bell they would ring as they raised money at an event (see Photograph 66):

For me, it’s the most important part of my university experience ... It’s something that’s really inspired me ... The idea’s that, you know, I can start something and carry this through, and organize this group of people and, you know, synchronize everyone. That’s very appealing to me and to actually see the results ... and I think that just made me stronger as a person. And, that really helped me out, and it was a big part of shaping my identity of who I am today ... I would never have taken on a leadership position or, you know, be comfortable speaking to a large group of people and much less lead ... and organize them (Sara 2010).

Sara distinguishes between the motives and meanings of her time spent with the MSA and her engagement with other organizations in ways that highlight multiple belongings:

[The MSA is] a group for a collective identity and educating people about Islam. [Circle K] is something that appeals to me more because this is what I want to do later in life ... helping people ... and to be personally able to do something. That really appeals to me. Something that’s tangible, that’s something that really appeals to me. Circle K, I won’t lie, it’s much more close to my heart [laughs]. But, MSA, I helped out with the organizing the Fast-a-thon and events and stuff like that. That’s really important to me too and it’s a sense of a feeling of community when we all come together (Sara 2010).

While the MSA provides a space in supporting and fostering her Islamic identity and provides a sense of community in relation to her faith, Circle K appeals to a broader imagining of identity, present and future, of which being Muslim is but one part.

Photograph 66: On Making a Difference (Sara 2010)



Language, Culture and Homelands

Sharing a common language is one important element for developing and maintaining community and social relations. Differences in language, therefore, can become sturdy boundaries with the power to exclude people from community and social groups and activities. As demonstrated in the previous section, the Muslim Student Association is an important site through which many Muslims in Halifax find support and friendship. Malcolm X suggests that the MSA is a diverse association in which a range of Muslim identities are represented:

We've had many different kinds of ethnic groups, lots of converts ... even minority Muslim groups ... it's not discriminatory here, it's great. Any kind of affiliation ... we've been really promoting people to come out (Malcolm X 2009).

From the perspective of the Bangladeshis, however, differences in language and culture construct the MSA as an alienating space where they feel unwelcomed. Tarek suggests that the Arab-Muslim majority in Halifax influences institutional sites of the Muslim community:

The Muslim Student Association and other things, are dominated by, mostly they are Arab Muslims ... Mostly Arab ... Their culture is very different than us ... The way we practice our religion is mostly the same ... but, you know, your life is dominated more by culture than by religion ... if you go to some place you want to speak in your language, right? Wherever you go ... you won't look for a Muslim or like same religious people first. First place we go, we look for somebody who's from Bangladesh (Tarek 2009).

Sabir's experiences with the Muslim Student Association also reflect feelings of non-belonging, in terms of culture and language. During his first two years here, he attended Friday prayers arranged by the Muslim Student Association. Despite knowing many of its members, he does not participate as an organizing member, in part because he saw it as an Arab-Muslim student group:

[It's] run by the Arabic students ... there is no Indians or Pakistanis. Because our culture is quite different. I couldn't find anyone like [me] ... I'm sitting, sometimes, no one talking to me. And I felt like I am not one of them (Sabir 2010).

Catherine provides some additional insight into the divisions of culture, language and class that are remapped in Halifax, and that surface in the Muslim Student Association, based on the hierarchical geographies of exclusion elsewhere:

If they don't speak Arabic there's not much interaction. [Class] has everything to do with it. Indians and Pakistanis in Arabic countries are workers and people carry that idea with them when they come to Canada ... they feel like that because Indians and Pakistanis for the most part there, are workers, domestic workers. So, it has a lot to do with class ... [At the community level] the Arabs, they either go to Chebucto or Kearney Lake. And the Pakistani/Indians go to Dartmouth mosque (Catherine 2009).

Trishana also feels somewhat 'outside' when it comes to the Muslim Student Association but for reasons related to her experience as a woman attending an event on gender equality in Islam:

They just said ... good things, not the restrictions. [Just] the flexibility of Islam on women but there are lots of restrictions ... I'm not criticizing my religion, it's just they should have shown that too ... There are lots of things that women are not allowed to do ... there are lots of things that they should have clarified (Trishana 2010).

Finally, Kuyasha, who also has not been part of the MSA since coming to Halifax, informs me that he and other students have started a small Bangladeshi Student Association at the university which in part serves some of the organizational and community functions that the MSA does without, of course, making them feel excluded on the basis of culture or language.

There are other student associations, too, that provide a space in which the Bangladeshi students might anchor a sense of cultural belonging. DJ Albatross suggests that the Indian Subcontinent Students' Association (INDISA) is an association through which Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi students find support for both their collective and individual cultural framing. He says that INDISA is important precisely because of the prominence of Arab-

Muslims. Many of the Bangladeshi students, however, feel excluded here too because INDISA events are sites for privileging one cultural framing over others:

They are supposed to be Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis but actually it's almost all Indian [laughs] ... You can't do any cultural function from Bangladesh. Bangla song or something? Who will hear the song? ... No one, because all are Indians. If someone sings a Bangla song, there is no one will hear your song, because they are singing in other language. So we sing nothing [laughs] ... Last year, there was a singer, singing a Bangla song, and people are just talking with each other ... no one was listening to her [laughs]. And she was sad, like 'I was singing but no everyone was talking. I'll never sing in INDISA [again]' ... It's more about Indian culture. Indian dance, Indian culture (Sabir 2010).

He further notes that outside of 'Desi' spaces such as INDISA, there is very little cross-cultural interaction:

The community between the Bangladeshi community and the Pakistani community is not that much good. Bangladeshi community don't mix with Pakistani community ... They never mix ... They don't like, go anywhere together, or go [to] any religious function together, they never do that. Never do that (Sabir 2010).

The absence of a cultural framework supportive of our own sense of self and belonging may result in feelings of detachment, isolation, and a sense of dislocation. As we saw in Chapter Three, Sabir's experience during his first year in Halifax speaks to this dislocation and isolation as he navigated a new city and a new social system outside his own Bangladeshi cultural framework.

Given these experiences and perceptions of being excluded from other groups and associations, the Bangladeshis in this study turn to the broader Bangladeshi cultural community in Halifax. Kuyasha suggests that because the Bangladeshi community is quite small, most members actually know one another, at least in acquaintance, making it socially easier to develop a sense of belonging. The Bangladeshi community organizes a Bangla New Year cultural program with comedy, music, dancing and singing as well as a gathering to celebrate following Eid prayers. Feeling a connection to the Bangladeshi community in Halifax, along with knowing other Bangladeshi students at school has helped balance feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Bangladeshi community cultural events provide a space to speak Bengali with friends and to take part in or enjoy a range of cultural songs and dances. Trishana reiterates, however, that

the Bangladeshi community is a cultural community and not one based on religion and, therefore, more inclusive:

There are lots of people who are not Muslims ... lots of people are Hindus ... anyone from Bangladesh can come and attend. Even some Bangladeshis bring spouses who are not from Bangladesh (Trishana 2010).

Bangladeshi cultural events are open and inclusive but there are no specifically Muslim Bangladeshi gatherings, to celebrate Eid, for example. Rather, Muslim Bangladeshis join in on larger Muslim events arranged by the broader Muslim community or through the university.

The ability to speak a certain language that may provide or bar access to social, cultural, and religious community may also provide intimate and emotional feelings of belonging. As a convert, being able to understand Arabic possesses a very special meaning for Talal as part of becoming Muslim and finding a sense of belonging both in his personal relationship with Islam and in the Muslim community:

[Listening to the khutba in Arabic] ... gives me another instance to learn ... every once in a while I'll actually ... know he's talking about this or that ... Recognizing certain words and phrases. Which encourages me a little bit. Plus my wife speaks Arabic and she's teaching me a little bit ... the fact that it's Arabic and it's a language that really I should know, I should learn, it gets special treatment in my mind because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic ... the only real Qur'an is Arabic ... the easiest way to say it is I just give it preference (Talal 2009).

Talal's Saudi Arabian wife is fluent in Arabic which provides additional opportunities to not only learn the language but also share a more intimate bond with his partner on a personal level and in the way they are able to practice Islam together. Talal suggests that understanding Arabic is important as a practicing Muslim providing the means to study the Qur'an but also allowing individuals to understand the prayers (always in Arabic) and the khutba provided by the Imam at Friday prayers if not delivered in English:

All the prayers are in Arabic ... the kubitba in Chebucto is usually in Arabic but, like today, the sheik had a translator. Sheik Mohammad almost always had a translator ... [but] ... if you go to a madras ... and you can recite the Qur'an but it's in a language that you don't speak and you recite it so fast that ... even if you spoke the language you wouldn't know ... you hear some of these guys reciting it, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah [fast], right, blah, blah, blah, blah ... which is [laughs] is against the Qur'an itself.

Talal invokes the notion of the original language of the Qur'an and his own privileging of Arabic in relation to his Muslim identity and his practice of faith suggesting that it is one way to draw boundaries around being a 'proper' Muslim. He discusses Muslims who do not take effort to learn Arabic and, therefore, practice blindly. From his perspective, they merely recite the Arabic words without knowing what they mean, thus, relying on being told what they mean instead of knowing for oneself. His own enthusiasm in learning Arabic represents an important process of belonging within Islam and as a practicing Muslim convert.

Language may also create boundaries between Muslim converts and other Muslims for whom English is not a first language:

I'm the outside convert. We hang out with other converts ... we don't really fit in ... Because we speak English really well and we don't speak any other languages ... Language barriers ... I'm sure if I was able to learn their language they would be very happy to be friends with me (Maria 2009).

Duke suggests that much of the problem in uniting Muslims with other Muslims and non-Muslims lies in language and ethnic ties:

On a normal everyday practice, you will find that the Muslims are bound together on ethnic ties. Cause it's easier for them to speak in Urdu or Bengali than it is to speak to somebody who speaks English (Duke 2009).

He suggests that not only language but also other cultural expressions, such as dress, dislocate his wife from the South East Asian community to which he feels belonging:

The South East Asian community is very prejudice ... If she was to wear the traditional dress of the shalwar kameez, she'll be very happily accepted ... But if she was to show her more Canadian side then it will not be as warmly welcomed. You will feel a colder barrier (Duke 2009)

I'm better off showing up in the Pakistan traditional clothing than I am showing up in my jeans and a long dress that I turned into a shirt. Being a Canadian styled way of doing things (Maria 2009).

Belonging, as a process of negotiating connections to the places through which we identify, are grounded locally in our everyday lives but also in our constructions of belonging to a 'homeland' rooted in our histories or longed for as part of future imaginings of home. In what follows, I explore the ways in which some participants' sense of self is intricately entangled with an imagined sense of homeland as a terrain that includes both past and future belongings felt, lived, and expressed in the present.

Lulwa was born in Saudi Arabia, grew up in Vancouver and moved to Halifax for university. Her most intimate sense of homespace where belonging moors itself rests at the intersection of culture, homeland and faith. Though she has never lived in Algeria, her parents are from Algeria and the ‘Algerian’ homeland is a central thread in her identity and a place she calls home (see Photograph 67):

I’m originally Algerian. I’m very, very patriotic. I have a huge Algerian flag on my backpack and I have three huge Algerian flags all over my walls. And I thought to myself that was probably the most important thing to me in my life ... I pride myself on being African. I pride myself on being Algerian, and most of all I pride myself of being Muslim (Lulwa 2010).

Reflecting on several photographs she took in her bedroom, she reveals a patriotic attachment to a nation in which she has never lived nor holds citizenship. She has constructed an imagined homeland in Algeria that is close to her heart:

When I was in Vancouver, that was my home ... my parents don’t live in Vancouver anymore, so in a way I kind of lost my home there ... I lost my connection. So now I need to find a home [laughs] and the only logical place to me, that’s dear to my heart, that’s closest to me after Vancouver, is Algeria. Even though I don’t really fit in there [laughs] ... [I don’t have many friends there] because I have never lived there. So just family. [But] it’s not really about the people in Algeria. It’s the country itself (Lulwa 2010).

Photograph 67: On Marking Homeland Belonging (Lulwa 2010)



However, identifying with an imagined homeland in very intimate and deeply personal ways does not necessarily translate into feeling a strong sense of belonging:

The whole identity thing [laughs], it's hard for someone like me ... a Muslim or an Arab that's raised [in Canada]. I don't fit in as a Canadian because I don't dress like 'Canadians', I don't drink and all of that. But I don't fit in as an Algerian either because I don't think like Algerians, I don't speak Arabic, so when I go to Algeria I don't fit in. I come here [to Halifax], I still don't fit in. So no matter where I go, I never fit in completely. You'll find that with a lot of Algerians ... it's actually a huge thing in France, because French people don't consider them French. They go to Algeria, they're not considered Algerian. They have nothing to do with Algeria except they visit it. ... So, we don't fit in, really, anywhere. And that's why it's very important that you know who you are, otherwise you'll go crazy ... I go here I'm not welcome. I go there, I don't really fit in (Lulwa 2010)

Lulwa maps out multiple and yet always partial belongings to which she orients herself. The resulting terrain is one in which she may not feel she belongs anywhere. Her Islamic identity and practices seem to be at odds with what it means to be Canadian and she struggles with calling Halifax home. Growing up in Canada and speaking only English creates a barrier between herself and the Arabic-speaking Muslims of her imagined Algerian homeland. And yet, she again aligns herself with an imagined community of Algerians in diaspora, a shared experience of displacement and dislocation, when she suggests that fitting in is a difficult process for Algerians in France as well.

One way that Lulwa expresses a deep connection to her Algerian homeland is through her love of Soccer and by following both the Algerian team and Algerian players on other teams (see Photograph 68 and Photograph 69). At the time of our interview, the World Cup was being played in South Africa and the opportunity arose to discuss these connections through a photograph of a jersey hanging on her bedroom wall. She throws her support behind the Algerian team but also behind Algerian players on teams elsewhere. Her deep connection to the imagined homeland is created in association with soccer and soccer teams but also through an imagined community of soccer fans: "I don't know a lot about this team but I support them because they're the heart of Algerians" (Lulwa 2010).

Photograph 68: On Connections to Homeland (Lulwa 2010)



Photograph 69: On Connections to Homeland (Lulwa 2010)



Lulwa derives a certain amount of distinction and pride from identifying as Algerian because few others in Halifax do. She also likes it as a response to others' assumptions that she is an immigrant in Canada:

I don't like that feeling of people thinking that I'm below them ... [people] speak really slow and try to use simple words. It's kind of irritating [laughs]. I have a friend who is a convert [Amy]. She's actually a native, so she's more Canadian than any of the other people, and she gets really annoyed because she's actually 100% Canadian and they still treat her like that ... it's just the assumption that you come from somewhere else ...

Since I came [to Halifax] ... I've embraced my Algerianism [laughs] ... you just get this sense of pride ... I love being Canadian and to be honest that's all I really know. But, since people don't expect you to say you're Canadian [so I say Algerian] (Lulwa 2010).

The assumption that she is not Canadian comes primarily if not entirely from the fact that she is Muslim and wears the hijab. These markers position her as outsider in a country she has always called home.

Twin sisters Sara and Jane reveal multiple cultural frameworks crucially shaped by their connections to and experiences in India, the United States and Canada. Sara reflects on these different anchoring points of culture revealed in the inevitable question from others of where she comes from:

I consider myself as Canadian more than anything else ... like when people ask me, I know they're asking where am I originally from. So I'm just like, yeah I'm originally ... from India but I've lived here for a while ... I've moved around a lot ... [But] the people that I guess formed a large part of who I am today that's definitely happened in Canada (Sara 2010).

Jane orientates her cultural sense of self by similarly mapping the comparisons between the places she has lived, particularly Canada and the United States:

I've been to Toronto, I've been to Halifax, Montreal ... but when I meet ... non-Indian or non-Muslim, and basically Canadians, they're more aware of our culture. Whereas, when I meet people like that in the States, they don't really know much, they're more ignorant I find (Jane 2010).

Jane demonstrates the complex and deeply personal ways in which cultural frameworks become part of the way we understand belonging:

When we were living in [the US], one of the first questions that people ask you is 'where are you from?' ... Moncton is a very, very white, not a lot of diversity at all and I think me and my sister were the only two brown kids [laughs] ... I think almost a year went by before people asked us 'where are you from?' I like that because it was like they accepted you for who you are ... I consider myself Canadian ... I don't consider India my home, I consider that my ethnicity. I don't have any kind of strings that pull me there. I go there once in a while to visit my family. I lived there when I was very, very young. I moved to Saudi when I was five (Jane 2010).

Deeply affected by her time spent in the United States, she reveals the emotional sense of home viscerally experienced:

I have a Canadian citizenship. When I go to the States I just feel weighted. And the moment I get to the airport here and they're like welcome home, I just feel it lifting off of me ... Like I went to Boston once, and on, you know on electric boxes on the side of the street, the big metal things? It was like 'go home Arabs' or something. And like I'm not an Arab but 'it' affects me (Jane 2010).

The 'it' to which she refers here is the legacy of September 11, 2001 which has reshaped the perception of Muslims in the United States and elsewhere. Jane's intimate discussion suggests that, at least to a certain extent, living in Canada and being Canadian, gives her a sense of self outside of those perceptions.

Jane and Sara not only map out the differences between themselves and those of their cohort living in the United States, but also reveal the key cultural frameworks that shape their own subjectivities. Their sense of self and sense of belonging in relation to others like them is culturally framed through language as well as a geography of uniqueness located in coming from Kerala. Sara intimately discusses the importance of Indian culture to her own sense of self as a young Muslim woman living in Canada. She says that when it comes to the 'important parts of our lives,' food, clothing and the cultural significance of Bollywood are central aspects of her own cultural self. Beyond these, Sara reveals a deeper connection to Kerala, rooted in family and pride of place:

It's just really important to me ... the culture, in a sense, is essentially Indian ... [So] there's a religious aspect but other than that, culture is my mode of thinking. Like, India is emerging as an economic superpower ... you know, this drive towards innovation, drive towards education. Kerala, my state where I'm from, has one of the largest literacy rates in all of India ... all the girls, all the guys in my family, they're all applying to engineering or medical school ... not just in my family, in Kerala, as a state as a whole ... that's just wonderful. I completely love that about my culture. That, drive ... you'll find so many doctors, even in my parents generation, like, female doctors, they're studying, they're managing families, they're still professional women. I think that's amazing (Sara 2010).

Sara derives a significant sense of belonging with the Kerala diaspora by attending meetings of Kerala Muslims held every two years in the United States. A kind of 'family' reunion for 60-70 Kerala Muslim families living in the United States and Canada, at which faith, culture and language transform their individually located and placed everyday lives into a space of commonality. These meetings provide an anchor through which Jane and Sara maintain a sense of cultural, linguistic, and religious belonging while at the same time reveal lines of difference in

the politics of belonging, particularly among the second generation. For Sara, an important cultural sense of self emerges through the maintenance of speaking Malayalam:

[In the United States] they try so hard to assimilate ... In that group [of American Kerala Muslim youth] when you speak [Malayalam] ... It's something that's looked down upon [laughs] ... They speak the language but they'd much rather speak English. It seems extremely white-washed and I feel uncomfortable in that situation even though they're my people ... And that bothers me ... I'm quite proud of my language ... It's very important to me. And those kids barely speak my language ... For whatever reason [they] are not too proud of their culture (Sara 2010).

These kinds of frameworks of belonging through which a comfortability and familiarity arises between people also reveals that when such framings are rejected or refused there is a denial of the connection, culture, history and geography through which comfort and familiarity may be found. Speaking Malayalam is 'looked down upon' as a cultural artifact to have been left on the shore of India or in the quaint corners of their parents' homelands while to be a citizen in the United States is to reject these affiliations. It is to 'wannabe' and yet as Jane points out, you can never be American in the same sense as white Americans because you are Indian and this you cannot hide. Speaking Malayalam from the American point of view, is seen as 'pulling them back' to country, culture, tradition; some past of which they no longer wish to be part.

In a photograph of her child's daycare, Catherine represents the routine of the everyday life of a parent and student but also a sense of connection to and importance in being a Canadian woman (see Photograph 70):

Photograph 70: On Being a Woman and Mother in Canada (Catherine 2009)



I took it because I make two trips there almost every day ... I'm very thankful for that daycare ... to me that represents a positive side of being Canadian, that I have resources that can help me be a woman, do a million and ten things and have a baby (Catherine 2009).

This thread of freedom and equality in Canada continues in a conversation we have sparked by a photograph of where she lives (see Photograph 71):

It really represents a good thing ... there's a lot of people walking with strollers and a lot of families ... it really represents a beautiful picture of Canada to me, because you can't really do that in Arabic countries, go out for a walk (Catherine 2009).

Her comparative geography, mapping the differences between everyday life in 'Arab countries' and in Canada, is rooted in her experiences of living in Egypt during summers and while attending a semester of university there. Canada is mapped as a space of equality against class inequality and segregation in Egypt:

I think that's what's so special about being Canadian is the feeling of equality and really you can go to school with anybody and it's not going to matter. But in Egypt it's so segregated, in the Middle East, it's so segregated. There are, like, rich kid schools. Rich kid restaurants. Rich kid movies (Catherine 2009).

Photograph 71: On living in Canada (Catherine 2009)



Nevertheless, Catherine possesses a special connection to Egypt and Egyptian culture that is nourished during trips 'back home':

I have to go to Egypt at least once a year or something happens to me, like, I need to. No seriously, there's an Egyptian saying that if you drank from the Nile you will never quench your thirst until you drink from the Nile again ... I think there's something about Egypt and I don't know why, I'm not really Egyptian, my dad's Palestinian [and my mom is] Egyptian. Egypt is where I am originally from but my home would be Halifax. So I long for Egypt but only as a visit. I can't live there. I go there, I get really angry and I want to leave. But I always want to go back (Catherine 2009).

Catherine may not have herself rooted in Egypt but Egypt as 'homeland' has certainly taken root in Catherine. Despite how she may feel about the social and political milieu of Egypt, she longs for the social and cultural life of the streets and Islam as interwoven with everyday life:

I really miss the action, it's busy and everyone's talking Arabic, listening to Arabic music and there's just so much life in Egypt ... I don't know why [laughs] ... It's just so much life. I love hearing the Adhan [call to prayer] five times a day. I think it's beautiful. And I have a lot of family there. A lot of sentimental kinds of moments (Catherine 2009).

In Canada, she often feels a sense of conflict in terms of her culture and identity. She negotiates an Arab-Canadian or Muslim-Canadian identity in relation to other Muslims and some parts of the Muslim community but often feels like an 'alien':

That's one of the biggest conflicts I have in my life, being an Arab-Canadian or a Muslim-Canadian is just trying to take the best of both cultures and integrate them ... sometimes if I'm talking to another Muslim person that's my age, I'll feel like I'm really an alien. Like I really am different than them in the way that I think (Catherine 2009).

Catherine maps these feelings of difference onto perceived differences in being Canadian and immigrating to Canada:

There's something very special about Canada. Something very special about why people want to immigrate to Canada. And not everybody immigrates to Canada for the right reasons ... some people immigrate just because they need a passport and they have the money to immigrate ... And when they become Canadian, they don't really truly care if they're Canadian ... And I think it's really those people that I disagree with. They refuse to respect the culture that really grants us the freedom ... really you should be thankful for this system that granted you a passport and try to be at least respectful of the culture. I think those are the people that I disagree with the most when they hold on so much to their old culture to the point that it's disrespectful to other people (Catherine 2009).

Catherine's connection to Canada and her identity as a Canadian-Muslim woman is strongly presented in her narrative. She identifies with Egypt as her homeland and Canada, Halifax specifically, as her home.

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, Catherine's husband, Kareem, reveals a deep connection to and intimate feelings of belonging in Halifax through his photographs. He also demonstrates the lines of tension that surface when others map his race and ethnicity as out of place there:

[I identify as] Egyptian-Canadian. When people ask me ... where are you from? I always say I grew up in Halifax and if they're not satisfied with that, sometimes they say, 'yeah but where are you really from?' I'll say I'm Egyptian ... Because of my colour or whatever ... a lot of people assume that [I'm from somewhere else] just because I don't look white, I look like an ethnic (Kareem 2010).

However, Kareem is also mapped out of place during visits to Egypt:

Ironically ... people used to ask me where are you from, I would say Halifax ... which is kind of weird because I'm actually Egyptian. But when I'm in Egypt I don't feel like I'm from Egypt. I would be lying if I told someone I'm from Egypt ... Because when they look at me they just know I'm not Egyptian. I look Egyptian, I have their skin, and I look like the majority of the population but the way I speak and the way I act, they just know that I'm not from around there (Kareem 2010).

In terms of cultural identity, Kareem feels out of place in Egypt and identifies Halifax as his 'home' to those who ask. And yet, when comfortably at home in Halifax, people sometimes question his belonging due to his cultural identity at which point Kareem momentarily betrays his own sense of belonging to provide the answer people are seeking. He links cultural identity to the idea of calling a place home:

[If I say I'm Egyptian] they're going to automatically assume that I know a lot about Egypt ... I don't know anything about Egypt ... But if I say I'm from Halifax, I know everything about Halifax. And I've lived here all of my life and I can honestly say, yes, I'm from Halifax (Kareem 2010).

Despite feeling out of place, a photograph of a decorative souvenir plate from Egypt represents his desire to maintain cultural connections to Egypt now that he is married and has a son (see Photograph 72):

When I'm done school, my wife really wants to go back to, not necessarily Egypt, but maybe an Arabic country ... just to raise him there, just so he gets the culture

... I'm not really too keen on the idea ... it's not a bad idea, just, I'm not comfortable living in an Arab country (Kareem 2010).

Kareem reveals the complexity of belonging among the cohort of younger Muslims who have grown up in Halifax:

I cannot call myself 100% Egyptian. I cannot call myself 100% Canadian ... all my friends are like that ... they also came at a young age ... They're just Egyptian-Canadians I guess you'd call us [laughs]. We're a whole new breed. Because I don't feel at home when I go to Egypt, I don't feel like I fit in. I'm just so different from everyone else. And I don't feel at home when I'm outside Halifax, like if I go to Toronto or Montreal or something ... I'm just comfortable in Halifax ... But I never forget I'm Egyptian, I'm proud of it (Kareem 2010).

Photograph 72: Family and Culture (Kareem 2010)



Kareem decidedly locates 'home' in Halifax. So while he certainly maintains a cultural identity that is tied to Egyptian culture, it is one that is imagined through a symbolic connection rather than one that manifests in a longing for a 'home space' in Egypt itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the negotiations of individual Muslims who seek a sense of belonging in the city: with its spaces, its varied social contexts, and the individuals encountered within them. Muslims negotiate this sense of belonging through the everyday experience and practice of their faith in ways that make use of or create 'halal' space in the city. These negotiations, therefore, provide a remapping of the city, and its places and landscapes,

from the perspective of Muslims. This alternative mapping reveals the multiple and various forms of engagement and interaction that characterizes the efforts of Muslims to belong, among the Muslim community as well as the broader social and civic context of Halifax. It reveals the cultural and social spaces used and created by Muslims in the practices of everyday life and of Islam and demonstrates how Muslims stretch their identities across multiple social, cultural and personal points of reference. Participants have mapped out very personal and intimate spaces through which they feel a sense of belonging, to Islam, to the community, and to the city, but they also reveal the important connection between Muslim visibility and public space. For converts who must remap a familiar city and for Muslim women who don the headscarf for this first time in public, their experiences are an exercise in constantly reorienting and re-placing themselves on the ground and in the city. 'Looking like a Muslim' is a crucial component of expressing oneself and identifying with the Muslim community, while at the same time provides the site for both recognition and targeted intolerance. Thus, the Muslim body, particularly in the public spaces of the city, is a central site through which both belonging is sought and non-belonging might be deeply felt. Finally, these alternative maps of the city, explored, charted, photographed and redrawn by twenty Muslim men and women have revealed a topography of engagement. From the personal and social networks of individuals, through work, school and faith to the institutions and associations through which many of them dedicate significant portions of their time and effort to the cultural tensions that sometimes create fault lines of difference, their maps are maps of interaction and engagement that reveal a process of belonging through constant negotiation.

Chapter 5: Mapping ‘UMMAH’

Introduction

This far, I have focused on the diversity of the Muslim community reflected in participants’ experiences and highlighted the ways in which diversity matters in the negotiation of everyday life. In Chapter Three, the diverse histories, identities, and positionalities of participants demonstrate a challenge to considering the Muslim community as a single and coherent one. In Chapter Four, I exposed the ways in which the diversity of participants is negotiated in everyday life through different personal, civic, social and cultural spaces in the city. In this chapter, I focus on participants’ faith in order to map out their experiences and perceptions of the Muslim community in Halifax. They further reveal multiple lines of difference cross-cutting the Muslim community with both symbolic and material implications.

From the mosque to prayer space, Muslims and the Muslim communities have had an impact on the landscape of Halifax. Participants demonstrate the ways in which spaces for the practice of Islam in everyday life is fought for and created and they reveal their intimate connections to such places. In Part I, “Faithscapes and the Promise of UMMAH”, I provide multiple mappings of Muslim faith-spaces to highlight overlapping and sometimes contradictory maps of meaning in the Islamic spaces of Halifax. Alongside existing spaces in the city, I address the newest mosque under construction in Halifax at the time and, in particular, the ways in which it holds the promise of community in the eyes of several participants.

As discussed in previous chapters, there is a complex diversity of identities within the Muslim community in Halifax. Differences of age, gender, race, culture, and faith practice have been introduced throughout discussions of participants’ journeys to Halifax and to Islam as well as in the negotiation of everyday life. In Part II, “The Politics of Ummah”, I map out the challenges of fostering a sense of ‘ummah’ or community raised by participants. In particular, differences in culture, faith practice and ideology reveal internal divisions that result in a complex cartography of the Muslim community such that the promise of ummah may not be enough to overcome its politics.

Part I: Faithscapes and the Promise of UMMAH Masjid

Despite the relatively small size of the Muslim community in Halifax, there are a number of mosques and prayer rooms across the city providing social and spiritual space to Muslims (see Figure 8). The first formalization of the Muslim community in the Halifax area is evident in the Islamic Association of the Maritime Provinces of Canada (IMP) established in 1967 in Dartmouth. The services of a mosque took place in founding members' homes until, in 1969, the community outgrew its capacity (Ali 2007). Temporary spaces to accommodate Muslim prayers were found in a United Church in Halifax. For larger events such as Eid, they rented space in community halls. In 1969, the land where Dartmouth Mosque now sits was purchased to accommodate the original plan for a purpose built mosque with minaret and community centre. The prohibitive cost at the time resulted in the scaling down of the Dartmouth Mosque, completed by the fall of 1971, that remains on the site today with an addition completed in 1986 to expand the prayer space. Another major expansion of the Dartmouth Mosque was done in 2005 with the addition of a dedicated prayer area and a multi-purpose hall for women. New washrooms, wudu area for washing before prayer and a large parking lot were also constructed (Ali 2007). According to the Islamic Association of Nova Scotia's website, "the Dartmouth Mosque is one of the first, if not the first, original mosque in Canada to be built from scratch on a virgin piece of land owned by Muslims" (Ali 2007).

In 1996, as demand for space in both the prayer centre and school in Dartmouth Mosque grew, the IANS searched for an additional location in Halifax. They leased and then purchased an old school site on Chebucto Road, establishing the Maritime Muslim Academy, an Islamic school running kindergarten through high school, in one of the buildings. In 1999, a second building on site was adapted for daily and weekly prayers, known as Chebucto Mosque, until it was torn down to make way for the construction of UMMAH Masjid and Community Centre (UMMAH Masjid). Without a prayer space available in the school building, they rented the basement of an adjacent building, owned by the Maritime Conservatory of the Performing Arts. Since its relocation in 2008, this basement space has been known as Chebucto Mosque.

In the early 1990s, political differences caused a split in Dartmouth Mosque; while a more conservative fellowship remained, liberal Muslims temporarily rented a church community hall in Halifax until they constructed a new centre at a site in the suburb of Bedford (Kareem 2010; Talib 2010). According to Catherine, the divide was also partially related to culture: the

Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi community remained at Dartmouth Mosque and the Arab community relocated either to Chebucto Mosque or to Kearney Lake. Founded in 1992, the Nova Scotia Islamic Community Centre, also known as the Kearney Lake Mosque, houses an Islamic school teaching Arabic and Qur'an to all ages (Kearney Lake Islamic School 2013). Kearney Lake Mosque remains incomplete because the community is pooling money from donations and fundraisers toward the completion of UMMAH Masjid (Kareem 2010).

In 1998, and just a few blocks from Chebucto Mosque, the Centre for Islamic Development was established as a centre for education about Islam and Islamic teachings (Centre for Islamic Development 2012). It houses the Ihsan Academy of Halifax providing Islamic teaching from primary to grade eleven. In addition, there are weekly classes for non-Muslims and new Muslims held at the centre including Qur'an study and Arabic languages classes. Daily and jummah prayers are also held at the centre.

As mentioned, the newest mosque on the Halifax landscape is UMMAH (The United Maritime Muslim Association of Halifax) Masjid and Community Centre. UMMAH Masjid sits on the site where the original Chebucto Mosque was housed before the building was demolished and was relocated to the basement site. This is, arguably, the first purpose built mosque in the city and certainly the first one of significant size and recognizable architectural qualities that includes a dome and minaret. UMMAH Masjid represents the first time since establishing Dartmouth Mosque that the community collaborated through planning and fundraising to build a mosque: all the other mosques in the city exist because of ethnic, ideological, or political divisions. At the time of conducting this research, the mosque was under construction and after several delays finally opened its doors in 2012.

Despite the fact that it would be two years before Muslims in Halifax would begin to use it, my participants already had a great deal to say about the new mosque. For many, it represents a site through which the Muslim community would not only be noticed in Halifax but also a place in which the community might, in unity, have a home in faith. Hence the acronym UMMAH paralleling the Arabic word ummah meaning unity or community among Muslims. For others, while the mosque may be symbolically important, it holds no more a special place in their hearts than the mosques and prayer spaces in which they currently pray. For others, still, the mosque represents a misuse of resources and is more symbolic of the splintering Muslim community than it is of ummah.

In addition to the institutional spaces of mosques in the Muslim community, there are myriad official and unofficial spaces for prayer across the city sometimes referred to as musallas or prayer rooms. These are located in dedicated workplace and university faith rooms as well as the improvised spaces found on quiet library floors and other locations at which everyday life and prayer times coincide.

Figure 8: Mosques and Select Prayer Rooms in Halifax



Source: Map adapted from listingsca.com, 2007

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Dartmouth Mosque | 6 Prayer Room, Sexton Campus, Dalhousie University |
| 2 Chebucto Mosque; UMMAH Masjid | 7 Prayer Room, Saint Mary's University |
| 3 Centre For Islamic Development | 8 Prayer Room, Mount Saint Vincent's University |
| 4 Kearney Lake Mosque | |
| 5 Prayer Room, Student Union Building; Prayer Room, Killam Library, Dalhousie University | |

By no means is this mapping of the geographies of faith and belonging in Halifax among Muslims comprehensive. It is, however, one that emerges from the everyday experiences of the participants involved, and, as discussed throughout this dissertation, reflects a complex diversity. However, despite efforts to involve Shia Muslims in this study, all the participants are Sunni

Muslims. Therefore, there are geographies of absence to consider: the everyday places of faith and belonging, of family, social connections, and home carved out by Shia Muslims, but for the occasional reference by participants, remains unmapped. This includes the people and communities, for example, connected to the Al-Rasoul Islamic Society Centre in Halifax as well as the Ismaili Jamatkhana and Centre in Dartmouth.

In the remainder of Part I, I examine participants' narratives in order to map out their diverse personal experiences, perceptions, and connections to these faithscapes of Halifax. For a number of reasons, participants have very different kinds of connection to and feelings about the various faith spaces across the city. They may not practice Islam regularly or when they do they always do so in the same place. Additionally, those who are newer to Halifax, perhaps attending university, are meeting their faith needs on campus and have limited knowledge of spaces beyond the university. Converts typically feel connected to the 'home mosque' in which they first became Muslim or began regular practice. Depending on the degree to which individuals practice Islam, mosques and prayer rooms may be an integral geography of everyday life or may largely go unmapped in their photographs and interviews.

Mapping Faith

Most participants spoke about multiple mosques and prayer rooms as they compared experiences and explained their own relation to various places. The Bangladeshi participants primarily practice daily and weekly prayer at the Sexton campus prayer room and then at Dartmouth Mosque for special occasions. By his own admission, Tarek is not very religious. He prays irregularly through the week but usually attends Friday prayers:

Honestly, we have to say prayers five times a day. I can't wake up that early in the morning ... and I'm not that hard-core religious ... mainly because of time, lack of time and laziness ... If I go to mosque I go to the prayer room in Sexton because that's beside my lab. I don't go to Chebucto and Dartmouth Mosque, like rarely, hardly (Tarek 2009).

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Bangladeshi participants are not involved with the MSA because they feel excluded. Thus, even though the MSA organizes ifatars on campus during Ramadan, Tarek and the other Bangladeshi students prefer to attend Dartmouth Mosque with other members of the Bangladeshi and Desi communities. Kuyasha also uses the Sexton campus prayer room and even though it is more convenient to go to Chebucto Mosque, his preference is

clear: “Dartmouth one is much better than the Checbuto one ... Because it’s quiet and clean” (Kuyasha 2010). In his photograph, Sabir describes the jummah prayer at Sexton (see Photograph 73 and Photograph 74):

I took this because ... on Friday prayer you can see lots of people ... In the Friday prayers, the rule is you have to pray together. In [daily] prayers you can pray alone and when you find time you just pray your prayer and go back. But Friday prayer, it’s a fixed time, 1:30, 2:00, or 2:30 ... there is a place for women at the back ... actually I never seen any women pray Friday prayer ... [Sexton] is really small, so I only seen men praying there (Sabir 2010).

Photograph 73: Prayer Room, Sexton Campus, Dalhousie University (Sabir 2010)



Photograph 74: Gathering for Prayer at Sexton Campus (Sabir 2010)



However, convenience and accessibility are more important than attending any particular mosque:

I've been there [to Dartmouth mosque] lots of times ... I go for prayers, most of the time, I use to go in the Ramadan time for iftar. There's lot's of people there ... [But] it doesn't matter for me. I don't care whatever mosque it is ... When there is no classes [at university], the prayer room is closed ... [so] I normally go to the Chebucto one ... [my home] is closer ... it's walking distance (Sabir 2010).

Sabir suggests that the small size of the Sexton prayer room and the large number of brothers attending daily prayers there (staggered over 3 sessions over ninety minutes to accommodate worshippers) is the main reason few if any women use the prayer room. Trishana suggests another reason: "I prefer saying my prayer at home or at any other's place but not in these public places. I don't feel comfortable" (Trishana 2010). Several of the women indicated that conducting prayers at the mosque or at Friday jumma was not mandatory for women but for men it is an important part of building and maintaining community. Harrie Podder may not have to attend mosque, but she finds that it provides an opportunity for men and women alike to connect and for the community to come together once a week:

It's mandatory for men to go, but for women it's optional. But you get to meet everybody on Friday's so it's a tradition that I find is good. We didn't have that in Pakistan. Women never go to Friday prayers. Not the women that I knew at least (Harrie Podder 2010).

Coming together for Friday prayers has become an important and new aspect of her relationship to her faith and provides her with a sense of belonging in the Muslim community. She uses several places on campus for prayer including the Student Union Building on Fridays, the prayer room in Killam library and the campus chaplaincy. Particularly on special occasions she may go to the Centre for Islamic Development, primarily because the Imams who speak there also speak at the SUB. Again, Harrie Podder is in Halifax to attend school and has been in the city just a couple of years. She has not been to Dartmouth Mosque and has never heard of Kearney Lake Mosque, however, she has visited Chebucto Mosque:

I like the CID more because the Chebucto is just a basement of another building right. It's not that nice, so I just like to go to the CID [laughs] (Harrie Podder 2010).

As she suggests, Chebucto does not feel like a mosque and given its temporary status, only in use until UMMAH Masjid opens, it is, from her perspective, 'just a basement'. In fact, she feels that most of them in Halifax lack the qualities she associates with a mosque:

The masjid, it doesn't even look like something religious, If you went to the CID you wouldn't think it was a mosque ... I was really surprised when I saw [Dartmouth mosque]. When I first came here we thought we were going to a mosque, you know, with minarets and stuff, and then we just parked in front of this house [laughs]. We were like, oh. [laughs] (Harrie Podder 2010).

Talal agrees that Chebucto Mosque may be lacking, however, it occupies a special place as his 'home masjid' (see Photograph 75):

It is a very dingy, scruffy, dirty place, and I love it ... It's amazing when I go there. I really feel comfortable, I really feel at home except that there's a music school above. It's not ours ... we're renting it (Talal 2009).

Photograph 75: Chebucto Mosque (Talal 2009)



Talal's photograph of Chebucto Mosque represents an intimate connection both to Islam and to the practices of his faith. Despite the fact that this is not 'owned' by the community, that it is temporary, lacks space and proper facilities and located in a 'dingy' basement, Talal feels at 'home'. This space of prayer and brotherhood is where he feels most comfortable and welcomed. In an undeveloped photograph, DJ Albatross suggests both the centrality and significance of Chebucto Mosque though he only attends it during special events throughout the year:

It's the most central mosque ... it's where I would go for Taraweeh prayers ... it's your ideal, it doesn't look like a mosque, but it's what a mosque feels like (DJ Albatross 2009).

Talal and DJ Albatross view Chebucto Mosque as having the 'feel' of a mosque but for Duke Dartmouth Mosque conforms most closely to expectations of a 'home mosque' (see Photograph 76):

If I was to really have the spirit, any place where you can go and pray that conforms to certain rules, a mosque under legal Islamic jurisprudence. [Dartmouth] has a lot of historic value. It was the first mosque that was made ... the first mosque I went to ... [and] where I prayed my first Friday prayers. I've visited all the other mosques and centres in Halifax; I find this is one place that I can relate to the most. Not because of the ethnic ties, even though I am Pakistani and this place is dominated by Pakistanis, but because I feel that it has the atmosphere of a mosque. There are certain disciplines observed in this mosque that are not observed elsewhere ... When I am praying here, I'm relaxed, I'm focused, I can pray, in the prayer area. In other places, they have turned mosques into 'slash' community centres ... [Dartmouth] is where I find the spirit (Duke 2009).

Central to his idea of a home mosque is that the space is disciplined by the rules of a mosque. In this case, Dartmouth Mosque is maintained functionally as a mosque and not a community centre or social space in which the conversations can stray from matters of spirituality. He compares all the mosques in terms of function, spirituality, and serenity:

I can't pray [in Chebucto] because there is always someone yapping, distracting. And there's a prayer area here [CID] which is used for praying as well as they use for eating, and they play table tennis there as well, so it's distracting there ... because there are no rules so in this place anything goes ... In [Dartmouth] you have strict obedience, there are rules you must follow, which are the rules of the mosque laid by the prophet, peace be upon him. So when somebody's praying you don't distract them, you take your conversation outside. Or there are other rooms. There is a basement down there for eating and socializing. [In these other mosques] the rules of the mosque were not observed (Duke 2009).

Photograph 76: A Home in Dartmouth Mosque (Duke 2009)



Like Duke, Maria has an emotional connection to Dartmouth Mosque as her first ‘home’ in Islam with which other mosques cannot compare:

I prefer that one to all the others ... Chebucto I found very dirty and unkept and it was in a basement and I didn’t like it. Um, and when I go to CID it doesn’t feel like a mosque, it doesn’t feel holy. It feels like a community centre and everyone just happens to be praying there at the moment. This is the only place in Halifax to me that feels like a holy place ... so, it has a special energy to me (Maria 2009).

Though she reflects back nostalgically on it as her first mosque, she also reveals a very uneasy journey to acceptance at Dartmouth as a convert:

I did not feel welcomed by the ladies ... I just didn’t feel welcomed. I don’t know how to explain the feeling of not feeling welcomed. Sorry. It’s just a vibe ... No eye contact, they didn’t talk to me. I felt utterly ignored. Completely and utterly ignored. Even once I became Muslim and I went there. Completely and utterly ignored ... I just always felt very alone there. Aaron on the other side though, he was all always welcomed. Every time he came in, ‘brother, how are you, how’s it been’ – very different on both sides of the wall ... There’s lots of brotherhood but there’s no sisterhood (Maria 2009).

Both Maria and her brother Aaron are white converts, however, Aaron’s gender afforded him a kind of instant acceptance, welcoming and belonging among brothers that Maria still does not feel some years later. Maria suggests several ways that being a white, female convert sets her outside of the Muslim community as stereotypically defined or perceived by others:

Some of it also has to do with the fact that when a new convert woman comes in they're kind of looked at skeptically, because most of the women who convert don't convert for religion and don't convert for God, they convert for boys ... Every time that I meet someone and they find out that I'm married, I make the point of saying that I was Muslim before I met him. And I shouldn't have to say that ... It's also about being a white girl and being Muslim regardless of who I would have been married to ... The first assumption is always that the white girl, even among non-Muslims, the first assumption is always, she converted for marriage ... It annoys me when I find people who do that. It makes a bad name for me [laughs] (Maria 2009).

As Maria indicates, difficulties in fitting in among Muslim women in particular as a new convert eased when she married Duke:

Once I got married to the Pakistani man, the Pakistani women were okay with me. Now Dartmouth is welcoming to me [laughs] ... Because Duke is well known in the community around Dal ... I was welcomed easier there ... so it's really bizarre (Maria 2009).

Maria and Duke do not attend Dartmouth Mosque as often as they would like because of the distance and because public transit is time consuming. Just before they set out to take photographs for the project, they purchased a car which changed their everyday lives and, in particular, some aspects of the way they practice their faith:

Over Ramadan, we went there for Taraweeh prayers every night, so that's extra prayers that you do during Ramadan, in the night, after you have done all your other daily ones and that was nice ... [I] couldn't do it without the car. Ramadans were very hard without the car ... And so this year was awesome ... I really enjoyed that. It helped make Ramadan more special (Maria 2009).

Having access to the vehicle meant having access to her home mosque during one of the most important times of the year for Muslims. Maria could make it to mosque in the evenings to complete the extra Taraweeh prayers which is something that she has had only the rare opportunity to do.

The degree to which participants practice Islam, of course, matters in terms of how much faith shapes everyday life. Kareem expresses a sense of pride and accomplishment on behalf of the Muslim community in Halifax and the impact it has had on the landscape:

We do have an effect on the city. We've changed a lot of things about the city ... there's three mosques now, there's religion classes, Arabic school. There's actually a private school ... it's a Muslim school (Kareem 2010).

However, Kareem does not regularly practice Islam except for significant events such as Ramadan or Eid. In previous sections, Kareem has demonstrated a strong sense of belonging in Halifax, yet, he has a limited awareness of, for example, campus prayer space:

There's one upstairs [in the Student Union Building], I've used it on the odd occasion. The only one I know of, I think there's another one down at Sexton but I've never been to it. Where is the one in Killam? I have no idea (Kareem 2010).

Though he has lived most of his life here, his father is a local Imam, and he attends the university where the prayer rooms he is talking about are located, he does not map himself into these spaces. However, for Sara, making prayer is weaved into daily routine. She prefers the more private space of a prayer room for daily prayers but still makes her way to jummah prayer and the mosque on occasion:

I feel more comfortable in the [Killam] library one ... Everyday, I practice regularly, my prayers ... I do the morning one in my apartment and then I do all the other four [on campus] ... Friday prayers are usually the one in the SUB ... I do like the CID ... it's just a good environment, it's very quiet ... that's just nice. And, you know, you have the books and the resources and things to sit and read, or if you just want to relax. I just find the CID a great atmosphere to do that (Sara 2010).

Sara is able to fulfill her needs as a practicing Muslim in university spaces. The quiet, peaceful, and relaxing atmosphere of the Centre for Islamic Development is, on a rare occasion, an oasis of sorts for her. However, because the Muslim Student Association holds potlucks and social events, she does not feel a need to access the broader Muslim community or attend functions at the city's mosques.

Whether it is the appeal of a motivational Imam or speaker or the convenience of praying with friends or near work or home, Talib reveals the ways in which faith practice is woven into everyday life:

So the Friday prayer when I'm working with Dawgfather [a hot dog stand in front of the SUB], that's a must. But outside of that time, when the school year is in, it's usually in CP Allen [High School in Bedford]. But outside of those times it's usually Chebucto ... before the prayer room at the Mount I would go pray [at the library basement at Mount Saint Vincent's University] ... that's what you got to do ... But I was very open with where I go. In Halifax, the Muslim community is very cliquy for some reason. There's a lot of politics and there's a lot of people who only go to one mosque but I'll go anywhere. It doesn't matter to me ... I prefer Chebucto because I find the sermons are better ... the best I've ever heard,

is a guy from Libya ... his sermons are the best and they're amazing and so that's where I would choose to go for Friday prayer. For the other prayers, I go to CID because I'm around the area, Panini Kabobs near there, my friends. Their Friday prayer is also very short too, which I love. So it just depends. Different places, man ... I like to sprinkle myself around, you know? ... Because some people, it's very clique-y ... 'we' make a conscious effort to kind of try and not be like that ... there's no need for it (Talib 2010).

He attends a number of mosques and prayer spaces in Halifax, in part, avoiding what he calls a tendency to be 'cliquey' in the community. The 'we' he is speaking of in terms of trying to avoid the inclination to pray at the same mosque or only among similar community members, are converts like himself, who he feels are open to broader experiences of Islam and being Muslim.

Talib further reveals the qualities that, for him, contribute to a good experience of jumma prayer at mosque:

What it needs to be about is one, not political, for the love of god ... because I didn't go to the mosque to friggin' hear about politics. I have CNN for that ... that's not what I'm there for ... Two, interesting ... How the person presents it, you know what I mean? ... Sheikh Mohammad, even in Arabic, I can't stop listening ... Very charismatic ... he keeps you focused and in tune. I like guys with some charisma ... I like also when it's easy to follow, when there's a clear narrative and when there's a clear line. Not people jumpin' all over the place to this point and that point. Somebody with a clear narrative, and can keep my attention and is going to tell me something beneficial, even if it's something I already know ... sometimes I've heard some things that I just didn't agree with ... that doesn't stop me from going ... you're going to always have people with different opinions (Talib 2010).

Though Talib likes to 'sprinkle himself around' the community in terms of prayers, he has a sentimental attachment to many of the places he pray. As an impassioned Muslim convert, the library at Dartmouth Mosque offers a space for him to continue his journey with Islam (see Photograph 77):

I took the pictures of the book room here because ... books are one of my favourite things ... Anytime I can get my hands on an Islamic book I just love to read, I just love to listen to lectures, anything like that. And this is why I gave myself, when I became Muslim I gave myself [a name] which means student or seeker. So this is my favourite place to be and I would lock myself in this room and read all the books in there (Talib 2010).

Although he tells me that Dartmouth Mosque is home to a number of converts, it is not typically where he prays. He feels more deeply connected to the CID and to Chebucto:

If you are [practicing and social] ... that's where you really get strong connections with those places. Like Chebucto, I have strong memories of being there a lot three years ago ... So there's a lot of memories from there ... CID is obviously a big, big place ... so I really identify a lot with those two places ... just the vibe of it, you know, after prayer there is a lot going on there. There's a lot of people talking, there's a lot of kids going there, you play around with them. So that spot is definitely the most congregational, chill spot, I guess you could say, of the mosques or of the prayer spaces, than any other place. It's not like you just go there and pray and then okay, salaam alaikum and then you leave. You can do a lot of other stuff down there and that's what happens a lot (Talib 2010).

Photograph 77: Dartmouth Mosque Resource Room (Talib 2010)



For Talib, the CID has the most 'congregational' feel of all the mosques. He describes it as an 'open' and 'chill' space for community members, particularly youth, to use not only as a centre of faith but also a gathering and point for socializing.

The ongoing need for places of prayer in the everyday lives of Muslims is revealed in interviews with several participants. In a photograph inside one of the campus buildings, DJ Albatross discusses the temporary and ephemeral claim to space that occurs during improvised prayer (see Photograph 78):

It's just one of the places on campus where I [pray] ... this is like the whole idea of praying in the stack of books, in the hallway ... you make do with what you can ... I've prayed in every building that I've been in. And it's just the whole idea that you can do that anywhere you want ... it's not necessary that you have to go pray in the mosque, you can pray any clean place you find (DJ Albatross 2009).

The idea of improvised prayer space that allows one to practice where you are, in makeshift prayer spots, provides an example of personal performance where the practice of Islam in the everyday and routine spaces of life translates into moments and pockets of belonging. Clearly important for the practice of prayer, DJ Albatross discusses his photograph of another improvised space of prayer and suggests one motivation for negotiating permanent prayer rooms on campus (see Photograph 79):

I took a picture of second floor the SUB building in front of the lockers because before we had a prayer room in the Killam library, we had to go pray there in public ... that brought in larger implications because you're praying in public so you're seen. You're seen as a Muslim, you're visibly known as Muslim ... particularly sisters may not feel comfortable praying in a prayer place like that (DJ Albatross 2009).

Photograph 78: Everyday Place of Prayer (DJ Albatross 2009)



Public prayer exposes the private relation between self and faith. As Sara already commented on, and many other women in this study have commented on, public expressions of faith make them feel uncomfortable (e.g. Trishana, Amira, Jane). While improvised spaces allow Muslims to 'make do', a more permanent solution by setting aside space for prayer rooms is welcomed especially by those uncomfortable with public prayer:

We've been lobbying for quite a bit for the Killam prayer room ... but we just got this prayer room last year ... I don't complain too much about their provision of prayer spaces and I'm grateful that they have given us this room for Fridays. It's very good (DJ Albatross 2009).

Talib discusses the same site represented by an undeveloped photograph meant to show him praying in the hallway of the SUB as an example of both the need for space and the way that any space can be transformed into a place of prayer through its routine use. This hallway became a place of prayer over the years as Muslims sought out a quiet semi-private space on campus before prayer rooms were available. Even after dedicated prayer rooms became available many continue to practice here because, through the routine, repetition, and practice of everyday life, it has become a meaningful place for them.

Photograph 79: Improvised Place of Prayer (DJ Albatross 2009)



When Abdullah first began university he was not aware of available prayer rooms and so he, too, improvised by placing his jacket on the floor and praying in the hallway. He now takes classes at two different campuses and has found the prayer rooms which now have become important parts of his daily routine:

During the school days I go to the Sexton campus, there's a Musalla over there, so I go to the Friday prayers over there ... a lot of my prayers I do over there. And because I study at St. Mary's I usually go to the prayer room over there ... It's pretty convenient ... so I go there for all the prayers. But Friday prayers you can't, you need to have a bigger gathering (Abdullah 2010).

At Saint Mary's University he has found a comforting space in an interfaith room for spiritual reflection (see Photograph 80):

It's not just for Muslims, it's a private space for everyone but no one comes there ... there's some bibles and Christian books on the shelf but I haven't seen anyone

else ... This is where I go and pray ... I was spending most of my time in the prayer room reading Qur'an ... a good place for me in the university. I feel more comfortable there ... It shows the importance of a place to pray on the campus ... There's a washroom right next to it ... people can make their wudhu over there. It's very good ... In other universities I've heard people go and they wash in the public washrooms, wash their hands and faces, and it kind of causes a little bit of mess ... so it's really good that they give us a separate washroom right next to the prayer room (Abdullah 2010).

Photograph 80: Prayer Room, Saint Mary's University (Abdullah 2010)



Though he says the only important thing is to have a clean place to pray, the facilities available at Saint Mary's University, including prayer mats and nearby washrooms, enhances the comfort level in this space.

Familiar with other university spaces, Abdullah describes the prayer room at the Sexton campus of Dalhousie:

Now it's easier, but before it was much more difficult ... in the beginning they didn't have a prayer room and [they] used to go and pray in one of the classrooms. [They] asked the university to give us a room that we can go and pray in, to be convenient for us ... They were against it, they were like, 'we don't need a prayer room in the university'. And [the university] called a lawyer, and the lawyer said that 'there's been Muslim students here for so many years, what kind of Muslims are you that you need a prayer room?' [laughs] ... But you know, slowly, we got the place and, Alhamdulillah [Praise to God], it's very good (Abdulah 2010).

He does not reveal when this conflict over space occurred, nor exactly how it came to pass that the room was set aside for prayer. His point, however, is to suggest that there were times in Halifax that being Muslim and finding places to accommodate prayer was more difficult than it is now.

There are important differences between prayer spaces. Abdullah compares the larger more popular jummah prayer held at the main campus Student Union Building and the Sexton campus prayer room:

[At the Student Union Building] there is a very good speaker ... he's very inspirational and very good speaker ... But [at Sexton prayer room] it's very packed, and very crowded ... they have three jummahs, they have three Friday prayers over there, it's like, one gathering they come and they finish in maybe fifteen minutes, half an hour, and then the second one comes and the third one, so they can't have a long talk or something (Abdullah 2010).

The more traditional Friday service including a khutbah takes place at the SUB but, as Sabir described earlier, the Sexton prayer room is small by comparison. The three prayer services accommodate larger number of Muslims but without providing a khutbah. Thus, these shorter services allow Muslims with time constraints to meet and pray communally before returning to classes or work.

In terms of mosques in the city, in Chapter Four Abdullah describes his connection to and volunteer efforts at the Dartmouth Mosque. Convenience and access are important factors that determine where he prays, but so too is the feeling of community at a mosque:

Right now, I'd go to whatever mosque is closer. Dartmouth Mosque is closer for me, but if Chebucto was closer I'd go there. It doesn't really matter ... I think it's just also because of the Imam [in Dartmouth] I think is better and also the community ... I find the scholar over there very knowledgeable, and I have a better connection with the Imam over there ... he knows how to talk with the youth (Abdullah 2010).

Although most of his daily and even Friday prayers are done on campus, and he lives in suburb of Halifax, Dartmouth Mosque is on a direct bus route from home and he has a connection with an Imam there to which he relates. Having a connection with the Imam is sometimes more important than the convenience of getting to the mosque. When a special scholar from Libya was in Halifax, for example, Abdullah attended Chebucto Mosque instead:

I was going there a lot when the Imam was from Libya ... And then he moved away from Halifax. He's gone back to Libya. And then I started going more to Dartmouth and spending more time over there and I find it more beneficial for me (Abdullah 2010).

As a student, Jane's time and focus are also on campus, therefore, much of her prayer takes place, either at home or on campus in available prayer rooms and at Friday prayer in the Student Union Building. For Sara, semi-private spaces for prayer rather than the improvised hall spaces of which others spoke, is important:

I'm very uncomfortable praying in public [laughs] ... I can't pray when people are staring at me. At the Killam library, it's open to all faiths but the Muslim students mostly go there ... But just having that space to practice, a private space, because I think prayer is very private. And I also like the Friday space upstairs [Student Union Building] and a lot of universities don't have that ... By that I mean the [United] States. I know students pray in the library and things like that. If I was in a situation like that, I don't think I would pray (Sara 2010).

Prior to having separate prayer space, students would improvise using any clean space in order to pray (e.g. library basement at Mount Saint Vincent's University). She says that if she had to pray in such public space she would be much less likely to keep up with her daily practice. Again, because of the time spent living in the United States, and the possibility of continuing her education there, Jane uses comparative geography to emphasize her freedom to pray in Canada:

That's one of the things that scares me a little bit about the [United] States, that if I do go there for medical school, would I have a space to practice? Because I definitely wouldn't practice just in the corner of the library because I would be very self-conscious ... [At Saint Mary's] they have two prayer rooms, and a special place for the students to take ablution, like wash up before prayer. The accommodations that they make is just, I think it's great. And also at the Chaplaincy [at Dalhousie] it's open to all faiths (Jane 2010).

As part of expressing an Islamic identity as a bi-racial convert born and raised in Halifax, Talib extends great efforts to claim prayer space in the city. He does this especially in terms of creating new social and prayer spaces across the city:

I went to [a school] ... to give a presentation on hijab with a friend of mine ... while I was there, they were like, 'we don't have Friday prayer, will you come [and do Friday prayer at the high school]?' ... I was like, 'well, I'm not the best person for it, but I'll find somebody for you' ... [At another high school] they had Friday prayer space ... where they use it for dance class, they use it for karate sometimes ... I still go there to this day ... It's actually closer to my house than Mount Saint Vincent, but the reason that I really do it is because both of the

people who used to lead the Friday prayer there left ... so I got one of my friends [to lead the prayer]. So he obviously wants me to go there (Talib 2010).

To its credit, the second school he mentions has been very accommodating to the needs of its Muslim students and the community beyond. In order to fit in with the school schedule, jummah prayer here takes place earlier than those typically held at 1pm in other parts of the city. Therefore, it has also become an option for those in the community outside of the school who, because of work or other engagements, are unable to attend at the regular time elsewhere.

In another example, Talib advocates for prayer space at a local ESL school catering, in large part, to Arab Muslim students not yet provided time and space for prayer. Talib negotiated prayer space with the school so students were not sacrificing prayer for language skills:

I met with one of the heads of the school and told her like this is unacceptable ... there's so many Muslims ... there's no place to pray ... all the other language schools have prayer rooms ... [I said] 'If word gets back to Saudi Arabia that this is the only school without a prayer room, well guess where nobody's going to go' (Talib 2010).

What Talib was asking for was to have the school acknowledge who their students/customers were and to make an accommodation so that the choice to attend or not attend would never be based on religious exclusion. The school arranged for a room in their facility to accommodate prayer for their Muslim students. Talib believes that all Muslims should make it their responsibility to advocate and maintain spaces for practice: "to make sure that the other schools have prayer Imams and make sure everything's good" (Talib 2010). And he continues to do just that. He now attends a university that has not had a prayer room until an international student fought for one. Since then, he has created a new Muslim Student Association and further negotiated the logistics for acquiring a small but functional prayer space on campus:

Beautiful Mount Saint Vincent has never had a prayer room in its history ... we've been in the bottom floor of the library, praying on the dirty carpet between the bookshelves ... there's been petitions being signed forever to get a prayer room and [the administration's] just been ignoring them ... a new student ... from Saudi Arabia came. And he just squashed everything, he went in there ... 'I'm going to destroy you guys publicly, if you don't give us a prayer room. I'm going to write an article about how racist this school is and how non-multicultural it is, and how not open and not diverse it is, and all the other schools there is so many places you can pray ... even at NSCC [Nova Scotia Community College], they have their own prayer room. We don't have anything' ... [So] they gave us a room. So

then we said, okay, we have our room, now we need a Muslim Student Association to facilitate it (Talib 2010).

While there are always challenges in setting up new associations and developing a good routine for the operation of the prayer room to meet the needs of those who practice within it, Talib says the new MSA is already looking forward to how they can continue to change the landscape for practice in Halifax:

I think we're going to take it upon ourselves, upon the association, to make sure that next year the [public high] schools have Imams or have people who go lead the prayers (Talib 2010).

Duke reveals the importance of having prayer rooms in workplaces, particularly those with larger numbers of Muslim employees. Whether working in Bedford or in Halifax, getting to the nearest mosque was a challenge for Duke and his co-workers:

We were allowed to have our Friday prayer ... but the question was is it practical to go to the mosque and back ... if you took the bus it would take you an hour and a half to get to Chebucto ... If you took a car it would take you ten minutes but then one car can only fit so many people. I took taxis ... it was prohibitively expensive ... we had to come up with a better solution ... So I had to take the initiative and talk to management to book a room that we can pray in. So every Friday, I got a room ... I had to push the chairs on one side, roll out the mats and pray, and after we're done, I put them all back together ... So [work] was accommodating ... When our new building was built, they kept in mind the purpose of faith ... they made a spiritual room for us to pray in (Duke 2009).

While his company provided a small space for daily prayers, jummah prayers for the group of Muslims at work required a larger space. The need for an improvised prayer space in the first location translated to an awareness at the management level to the point where faith was accommodated when designing the new location.

UMMAH Masjid and Community Centre

Following the first Gulf War in the 1990s, increasing numbers of Muslims from the Middle East began making Halifax home. Dartmouth mosque had been serving as prayer space, community centre, and Islamic school; however, demand soon outpaced the space available. To accommodate growing numbers of Muslims working and attending university in downtown Halifax, the Student Union Building began to offer weekly jummah prayers. To increase the capacity of the Islamic school, the Islamic Association of Nova Scotia leased (1996) and then

purchased (1999) two school buildings from the city on Chebucto Road to start the Maritime Muslim Academy. The third building on the site was purchased for the Maritime Conservatory of Music (now Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts). Purchase of the property and buildings was facilitated by a donation from the Saudi Arabia Royal Family who lost a family member in the Swiss Air crash on September 2, 1998 off the coast of Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia. Planning for the site and addition of a new mosque began in 2001 but were halted until 2005 due to a debate over the site's heritage designation. When the city concluded that the buildings on site were not heritage designated, planning resumed for the new mosque and community centre. In 2008, one of the old buildings was demolished to make way for ground-breaking on the new centre planned, at that time, to be completed in sixteen months. Unfortunately, delays due to construction costs meant that the community only received a partial permit to occupy in 2011 and a full permit in 2013 (UMMAH History 2014).

Over the years, local media have provided regular updates on the masjid and its construction often echoing some of the sentiments provided thus far by participants about representing Muslims in Halifax through its unique design and architecture as well as the social and community benefit of having a 'home' for the Muslim community (Jones 2009). Media reports have also focused on the projects' environmental design and 'green' features (Jeffrey 2011) as well as fundraising efforts given its construction under Islamic principles that disallow incurring interest on borrowed funds (Power 2010). The new mosque has also been described as both fitting into the existing neighbourhood while making a landmark contribution to the built environment in Halifax:

The new centre's brick facade will blend in with neighbouring buildings, which include the academy and the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts. However, the structure will also feature windows and domed roofs that will make it instantly identifiable as a mosque (Jeffrey 2009).

Finally, the new mosque has been described as both a site through which Muslim immigrants can find a sense of belonging among other Muslims while making adjustments to integrate into Canadian society and a site where family and community services will be offered to Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Jeffrey 2009). I was unable to locate any media reports detailing any conflicts or debates about the location or functions of the mosque. But as I show later in this chapter, participants revealed some conflicts and debates within the Muslim community about the construction of the new mosque.

Although not completed at the time of our interviews, the construction of UMMAH Masjid and its future role in the community and in Halifax was on the mind and in the photographs of many of the participants. Talal discusses Chebucto Mosque and the promise of unity and community (see Photograph 81):

[It's] definitely going to be a different sense of pride ... Let's say I wanted to take you to show you what prayer was all about ... and we went [to Chebucto mosque]. Not that I would feel embarrassed about it but I would wonder maybe what do you think. You know, we're going down into this dingy basement ... whereas, I take you to [the new masjid] it's going to be very impressive ... this dome, all these windows around here. When you're standing in the prayer hall, three or four lines back from the Imam, directly in this beautiful light. With all these extra rooms, quiet rooms, libraries, everything ... There's something about a masjid. When the prophet Mohammad sallallahu alayhi wasallam [peace be upon him] when he went to Medina after he left Mecca ... the very first thing he did was choose a spot to build the masjid. And it's very central, Friday prayer is as much about bringing the community together as it is about worshipping. It's about all the men in the whole community, really what it should be is we have masalas and small masjids all around but on Friday everybody should come to this one. and be together in this one central place (Talal 2009).

Photograph 81: UMMAH Masjid (Talal 2009)



Talal compares the city's mosques in order to draw out the significance of UMMAH Masjid:

[It's] very, very important ... this is actually the first purpose built masjid this side of Montreal in Canada ... In Dartmouth they have a house that's been converted to a masjid and it's nice and it's beautiful, it's well cared for and it's a masjid. But when you drive by it, it's just a house. When people drive by this, they're going to

know that Muslims are here ... it's got a dome ... Sheikh Mohammad said it's like a man standing here calling people 'here's Islam, if you want to find out about Islam come here'. And that's really important (Talal 2009).

Talal reveals a personal sense of pride as well as makes a community claim on this space by discussing UMMAH Masjid as the first purpose built mosque this side of Montreal. This new mosque establishes a hallmark in Halifax: it is not simply a mosque, but a special and unique structure in Atlantic Canada in which Muslims can lay a claim of belonging. He elevates the importance of UMMAH Masjid by comparing it to those mosques that look like 'just a house' or are temporary spaces in a basement. Finally, Talal indicates that the iconography of the new masjid, with its prominent Islamic dome and minaret, represent a declaration of presence and an established right 'to be' in Halifax. For Talal, this building communicates a history of a faith in Halifax, a call to Islam, and a place of information for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. However, so deep is his affection for Chebucto Mosque, as his first and home mosque, he is not yet sure if the new masjid will hold the same affection for him on that personal level.

Though Dartmouth will always be her home mosque, Maria invests UMMAH Masjid with the future hope for a stronger, more unified, Muslim community (see Photograph 82):

Photograph 82: Hope in UMMAH (Maria 2009)



I'll still have close ties to ... my first mosque. My first home [laughs]. So this picture is more probably hopes ... The building of the new mosque ... I'm actually kind of excited for because it creates an actual Muslim identity. You can see that and go 'that's a mosque' ... This is going to be UMMAH Masjid. And if it's all what they say it is, ummah means community. It means togetherness. And I'm

hoping that it will be that way, as skeptical as my husband [Duke] is [laughs] (Maria 2009).

Maria connects the visibility of the mosque as part of the built landscape to creating a more apparent Muslim identity in the city. She suggests that the presence of other less identifiable mosques such as Dartmouth and the CID do not provide an ‘actual’ space through which to locate Muslims and Muslim identity in Halifax in the same way UMMAH Masjid will:

There’s nothing that really says what it is [at Dartmouth] ... So I’m very excited about this for that reason ... we are here. So I am hoping it will be ummah (Maria 2009).

For Maria, the new masjid, complete with dome and minaret clearly express Islamic identity in the landscape:

It means that we are here. It means that we’re not renting houses, being out of basements. It means we have an actual mosque, we are here. It’s like the inukshuk [laughs] (Maria 2009).

The new masjid provides a formal sense of belonging located in a visible, material, built landscape that Muslims and non-Muslims can identify as Islamic. Her expression, ‘we are here’ coupled with the permanency of community owned prayer space is an expression of belonging that adds legitimacy to an established community. The metaphor of the inukshuk, as a beacon, a calling, an anchor and a communication tool reflects both the presence of the Muslim community and the building’s purpose: to call Muslims to prayer. But the inukshuk has also become, problematically, but nevertheless popularly, emblematic of the Canadian nation. That Maria compares the mosque to the inukshuk is to forge a connection to a strong and legitimate claim to belong to the Canadian nation and through Canadian identity. The inukshuk itself is emblematic of First Nations, of historical presence over generations and generations: a marker that I was here and now you are too:

I think for most people it’s creating that [permanence] in their mind, too, because this is going to be like an inukshuk for the Muslim community. A sense of permanence ... We’re not praying out of houses, praying out of basements. We’re here. We exist. We have visual representation. People will say, you know, I’m curious about Islam, I will go there because I know that that’s a place where Muslims go. Whereas going to a house, is, it’s fishy. You don’t trust that. Would you? ... They don’t look professional, they don’t look trustworthy (Maria 2009).

Like the inukshuk, she hopes that UMMAH Masjid will be a navigating point of reference in Halifax for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The only Bangladeshi participant to comment on the new masjid, Sabir recognizes the importance of the new mosque as a central place in the Muslim community:

The mosque is [the] main thing ... It's really important in our religion. And in Friday prayer, you have lots of people. Even, in the basement [at Chebucto mosque], in the Friday prayer, it's fully packed. So they build a big one because lots of Muslims are coming. Now, it's good, you have a big mosque. So, even lots of Muslim peoples is coming? It will not be a big problem (Sabir 2010).

Sabir views it as a community 'good' that the new masjid and centre will offer space on a for Muslims to gather for daily and weekly prayers and will accommodate growing numbers of Muslims moving into the city. Like others, he suggests that the symbolic value of the new masjid is as important as its functional purpose:

It's pretty good. Like there is one beautiful mosque building in Halifax. People [will] see that there is a mosque here ... Have you seen the mosque on Chebucto road? It's just like ... in the basement. But now it's feeling good ... the mosque is a big thing for us, and this new mosque in Halifax is good, because in Canada, every city, like Montreal, there is a really good mosque and in Toronto they have really good mosques there. So now Halifax will have another mosque (Sabir 2010).

He notes that other cities in Canada, such as Montreal and Canada, with prominent Muslim communities, have prominent mosques. This symbolic currency of the new masjid, however, is not important for the practice of Islam nor does it hold any special meaning for Sabir in terms of his relationship to Islam:

[But] it's just another mosque ... A lot of people pray in that basement mosque [Chebucto] and the Dartmouth mosque ... the Dartmouth mosque is good ... compared to the basement one ... but I always go to the basement one. So I don't know. When they open the new one, I don't care also. [Chebucto] is close to me, that's why I go. Even if it's in a small building I don't care (Sabir 2010).

He says that the look of a mosque is not important but markers like a dome and minaret serve as a common symbol that speaks to both Muslims and non-Muslims that identifies it as 'the mosque of the Muslims'.

Most mosques have the dome, so if you see the dome you can recognize that it is a mosque. This is the main reason actually ... if I'm new to the city, I can see this is the mosque ... if non-Muslims see that ... he can tell this is the mosque of the

Muslims. People will start knowing about our religion ... Because in Halifax people don't know that much about mosque. They never seen a mosque in Halifax because there is no mosque. Now people can see that there is a mosque for Muslim people ... at least people can know (Sabir 2010).

Muslim newcomers will be able to find the mosque for prayers and to meet other Muslims because of its visibility in the city. He suggests that the new masjid communicates a more permanent and official presence on the built environment establishing a concreteness to the community.

On special occasions, Sabir typically goes to Dartmouth where he prays, celebrates and socializes among others from the Bangladeshi community. One of the things he likes about prayer in Halifax compared to Bangladesh, however, is the diversity of Muslims with which he gets to pray. He suggests that the size of the new masjid will allow for a space in which a greater diversity of Muslims will pray together:

The good thing is, different type of people, like some Canadian Muslims, some Arab Muslims, people come from different [places], people are praying together. In Bangladesh all the Bangladeshi people we are praying together, inside it's all Bangladeshis. But here all the people from different countries they are praying together ... Yeah, it's good, yeah, it's good (Sabir 2010).

Sara echoes others' observation that mosques in other Canadian cities represents both the presence and permanence of Muslims in Canada. She compares the absence of a 'respectable' looking mosque in Halifax to other cities with ones that 'look like mosques':

I came here right after I went to Montreal, and I was completely disappointed that they didn't even have a respectable looking mosque ... [and in] Moncton, it's actually quite nice, it's small but it looks like a mosque ... It's used for that purpose only ... I was actually disappointed [in Halifax]. It's such a big Muslim population here that they couldn't afford to build a mosque, or just come together as a community and build something (Sara 2010).

Sara points out that the Moncton Mosque both looks like a mosque and is 'used for that purpose only'. She makes an important distinction between the ad hoc mosque located in store fronts or converted houses that typically serve new Muslim communities and the purpose built mosque, like the new masjid in Halifax. She suggests that a city the size of Halifax and with its large and growing Muslim population, a 'respectable' purpose built mosque more appropriately represents the community's presence. However, while it is a welcome addition to Halifax, Sara does not attach any significant personal meaning to the new mosque: "I think it looks great, but it's not

something I've been keeping up with ... it wasn't there before, and suddenly it's there [laughs]" (Sara 2010).

Like her sister, Jane comments on the importance of a recognizable Islamic landscape in Halifax:

In Moncton, they have built a mosque and it was a sense of pride for the community ... Because it was all community-raised money, it was all new and it actually looks like a mosque ... because most places mosques are kind of makeshift ... So I think the mosque, like the architecture there does play a significant [role] ... finally you get a mosque that looks like a mosque, right [laughs]? When you go to Toronto and stuff ... you'll sometimes see the minarets and stuff, and it's just a sense of belonging, a sense of community. That you have a place too in this country ... especially when a community builds a mosque, it's more like it's their mosque (Jane 2010).

Having your faith established so visibly on the landscape is important for being able to imagine your own self and community as part of the fabric of a wider social body – be it the neighbourhood, city, or nation. Jane conveys the importance of marking Islam on the landscape in relation to belonging and formal claims to belonging through rights and freedoms. But there is also an emotional connection; a sense of pride and belonging that comes with seeing your faith, your culture, represented in the built environment. Jane reflects on the availability of prayer rooms and mosques as well as the chaplaincy at Dalhousie as part of what creates Halifax as open and welcoming:

[It] makes me feel welcome and makes me feel like I have the rights to these spaces as anyone else would ... The construction of the mosque, like, you're free to build a mosque right? ... In Tennessee they're trying to build a mosque and there's a huge outcry ... they're like, you can't build a mosque, because of all the paranoia that's going on there and they're scared that it will support terrorist activities, and blah, blah, blah ... I find that's not an issue here. You don't here an outcry about people building a place to worship and things like that (Jane 2010).

The fact that the construction of UMMAH Masjid has gone by with little if any opposition provides Jane a sense of the rights she possesses in Canada as a Muslim.

Even though Saladin has been in Halifax for just a few short months and still feels unsettled in terms of employment and social relations, he has already developed a sense of pride and ownership in the new masjid (see Photograph 83 and Photograph 84):

It's going to be beautiful when it's done ... with a design that we know it is a mosque is something important and matters for every Muslim ... and it's much bigger than the basement that we pray in right now (Saladin 2009).

Photograph 83: Chebucto Mosque Entrance (Saladin 2009)



Photograph 84: Chebucto (left) and UMMAH (right) (Saladin 2009)



Saladin's admiration of its beauty indicates a deeper, more emotional connection between Muslims and their mosque. The shift from renting to ownership, again, is an important shift in the way the space is perceived but so too is its increased functionality, particularly as he compares it to Chebucto Mosque:

First we will not have to rent somewhere and spend fees to celebrate something ... For children who are being taught Islam, it's important to have a place there dedicated to be a class for them, rather than just staying in the basement [which is] barely furnished for just praying. But having these places, I think it will be better, people can do everything right there (Saladin 2009).

Beyond the emotional and symbolic value of the new masjid, Saladin notes that the new space offers the community a greater capacity to advance the teaching of Islam through new classroom and social space. Above all else, the idea of the community holding ownership of the mosque is important. No longer reliant on renting spaces that are 'barely furnished' for prayer and offer little space for educational or social functions, ownership of the new masjid provides a permanency that renting does not allow and a legitimacy that, perhaps, praying in a basement does not foster.

DJ Albatross suggests that UMMAH masjid is an important contribution to the city and emblematic of its growing Muslim population. He also has hope in the ability of the larger more prominent masjid to have an effect on Muslim community:

[It's] symbolic of the community's efforts for countless amount of years to have an actual mosque ... it is important to me because it can help give us that identity with the community ... The Imam told us in Friday prayer, 'it's more important to build people than to build structures' ... which means what's more important is how our hearts are, how are characters are, how we are with people, how we deal with the communities ... and that's not contradictory to building a mosque, I actually think it's complimentary. Having this mosque we can have a more organized outlook ... a more presentable place for prayer ... a more visible presence in Halifax. It can definitely give us more credibility within the community ... recognition ... it's symbolic of our presence here (DJ Albatross 2009).

As Sara, Jane and others have suggested, there is a strong perception of UMMAH Masjid as the city's first 'real' mosque; usually defined as 'looking like a mosque' and purpose-built rather than emerging from existing buildings. Amira discusses this in the context of having grown up in Dartmouth and attending its mosque (see Photograph 85):

I kinda like to drive by and check it out every once in a while, cause I am really excited by it. It's, like, a real mosque. And we needed that. My parents came here in 1976 and the mosque in Dartmouth was ... basically just a white house ... So, it's nice after thirty years that we finally have something to call a mosque ... that's something that I definitely decided I wanted to take a picture ... It's actually a mosque ... something to show off when people visit and [we] take them to our mosque and be like 'Look we actually have something that resembles what a real

mosque should look like. We don't like pray in a house' ... it looks, traditionally and culturally, like a real mosque. [Dartmouth] is nice but it's just a white house. It doesn't scream Islam ... My dad has been trying to raise money, as a community we have tried to raise money, to build this mosque ... the community is huge now and it shouldn't have taken this long to build something like this (Amira 2009).

Photograph 85: UMMAH Under Construction (Amira 2009)



Despite her lack of involvement in the Muslim community, the new mosque is meaningful to her from the standpoint of its symbolic representation and its effect of legitimating the community in Halifax. Amira weaves her personal history into the narrative invoking the 'we' of her family and the larger Muslim community with pride. She claims the space of the new masjid, both through community wide contributions and a sense of community ownership but also in recognizing that on the individual level, her family has contributed and so she feels also a personal and individual sense of ownership.

Amira did not recognize the term 'ummah' but her description of the new mosque under construction as a long over due achievement for the community suggests that she understands the

role of the mosque in community-building, and thus, the idea of ummah. She says that any mosque for the Muslim community must be “inclusive ... where everyone feels [welcome] ... number one is to have that. That place where people can call home” (Amira 2009). Whether or not Amira will call UMMAH Masjid her home mosque is another matter:

I’m excited. I don’t know if I’m proud yet, we’ll see what it’s like. After I go to a prayer, we’ll see if I’m proud of it. We’ll see how it’s conducted. Because there are some Imams that lead prayers that I can’t stand (Amira 2010).

Against many others’ comments about UMMAH Masjid as the first ‘real’ mosque in the city, Abdullah explains what makes any space a mosque:

About the real mosque thing. What’s the definition of a mosque? In terms of Islam, a mosque is a place that is bought for the purpose of praying to god ... established for the purpose of worship ... It’s a mosque forever ... [Dartmouth], because it was established for the prayer, it is the first mosque (Abdullah 2010).

Those referring to UMMAH Masjid as the first ‘real’ mosque are usually referring to its architectural dome and minaret. As Abdullah states, however, a ‘real’ mosque has nothing to do with its architecture or symbolic representation, rather a mosque is an Islamically determined place. While the new mosque may look like a real mosque to some, Abdullah maps out a number of important spaces as a practicing Muslim:

In terms of looking like the traditional shape of the masjid, [UMMAH] looks more real, and it’s bigger, so I think it will accommodate more people but I don’t think there’s much difference. I prefer to go to these musallas, the prayer places in the university. These aren’t permanent mosques, they are just places you can go and pray. Usually Muslims have more attachment to a place that is called a mosque, you know, a real masjid. Like [Dartmouth] or the one in Chebucto. So more people, I guess, will come when the new place is made ... [but for me] it’s the same thing, because if it was closer to my house I would go there (Abdullah 2010).

While the new masjid will have more space, more functions, and bear the imagery of arabesque mosques, it does not change the fact that it is easier for him to go to Dartmouth Mosque: it also does not erase his personal history and attachment to it.

Abdullah admits, however, that ‘looking like a mosque’ is important both in terms of the Muslim community, particularly Muslim youth, and for bridging Muslim/non-Muslim relations:

It’s going to have a capacity of maybe two, three thousand ... We used to rent some gym or something but now we can have Eid over here. It’s really good I

think. A lot more people can come and there's going to be a gym and you know more youth can get involved (Abdullah 2010)

Some of us say, you know, when the Muslim wants to go to the masjid and they sit in the taxi, they tell the driver I want to go to the music school ... because people don't know where Chebucto mosque is right? ... But once the new one's built they'll say I want to go to the masjid, and people will know ... [and] non-Muslims know that there is a masjid in the area and they might want to research more about Islam ... create a better understanding, so I think it's very important for that (Abdullah 2010).

As Harrie Podder says, the new mosque is set to become the single most important marker of Islam in the city:

[It] will be really cool because then I can tell you that that's the mosque I will go to because it looks like a mosque ... it will become the mosque in Halifax (Harrie Podder 2010).

As such, perhaps, the new mosque becomes a 'place' in ways that neither converted houses and store fronts nor the rented basement of a music conservatory could ever be.

Part II: The Politics of Ummah

I would think that the building of [UMMAH] mosque is an important thing that is bringing people together. Definitely. You can't say no to building a mosque really. No ideological differences in building a mosque (Malcolm X 2009).

While the establishment of institutions of faith is important for a number of reasons, including community building and as a representation of legitimacy, the varying perspectives of participants highlight the contested nature of the space rather than its unifying power. As Malcolm X suggests, the building of a mosque could be seen as a community good for all. As demonstrated in Part I, participants suggest that the new masjid offers a point of hope in marking the presence of Muslims in Halifax and a site for bringing community together despite divisions. However, multiple readings of the space indicate that their different positions in relation to the new structure are not easily mapped onto a simple relationship of 'ummah'. Maria admits that a building is not enough to bridge gaps and that of course, it will depend more on how and by whom the new masjid is operated:

I don't know who is going to be running it yet ... this is really the only united project that all three groups, the CID, Dartmouth, and Chebucto have all been working on together. So I'm hoping that there'll be a united front in it ... that it

can be ummah, you know? It would be nice. And I'm hoping it will have that good spiritual energy (Maria 2009).

While the three mosques she identifies have been a part of the raising of funds and directing and supervising the construction, it is unclear what will happen once the space is up and running in terms of who takes the lead, how cultural and ideological divisions may play out and how the idea of 'ummah' will be promoted. Understanding the challenges of ummah requires greater attention to the ways in which participants map out these lines of difference in Halifax.

Throughout this dissertation I have returned to the diversity within the group of participants to highlight the ways in which a range of differences matter in shaping a sense of belonging (or not) that participants develop in everyday life. In this section, participants map out the everyday politics of belonging, community and difference more specifically across the Muslim community in ways that reveal the challenges of unity and to the promise of UMMAH Masjid.

Re-Evaluating UMMAH Masjid

Not all of the participants approve of the construction of UMMAH Masjid and Duke is one of the most outspoken raising several concerns including cost, location and necessity as well as the politics of both its construction and the community:

They needed something that would help them boost their cause for the gym, and so ... people will donate for the mosque because everyone wants to come and pray. It's something people can relate to ... all this money is being spent to build this huge mosque when you already have the ad hocs not being utilized ... Even if the mosque was built tomorrow I would not go there at all because lack of foresight. You have built this huge mosque in a very tiny congested area. Where's the parking? ... [Also] there's no interethnic integration. Everybody talks about ummah, ummah, ummah. What is this word ummah? It's an Arabic word. It's not a Pakistani word. It's not a Bengali word. It's Arabic ... where's the unity, where's the actual ... connection with your fellow non-Arab Muslims? ... There is very, very little or less than negligible inter-ethnic connection between the Muslims ... you've got the potlucks in Dartmouth which are strictly Desis, potlucks in CID which are a majority of Arabs ... Now you have this huge mosque ... Are they really going to reach out and ask the Desis to join them or will it be an Arabic only environment? ... Unless the entire community [meaning neighbourhood] is Muslim I don't think people will fully appreciate the value of the structure ... Do they really know what they are getting themselves into (Duke 2009).

He suggests that the construction of the mosque includes a gymnasium and other facilities that will be used primarily by the Maritime Muslim Academy that sits adjacent to the new masjid.

Since not all Muslims use the school, he says the new masjid is ‘a mistake’ and questions whether this is truly a community mosque or merely a way to fund a school expansion. Duke suggests that there may not have been enough consideration about the location of the new mosque and implies that there could be some conflict if the surrounding neighbourhood is not fully aware of its impact. Moreover, the rhetoric of ummah is overshadowed by a failure to engage in dialogue about inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations dividing the Muslim community. As he says, the use of the word ummah is itself divisive: it does not resonate with him as a Pakistani nor does it, perhaps, with many other non-Arabic Muslims. As for the symbolic value of UMMAH Masjid on the landscape, Duke challenges its perception as a ‘real mosque’ (see Photograph 86 and Photograph 87):

We compare the CID, which looks like a green tin can to the Dartmouth Mosque, which is a white tin can, to the [new masjid] ‘slash’ gym which looks like a proper mosque. If I was to roll with the straight definition of being proper then [UMMAH Masjid] wins hands down ... This is the social acceptance of what a mosque would look like. And perhaps, this was not accidental. Maybe the designers decided that if we make it look like a mosque, you will get more support for the mosque (Duke 2009).

Photograph 86: Centre for Islamic Development (Duke 2009)



To counter at least one of Duke’s concerns, Amy, Talal and others have noted that Ummah Day, as a fundraising event that draws the neighbouring community to the site of the

masjid, has been a critical component of community building both inside and outside of the Muslim community (see Photograph 88):

One of the greatest things about this place is that it is going to welcome the community ... the neighbours have been invited and they've had meetings with the committee and they're very supportive ... It's a community centre so other people can use it ... I think that's going to be a good thing because ... at first [non-Muslims are] going to come there with some trepidations and they're going to say, 'oh well this is a Muslim place' and blah, blah, blah ... but eventually they will see that, you know, we're just people (Talal 2009).

Photograph 87: UMMAH Masjid (Duke 2009)



Photograph 88: On Integrating with the Neighbourhood: UMMAH Day (Amy 2010)



As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the diversity within the Muslim community is important both in terms of challenging stereotypes as well as recognizing the multiple ways that belonging takes place. However, this same cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity also works to create the kinds of boundaries that further splinter the Muslim community and that may be difficult to overcome in the name of unity or ‘ummah’. In my interviews with Duke, and his wife Maria, they introduce to me a number of the lines of tension that are creating splintering geographies of faith and culture in Halifax. These community differences allow us to revisit the politics of community and understand some of the challenges that developing a sense of ummah and the promise of UMMAH Masjid face. Duke suggests that there are two challenges against which community struggles for unity: ethnic entrenchments and ideological differences. Following Islamic principles, they both argue that there should be no divisions within the community and particularly related to mosques and prayer centres:

Maria: It’s not an Islamic principle; there’s not supposed to be a division between colours and races ...

Duke: Yeah, but in practice you have very strong entrenchments. Chebucto is primarily an Arab majority.

Maria: They even say the khutbah in Arabic before they’ll say it in English.

Duke: So Dartmouth is primarily South East Asian area. Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis. More so Pakistanis than Bangladeshis but regardless there are very strict divisions. The CID, which is the third major group, attracts primarily Arabs because of its close proximity to Chebucto (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

Duke maps the Centre for Islamic Development as a space where Muslims are encouraged to be suspicious of, and maintain distance from, non-Muslims:

The CID is a centre of paranoia ... I have received mixed signals. On one hand they are willing to talk about Islam and push Islam and come learn Islam and accept the faith and very welcoming to newcomers to the faith. On the flipside ... there’s always some kind of conspiracy theory and a lack of actually joining in the community on a non-religious basis. It seems that they’re interested if it comes to propagating the faith but if somebody has something else ... interest is missing (Duke 2009).

I suggest to Duke and Maria that ideological debates and discussions can sometimes create open and healthy dialogue as a community struggles with self-definition. However, it seems that, small or large, ideological differences have not been creating such opportunities:

Maria: It usually sparks division.

Duke: I understand what you're saying. Yes, you can have a discussion when there is knowledge. But when there is lack of knowledge and ignorance and one blind sheep trying to lead the others, then there is no debate. Then it becomes my way or the highway ... some interpretations of Islam are so strict ... it's either you're with us or against us ... And the reason we have six major centres or mosques is because of the divisions. CID was born out of a division. Kearney Lake Masjid was born out of an ideological division ... CID came out Dartmouth

James: And then the Kearney Lake one?

Duke: They're also part of the Dartmouth community. They had an ideological split conservative versus liberals. Conservatives stayed in Dartmouth, liberals went to Kearney Lake. The Shia, which is an entirely different ideology of Islam also split. They have their own centre, they do their own thing. So, for a small place like Halifax to have six centres, I think it's a shame. Because all six of them I can assure you are not even half utilized ... And the cost of running [a mosque] is phenomenal. They're now trying to build this, this Islamic mosque or gym for the school at Chebucto. A huge project. Millions of dollars (Duke 2009).

For the purposes of raising money for construction of the new mosque, Duke and Maria admit there is cooperation between different ethnic and ideological groups led by leaders and Imams in the community; however, they also reveal that their effort is not matched in everyday 'grass roots' ways:

There is co-operation. I'm not saying there is any animosity, there isn't ... but what about grass roots levels. What about inviting somebody or having dinner with them ... And this can actually lead back to language problems. Not everyone is proficient in English ... Arabs may only feel comfortable speaking Arabic so they'll tend to stay with their own group. Same thing with Desis and their own group. There never really is any opportunity to interact unless, the leaders bring them together (Duke 2009).

Occasions such as dinners and other gatherings across cultural and ethnic lines that would provide spaces for intercultural interactions and opportunities to interact on a more individual and personal level are rare. Again, in part, Duke suggests this is a problem of language more specifically, but it is clear he feels that individuals should be working to build ummah in everyday ways alongside what happens through Islamic leaders and institutions.

Duke is clearly against the construction of the new mosque for a number of pragmatic reasons but also suggests that its symbolic importance has been over-stated or misunderstood by others:

To the Muslims, domes and Arabic influenced architecture is something very sentimental for whatever reason. I don't find any attachment to them ... it's a place to pray. You pray and you leave ... This [Ummah masjid] is Arabic Turkish style, so when people are saying 'proper', that's a very misleading statement. It's proper to them based on the country that they came from where this style was present ... this is what they are used to. Under Islamic definitions, this is irrelevant. Under proper Islamic definition? No. Under ethnic and culture definitions? Yes (Duke 2009).

Duke suggests that it would have significance to some, but not all, Muslims because of the association of such imagery that dominates what is the 'imagined' Muslim or Islamic landscape. Referring to Islam, he also suggests that such markers are irrelevant in terms of defining a mosque but to cultural and ethnic groups they might be important to some Muslims and picked up through stereotypical association in the wider public.

The Everyday Politics of Community (In)Difference

Duke's comments about the construction of UMMAH Masjid and the major divisions in the Muslim community are evidence of deeply engrained differences mapped across the city. In this section, I draw attention to the ways in which participants map out these differences. Not confined to discussions of faith and prayer, or the establishment of new mosques and prayer centres, this section focuses on the everyday politics of community and the cultural, ethnic and ideological challenge for establishing ummah. Duke and Maria, suggest cultural and ideological differences are central organizing features in the splintered Muslim community in Halifax. They are not alone in their perception; many participants provided examples of how these differences have an effect on everyday life.

Ideological differences, often situated as liberal or conservative positions, affect both everyday social interactions as well as attempts at bringing community together. Talal reveals how he became conscious of spaces in which he felt comfortable or uncomfortable as a Muslim man during his photographic fieldwork:

I was forced to think a little deeper about things ... where I do feel comfortable and feel uncomfortable ... I was going to say, any time I go to one of these [mosques] I feel comfortable, but actually some of them I don't feel comfortable in (Talal 2009).

A space of comfort and belonging, the mosque is shaped by the ideological contours drawn through the presence of different Muslims in ways that reshape the space into one in which Talal feels uncomfortable:

If you study Islam you will get one picture, if you study Muslims you will get another picture. And I became Muslim by studying Islam. And it irritates me to no end to see people who do things that are so obviously not from the Sunnah ... I found in certain places, even in my own home masjid, I've had some of these people come up to me and just it irritates me ... Many of them come from a certain geographical area that it drives me nuts ... to the point ... if I know somebody's from there I really don't accept what they tell me ... and some masjids are predominantly this or predominantly that right? ... They're supposed to be mixed, we aren't supposed to have nationalism, it's actually a sin (Talal 2009).

Talal suggests national and cultural identities get remapped onto specific mosques in ways that serve to fuel internal divisions outside of the mosque. These differences may also be ideological and political in terms of following a particular Imam or scholar. Talal clearly marks himself separate from those Muslims who do not, according to him, practice Islam correctly. He discusses a Muslim he knows who visited the grave of the scholar his group follows:

He made pilgrimage to this man's grave. And he hasn't made hajj yet. And I mean [laughs] ... This does not sit well with me ... there's not one of them that I have anything personally against but it's what they swallow, it's what they believe ... they all speak the same language, they all use the same terms, and they all explain things in exactly the same way ... These guys, I mean [laughs] they can't be real ... It's completely contrary to the teachings of Islam where they say you don't really have to have knowledge. You don't have to know, just repeat (Talal 2009).

Talal draws attention to the disjuncture between ideology and practice here: the notion that you would make pilgrimage to a man's grave before making the hajj is, to Talal, un-Islamic. He further depicts the rote manner in which these followers relate their understanding of Islam as if they had been given a script from which to read. Elsewhere, Talal speaks of research, reading, learning, challenging, and critical thinking as all part of Islam: things he sees are absent among groups like this.

Sometime these ideological and cultural differences also shape social interactions between Muslims. Jane, for example, says she feels "uncomfortable around [some Muslim men] because some of them are just so like [makes an intense face and sound] [laughs] ... [most are]

like normal guys ... like the more balanced ones, like me” (Jane 2010). Lulwa suggests that cultural and ideological boundaries mark internal differences among Muslims:

If you pray differently, you pray three times a day instead of five times a day? That’s not going to bother me. But if you actually call me up and say ‘hey I’m going to go to a club later, do you wanna come?’ That’s a problem ... If they stick to their religion the way I do, then there will be no problem. Unfortunately not all Muslims do that ... Like even girls who wear the scarf, doesn’t mean they all pray ... If there is that religious foundation, we’ll always get along, we’ll always understand each other. But when that’s missing, there is no tie because I don’t understand your culture, you don’t understand mine, so, there’s no connection (Lulwa 2010).

These kinds of internal cultural and ideological differences extend into the terrain of her social relations as well:

Lulwa: I saw this lady, she was a convert, and I would never do this if she was an Arab [laughs], I was like, ‘I swear I know you from somewhere’. She looked at me and said ‘I don’t think so’ ... usually I’d have backed down, but I didn’t, I was like, ‘oh, nice to meet you’. And she gave me a hug and you know everything was fine. If she was Arab ... I’m the worst Arab you’ll meet in that I don’t know a lot about Arabic culture ... I don’t know if that’s okay for Arabs ... So I’d feel weird doing it ... I just wouldn’t feel that comfortable.

James: So you don’t feel a connection to the Arab community in Halifax?

Lulwa: No not really, no. No, no. [laughs] ... it’s the whole Muslim thing that I connect with ... if we have the Muslim component in common then it’s fine. I have a lot of Arab Muslim friends here but we didn’t become friends because we’re Arab. That’s definitely for sure [laughs] (Lulwa 2010).

Lulwa suggests that language differences are also a central part of the cultural divisions among Muslims:

I think it’s a cultural thing because like I said most of the Muslims here come just for school ... the Arabs don’t speak that great of English, so they can’t go chilling with an Indian because then they’d have to speak in English, and they just can’t express themselves, you know what I mean? So usually they’d like to stick with Arabs because they can speak Arabic, you know? I don’t speak Arabic and the Arabic that I do speak is not understood by most Arabs (Lulwa 2010).

Sara suggests that ideological differences influence her everyday social interactions with other Muslim women whom she perceives as more conservative:

Like I can't just be like 'hey what's up', like 'what's going on?' I wouldn't have that comfort level with them or I wouldn't know what to talk about ... I don't know how to approach them ... maybe it's part of me too, and me judging them. Maybe they dress a little bit more modestly then, ah, I don't want to say that. Because there are some sisters that dress ... [in] maybe a full abaya but they're very approachable. It's hard to generalize. I think it's more the demeanor of the individual. You know, someone that sits there ... someone who doesn't talk that much or ... for example, [these sisters], both of them wear abaya. One of them I'm completely comfortable talking to. She's involved with the MSA, no problems. The other one not so much. I would still talk to her but it never goes beyond school, you know? ... I've heard her voice some of her opinions and that just struck me as taking it a little bit too far ... but I guess the comfort zone really isn't there as much as with other sisters (Sara 2010).

Because she wears the hijab, Sara is often read as conservative herself, which sometimes results in uncomfortable and unwanted social interactions, particularly with men:

There are people I see everyday but we don't even talk or acknowledge each other ... Some of them, they're just being respectful, they don't know if I was probably [to] take offence if they say something ... For example, this one guy, [laughs] this is very embarrassing, comes up to me and he's you know, full beard, pants rolled up, and one of those long thobe things and he's like, 'um, sister, I'm looking for a wife' and I was freaked right out [laughs]. I was dumbstruck ... I just froze for a couple of seconds and then I was just like, 'I'll ask around if someone is interested' because obviously he's asking about me ... he approached me a couple more times but I just felt uncomfortable ... and that's something I wish that didn't happen. That kind of interaction (Sara 2010).

Sara also has a perception of the Muslim community outside of the university community, with which she has little contact, as more conservative:

I don't really interact with them very much ... I have a little bit more of a liberal background than some of these sisters ... So there are some things that I would probably think is okay and other sisters would probably frown upon or whatever (Sara 2010).

Malcolm X struggles with the ideological boundaries in Islam that make it difficult for Muslims to interact with each other at times. He also discusses the 'obstacles' between himself and more conservative Muslims:

It's just ideological. It has nothing to do with certain cultural or ethnic groupings ... It's just certain people hang on to these, grab onto these certain ideological beliefs ... The active Muslim community have beliefs that are very, very different, very different from my own religious beliefs. I'm more tolerant, ecumenical, spiritual than the more active members of the Muslim community. I know there

are lots of Muslims in Halifax that are ecumenical and tolerant and other things but they aren't active in the Muslim community probably because they don't want to associate with these sort of super-religious people that are very narrow minded ... it's very hard for me to really connect with these people ... it's a bit of an obstacle in trying to connect with them. But we're all Muslims in the end (Malcolm X 2009).

Divisions emerging from the politics of Islamic ideology and practice disconnect him from more conservative individuals and groups. Despite the ideological and political differences between himself and the 'community' Malcolm X still draws from the idea of ummah and its unifying potential, if only in principle.

Several lines of tension created by ideology, culture and even class have intersected close to home in Catherine's case. Such divisive politics posed a potential threat to her marriage:

I come from a very rich family and I hate that ... it really stands in the way of the religion ... They'll donate money to poor people and they'll advocate equality ... but then if I wanted to marry a poor Muslim, they wouldn't let me. And that's the difference between culture and religion ... they don't want me to marry a poor man because of their cultural slash socio-economic status and they think that they're better than poor Muslims. Even though he's a Muslim and really my religion dictates that I marry a Muslim, that's the most important thing ... [It's] a big conflict between Arabs and other Muslims. Because they think that just because they have money they're better than other Muslims so that comes into why they don't socialize with other Muslims ... But at the same time they're at the mosque every Friday praying and saying, okay, 'god help everybody, god save the poor from hunger.' But then it's not in their everyday life ... so many Arab immigrants are rich because they're Palestinian. And they all lived in Kuwait. It's so common to have the exact same history that I have. You're born in Kuwait, you left because of the Gulf War, you saved all kinds of money because the Gulf was so prosperous and then you came here and you had Indian maids and you had Indian drivers and all this stuff. And then it's so hard to be a good Muslim after that because you're raised in an environment where you think you're better than everybody else (Catherine 2009).

I couldn't marry my husband. I wasn't allowed. And I had to fight and fight and fight with my parents. And I had to challenge their ideas. And I had to say listen like, you're praying, you are fasting at Ramadan, you're donating money to the poor. You're doing all the right things but the one major thing that you're doing wrong is that you're not letting me marry this guy because he's poor, then you're not a good Muslim. Then you're not practicing what you preach. You're just preaching (Catherine 2009).

Catherine, again, turns to the Qur'an and the tenets of the faith to speak back to these tensions of class and culture and in terms of her desire to marry a man less well-off:

They always bring in how the man is supposed to support you according to the Muslim religion. He's not going to be able to support you so it's not going to work. But that's not the case. It's their culture. It's the way they think. Because of their socio-economic status. It actually dictates in the religion that the man has to support the woman with the resources he has. So if he has ten dollars then he has to support her with the ten dollars. Just as far as ten dollars goes (Catherine 2009).

Catherine also notes that the class prejudice worked equally the other way around. Her husband's family had their own preconceptions about how her family would respond:

My husband's family told him 'they're not going to be nice to you ... they're going to treat you like garbage. They're going to think that you're not as good as you are.' It's much better now but it was very, very hard (Catherine 2009).

These differences in the belief and approach to practicing Islam not only affect personal and social interactions but also make it difficult at the community level and attempts to bring Muslims together. In Part I, Talib and Abdullah discussed the draw that an Imam has on them in terms of attending one mosque over another. Amira points out that this leads to increasing division and poses a challenge to uniting the Muslim community:

People follow blindly and they don't sit down and try to understand the religion themselves. I'm not an expert by any means and I'm only twenty-three and there's a lot for me to learn. But I find that they're not using Imams as people to bring the community together. Rather they're separating the community, 'I'm a leader come follow me', 'I'm another leader come follow me' and 'I'm another leader come follow me'. That's why we have like three mosques. Why can't we just have one? Just have one prayer all together (Amira 2009).

Amira suggests that the rhetoric of some Imams, expressed at Jummah prayers for example, divides not only the Muslim community but also social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the city. Amira recounts a Friday prayer at the SUB from which she left feeling offended at its tone and content:

I remember him just talking about nonsense ... how we need to stick together ... and we should watch. We're being Canadian and being misled by Canadians and all this nonsense. Like you're in Canada, if you don't like it go home. That's what makes me angry. You don't dog the country that has given us so much. Has given us so much ... Don't dog it. Go home (Amira 2009).

Duke and Maria agree that Muslims who align themselves to Imams or scholars create divisions and challenge the idea of ummah:

Duke: The idea is today you and I are ignorant, we don't know about Islam, we don't understand Islam, we don't understand the faith.

Maria: It's too complex for the laymen

Duke: Yeah, it's too complex for the average mind, so we will defer to the knowledge of the scholars ... Who are the scholars? Who qualified them to be scholars? ... Islam today has been made incomprehensible to the little man so here's a scholar. He will dictate to you what Islam is based on his reasoning of Islam. [But] from a proper Islam perspective this person, whether he's a scholar or not, he has no authority. He can give an opinion but his opinion does not bind anyone.

Maria: You're supposed to use your own mind.

Duke: People have become sheep. So, ultimately all sheep end up in the slaughter house. Or get their wool shaved off [laughs]. That's the sad thing and this whole battle of scholars and evidence.

Maria: [It becomes] my scholar is better than your scholar [laughs] (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

Duke and Maria provide two examples of how such ideological connections to scholars or Imams in the community have effects on social relations within the community. The first recounts an incident one day following prayer:

Maria: We went to maghrib one time at CID and as soon as the prayer was over, these two guys start getting into an argument over the issue of ...

Duke: ... how to make ablution or cleaning yourself before prayer.

Maria: It became a 'my scholar is better than your scholar' debate.

Duke: Yeah. And that was a shame because her cousin was in town, he's also fairly new to the faith, so I went there with the intention that he might learn something. Well he did learn something. That this is foolishness. It's very sad to see the state of Muslims today (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

In this example, an argument over how to prepare for making prayers illustrates the ways in which differences in practice and ideology become lines of conflict between Muslims. Making the trip to mosque for maghrib, the fourth of five daily prayers, was intended to be an opportunity to share an Islamic experience with Maria's recently converted cousin and to enrich his understanding of Islam but instead became an opportunity to discuss the ways in which the politics of practice overshadow the spirit of Islam and create divisions within the community.

In the second example they discuss a Muslim film night held at the Centre for Islamic Development, popular with student and convert populations:

Duke: They're into propagation of the faith, into trying to make people aware of Islam ... When it first started it was a very liberal place, anybody could come in, they could say whatever they want, regardless of whatever idea it was. Slowly the Arab population is coming in and branding their version of Islam. So that clashes with other versions of Islam because I am one of the ones who oppose this strict interpretation of Islam. Something like this movie night, and the ridiculous fall out that came out of it? It was a shame.

Maria: [The CID] tried to set up a Muslim movie night and there was so many fights on what could be deemed a 'halal' movie.

Duke: Islamically permissible.

Maria: So they picked things that were educational ... and still somebody complained, 'oh brother, this movie is not halal because there is music in the background' [laughs] (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

Malcolm X suggests that ideological and cultural tensions such as the ones discussed by Duke and Maria that take place at mosques, between Imams and within the community, result in groups isolating themselves from the broader Muslim community and the rest of Halifax:

They want to separate themselves from other people ... they want to be in their own place ... They want to be understood as people who are peace loving but they don't want to be assimilated. No way. They don't want to be Westernized. We are this, we are Muslims, this is our culture, we wear kufis, abayas, blah, blah, blah. We have long beards, that is who we are. We are not Canadians. We do not go clubbing. We do not go dancing, we don't go drinking. We do not listen to music ... [But] they also have a place in this country. And that is probably the extremist mindstate ... the views of many of the Islamic leaders living in Halifax. Not exactly the views of the adherents, But of the leaders probably (Malcolm X 2009).

The very extreme Muslims ... are very much focused on the religion ... they don't really focus on hanging out with non-Muslims very much ... A lot of moderates are friends with non-Muslims. You have to. You can't just separate yourself ... We just need to interact more with the non-Muslim community. I find it too isolated ... the Muslim immigrants they are very isolated. They say 'shhh, let's all get in this bubble' (Malcolm X).

Maria suggests that Muslims isolated in their own ethnic, cultural or ideological enclaves ultimately damage the representation and perceptions of all Muslims in Halifax:

[It] makes Canadian society unaware of Muslims ... They don't make themselves open to people that ask questions. And, yeah, I have some of the silliest questions asked of me, but at least they're getting asked and they're getting answered and people are being educated. I probably do more of that on a daily basis than anything else. And I consider that a good thing. I can say this, especially of Muslim women who don't talk to people, keep themselves isolated and then [non-Muslims] don't understand them, and of course, look at them weird because they won't talk to them and they're different and they won't answer questions. They don't help themselves by acting that way (Maria 2009).

DJ Albatross suggests that for religiously convicted Muslims, it is important not to isolate oneself within one's own community at the exclusion of developing social relationships beyond ethnic, cultural and ideological boundaries:

I think they should ... socialize in the community as much as possible ... whenever there is a conflict of interest, they should make sure that they explain it in a respectful manner ... You shouldn't totally withdraw yourself or you should not totally try to give up who you are just to fit in ... You should maintain a balance ... you should try to really respect others while also respecting your own self (DJ Albatross 2009).

Abdullah suggests that social interaction with non-Muslims is an important responsibility of being Muslim in Halifax:

It's really important for people to understand ... [for] people to get the right information from the right people not just the media [laughs] ... I wish more people ask and more people understood the Muslims and Islam better. That's very important ... We had the Ummah Day ... and many, many non-Muslims will go ... It's very important ... to have some events like this where you can have some booths about Islam and explain to the people (Abdullah 2010)

Duke's comments about the lack of integration of Muslim immigrants into Canadian society further reflects this line of tension within the community:

Duke: There is a lack of social initiative among Muslims and I think the reason because of that is nobody really cares about Canada. Nobody gives a damn about Canada. And to be very, very frank and honest, they're here because somebody invaded their home or persecuted them, under threat of death, or because of economic benefits. If they had a choice, they would tend to stay back to their homes or to wherever they crawled out of.

James: Does this apply to you?

Duke: Applies to me as well. I'm here because my parents decided that moving to Canada would be better for my future ... So people have come here not by choice

but out of one force or the other. The question then becomes how integrated have they become to Canadian society. For my part, I think I have paid my dues because I'm socially active. This is my home now. Yes, it's not the same as back home. I won't wear the same dress, have the same food, speak the same language, but I have to accept that this is a new place for me, I have to change myself to adapt myself to a new place, I am taking something out of this place, in terms of wealth, economic benefits, welfare benefits, healthcare ... I paid my dues, in terms of taxes. I'm involved in the community. I give back as well as I'm taking from Canada. For a large majority, this doesn't apply ... People aren't socially active, they're here to take advantage of the system, find the loopholes, marry somebody who is white, get the passports or get your degrees or benefits of being Canadian and then take off. What have they given back? Nothing.

Maria: They don't try to integrate.

Duke: We're part of a minority group, we all need to be on the same page for us to improve ourselves, because not all of us are going to get up and take off ... So, all Muslims need to make the effort of being socially responsible (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

Duke's hopes lie with second-generation Muslims born in Canada and who have a greater investment in Halifax as home:

Duke: They didn't have something to relate back to, they feel that this is part of their society, they call Canada their home. So they try to be Canadian, in culture and faith. But their parents ... try to hold back to that conservative way of life, pretending that this is still Palestine, this is Saudi Arabia. When it's not. This is Canada. They view Canadians as foreign both from culture perspective and then from the Muslim/Islam perspective ... So they try to isolate themselves ... A lot of my friends, Canadian born Muslims, have been involved and exposed to the Canadian society since birth ... so they feel active and responsible ... and I hope that the third and fourth [generation] will be even more involved ... Perhaps the third generation will be even more balanced. And that is the hope, that ultimately we can balance being Muslim and also balance being Canadian because this is who we are (Duke 2009).

Ramadan and the Celebration of Eid

In order to further understand these tensions, I turn to a specific example during which the Muslim community comes together in potential ummah: the celebration of Eid following Ramadan. Raising the issue of unity, Malcolm X discusses what it means to be Muslim and have a sense belonging in Canada while acknowledging the complex diversity of the Muslim community:

The message of the Muslim community is ... that we are all Muslims and that's all that matters ... We're all one thing, we all believe in one thing. We're one but we're different. We're one people, we all believe in this one thing that goes on but we all have different ways of doing it ... It's complicated ... We're all Muslims, we all believe in god. We believe in his prophet Mohammad, Peace upon him. That's the main thing ... It's enough to pull us together ... Eid prayers are huge ... you'll see thousands of people (Malcolm X 2009).

He suggests that being Muslim in itself, believing in and practicing Islam, provides the common link that pulls together a community in faith offering the annual Eid celebrations as a material expression of this. Eid is an annual three-day celebration that invites Muslims to pray together and celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Saladin provides a sense of the importance of ummah at the Eid prayer:

It was amazing to see all the Muslims ... because I only see [at Chebucto mosque] people who live in Halifax, while there are all the people who goes to Dartmouth mosque and some people who don't have the chance to go here or there because they have to work on Friday or they have classes on Friday. We were lucky that the Eid was on Sunday, so it was vacation for everyone, and it was amazing seeing a lot of people there. I didn't imagine the Muslim community to be that big (Saladin 2009).

While it seems to offer an affirmation of belonging to a larger Muslim community, there are divisions that sometimes make it impossible to come together. For one, Malcolm X says that Muslims will follow whichever mosque they attend which may result in a divided community attending different Eid celebrations:

It usually ends up being two events just because certain people follow one of the different mosques ... The population [is] usually divided between mosques (Malcolm X 2009).

Another way that the community can become divided around Eid celebrations is in the way that the end of Ramadan and the beginning of Eid is determined:

They use scientific calculations of this is when the new moon is supposed to be, this is when the new month starts. [So it is] the calculations method versus the searching for the new moon in the sky. 'We've seen it, the month of Ramadan is now over, it is now Eid' (Maria 2009).

Because of these two methods there are usually two different celebrations depending on to which method one adheres. One year Maria says there were three different Eid celebrations in Halifax:

Last Eid they had two different Eid prayers held, one for the calculation method and one for the moon sighting method. The year before ... there was three different Eid prayers held at different points in the city. So even then, I don't think that there is a lot of unity. I think that part of the reason why people cling to their ethnic groups is to have some sort of unity (Maria 2009).

In 2009, when my interview with Maria took place, it was the first time since she became Muslim that Eid was celebrated as one event where 'everybody' attended. It secured a greater sense of belonging and community for both her and her husband:

Duke: This year has been surprisingly cooperative ... because the moon sighting and the calculations fell on the same day ... It made me happy for a change that all Muslims within the city can come together.

Maria: And that was a great day. Everybody was there, it was fantastic. I saw people there that I didn't even know existed. It was cool. Normally it's divided (Duke 2009; Maria 2009).

Duke explains that divisions based on practice are not confined to special celebrations like Eid but are common throughout the year and in the practice of daily prayer:

When we talk about diversity we should also talk about unity factors ... Just because they are doing it a different way doesn't mean that there's a break up in the community. Unless the people who are doing it one way stigmatize those who are not following. [For example], there is division in the late afternoon prayer and in the night prayer. Some people choose to pray earlier or later depending on what they think is right, and that's fine. There's no problem. But when Eid comes around suddenly it becomes a big issue. We already have divisions within little things on a daily occurrence, but when this annual thing comes around people start getting agitated ... But if I was to call you to wish you Eid, even if you are doing it tomorrow, you wish Eid back, so there's tolerance and acceptance. The fact that we have to say, 'oh no, I'm doing it tomorrow', puts the barrier between. There's a division between you and me, right? So, I think we need to be more tolerant (Duke 2009).

DJ Albatross echoes Duke's comments about tolerance surrounding Eid but suggests that much of the debate occurs between members of an older generation:

As the Imam said today at the Friday prayer, both opinions are valid and we should not bicker over [it] just respect both opinions ... And the greater thing is unity ... I think that it's more been a dialogue and a debate between the elders ... I don't really talk to another student and say hey man, what do you think is right [laughs]. I think we talk differently ... it's been like 'how are you finding fasting while you're studying. Do you go to the gym while you fast.' These kind of everyday questions (DJ Albatross 2009).

Debates and dialogues surrounding things such as Eid do not occupy his generation, rather, younger Muslims he says are more concerned with everyday experiences as they negotiate their faith alongside what are sometimes competing social and cultural influences in Halifax.

It is not only the determination of Eid that sparks division but also the social and cultural diversity of Muslims in Halifax that gets mapped out across events that are meant to pull the community together. Malcolm X compares what he knows about the Muslim community in London, Ontario where many of his family and friends live and to which he has been several times:

[In London, Ontario] there's a huge Muslim community, big mosques. Very beautiful mosques. The Lebanese community is unto its own. It's like, a group within the larger Muslim community. Because most of the Lebanese there are Muslim ... and they all know each other ... [and in Halifax?] It's very tribalistic (Malcolm X 2009).

Malcolm X indicates that the geography of Muslims in Halifax is splintered resulting in 'tribalistic' communities divided by culture, ethnicity and ideology. In the moment that Catherine, for example, tries to invoke a sense of ummah in the context of Eid, she catches herself stumbling on these internal differences:

In Eid everybody will pray at the same mosque. But I mean ... it makes me think of Pakistani, Indians and Arabs ... All the Arabic-speaking people, they socialize together. And they think they're better than the Pakistani, Indian Muslims. And then there's the white Muslims [meaning converts] which they just completely don't socialize with (Catherine 2009).

Despite efforts to bring the community together, to create a sense of ummah in the city, at Eid and around the year, cultural and ethnic differences are entrenched in ways to maintain divisions.

Duke also suggests that these divisions influence Eid celebrations and any sense of ummah:

Even at Eid ... it was, divided. You prayed together, yes, but then when you are praying you're not really interacting, you're just praying. And then after that you wish somebody Eid Mubarak, and then you take off. It wasn't a dinner or a social event it was just you pray and then [claps twice] let's get out of here, you know? So there hasn't been an event where all Muslims are invited ... there have been several dinners and fund raising dinners but even then when you go there, you find that circles are getting formed ... and what's common among all of them? They're immigrants. Non-native English speaking people. First generation. Maybe their kids, who have been born in this system, for them English is a natural language, will be more interpersonal with each other (Duke 2009).

Duke links the lack of interaction within the Muslim community to ethnicity, language, and culture, in particular, to first-generation immigrants who isolate themselves from engaging with others. He suggests that for the second generation, however, English will be a common language, and hopes for more interpersonal interactions in that generation.

Whether or not the new mosque will indeed be ummah as Maria and others hope or whether it will further entrench the community divisions that have already been mapped in place, remains to be seen. Talal, however, suggests that what really matters is what the community wants for the new mosque:

I know there's a lot of people in the community who say we don't need [a new mosque] and, you know, this is cheaper and blah, blah, blah. My answer to that is a) we do need it and b) but if we don't, we've already committed ourselves to it so let's just pull together and do it ... It's important because it's like an anchor for the community (Talal 2009).

There remains a promise, a hope in the new mosque despite the politics that splinter the community. At the time of the interviews, the story was still unfolding. However, as delay after delay pushed off the opening of Ummah Masjid, leaders at the CID developed an expansion plan and launched a fundraising campaign to transform their small centre into a much larger, and when Ummah would be open, competing mosque space and Islamic centre just a few blocks away.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored more specifically, the ways in which participants have mapped Islamic spaces across the city. The ways in which participants have fought for and created spaces in which to practice their faith reveals the “portability of Islamic ritual” (Metcalf 1996, 6) and the ways that the practice of Islam is bound up with the rhythms everyday life. Importantly, the places in which they practice their faith are personal and intimate mappings associated with individual's journeys of faith and their identity. They are also maps that place individuals in the broader context of local community politics in ways that reveal the splintering geographies of the Muslim community in Halifax. As both an expression of community, togetherness, and belonging, ‘ummah’ represents the efforts of some to transcend divisive cultural and ideological politics of difference that pull at Muslim community. ‘UMMAH’ also represents the way this sentiment has become materialized in the city's newest masjid and

community centre. However, the promise of ummah/UMMAH may not be enough to overcome the complex politics of difference. Mapping the city in these ways demonstrates not only the diverse and complex histories and politics of Muslims and Muslim community in Halifax, but also the efforts to find belonging in the city and in the community despite them.

Chapter 6: Maps of Belonging: Muslims in Halifax

Introduction

At the beginning of this dissertation, I set out to share the alternative maps of Halifax produced from the experiences, perceptions and everyday lives of twenty Muslim men and women revealed through auto-photography and photo-elicitation interviews. Building on work in alternative methodologies, I detail the design and use of the photography and its relation to the interviews and provide a reflexive analysis and discussion of the implications of its use on the production of knowledge. Further, I demonstrate how taking participant methodologies into consideration as part of the process of knowledge production provides a greater and more attuned analysis of the knowledges being produced. By replacing normative research power relations with the participant driven and, to a great extent, analysis of the production of these alternative maps, I establish how Muslims are making and remaking the city through their experiences, perceptions and interpretations of their own geographies (Hurworth 2003; Latham 2003). These Muslims have powerfully remapped Halifax by shifting themselves from the margins to the centre of the city (Bannerji 2000; Back and Keith 2004; Wood and Gilbert 2005; Teelucksingh 2006).

The end result is a set of maps of the multiple dimensions of belonging grounded in and negotiated through their everyday lives. They reflect, not only the diversity of Muslim identity but also the diversity both rooted and routed in their personal journeys and histories of being in Halifax and becoming Muslim. They reflect both material and symbolic landscapes in Halifax with both deeply intimate and personal meanings as well as important social and community meanings. And they reveal some of the lines of tension that exist within and outside of the communities to which they belong. Therefore, not only does 'Halifax' reflect the multiple and heterogeneous geographies of participants but also serves to implicate the city in various ways in the processes of negotiating belonging as a Muslim. In this final chapter, I discuss the contributions made by this research in the context of the geographies of religion and alternative urban geographies but emphasize contributions to the geographies of place and belonging. Emerging from the limitations of my research, I conclude with a brief discussion of the opportunities for subsequent investigation.

Discussion

The depth and breadth of diversity among participants sets my research apart from others. Studies often define the category ‘Muslim’ in restrictive ways in order to make the research more manageable or, perhaps, representative. Research that acknowledges the diversity of Muslims in Canada but stops short of exploring why and how understanding that diversity matters in terms of identity, belonging and everyday urban lives does not go far enough. Some research is simply too broad in scope to explore the impact and implications of diversity on the everyday lives of Muslims and the urban spaces in which they live or focuses only on immigrants to the exclusion of Canadian-born and convert Muslims (Moghissi, Rahnema and Goodman 2009). Research that does explore the material and affective negotiations of Muslim belonging in Canadian cities is often accomplished by narrowing the field of participants by ethnicity (Khanlou, Koh and Mill 2008), gender (Ruby 2006; Abdul-Razzaq 2008), or generation (Eid 2007; Ramji 2008). My research does not limit the remapping of ‘Halifax’ by narrowing the participant pool in these or any other ways. I left the definition open to participants’ unique self-identification resulting in research that addresses multiple and simultaneous intersectional faith identities (Valentine 2007; Kong 2010). Gender, class, age, generation, ethnicity, degree of religiosity, and citizenship are crosscut by each individuals’ journey to faith and place. Not only do the stories of Muslim immigrants and international students get mapped here, but so, too, do the stories of Canadian-born second-generation Muslims and Canadian-born Muslim converts (who rarely if ever are represented in the geographies of Muslims in Canada or elsewhere). While being Muslim is a self-declared common link among participants, this dissertation shows that the ways in which this is defined, interpreted, negotiated, lived and practiced differs between individuals. Participants are multidimensional in their connections and disconnections to a range of identifications including their faith. Moreover, not all identifications at all times are necessarily perceived, experienced, or valued equally by participants and in some cases may not be acknowledged at all. Thus, for some participants being Muslim is not necessarily a primary identification. Opening up of the actual diversity of faith identities provides a deeper understanding of multiple belongings in the city and demonstrates why it matters to acknowledge and take into consideration the diversity of Muslims in the first place.

As such, this dissertation fills a substantial gap in contemporary geographies of religion, faith identities and faith communities in Canada specifically and to the growing international

literatures within and beyond geography (Kong 1993; 2001; 2010). My research explores the internal politics of the local place-making practices and politics of Muslims (Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan 2007; and Hopkins 2008, for example). In Chapter's Four and Five especially, I emphasize the spatial relationships, landscapes and places of practice as well as the diverse forms of belief and practice of Islam and implicate them in the construction of the varied geographies of Muslims in Halifax. Although this research modestly contributes to work on the politics of mosque building in Canadian cities (see Isin and Siemiatycki 1999, 2002), my focus in Chapter Five is on the internal politics of UMMAH Masjid to reveal the disparate discourses of its symbolic and material value to both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities of Halifax. More specifically, this research provides a much needed intersectional analyses of local, grounded, everyday faith identities, practices, places and landscapes through which Muslims in Halifax negotiate a sense of place and belonging (Kong 2001).

My remapping of Halifax makes a significant contribution to alternative urban geographies based on the grounded, local knowledge of ordinary people leading ordinary lives (Hubbard 2006; Keith 2004; Amin and Thrift 2004). In Chapter Four, this alternative mapping reveals the spaces of interaction, encounter, and exchange that have shaped Muslim identities, geographies and belongings in 'Halifax' (Massey 2005; Iveson 2006). As Amin and Thrift (2004) astutely state, cities, but more importantly, 'sites of habitual contact' or places made meaningful through experience, interaction, and perception, "frame the everyday experience of ethnicity, the prosaic moments and daily rhythms of social life that have a decisive impact on racial and ethnic [and I would suggest religious] practices" (292). Place, and our experiences with and within it, shape and is shaped by our sense(s) of belonging. Chapter Three focuses on understanding the similarities and, importantly, the differences in faith and place journeys between converts, Canadian-born Muslims and foreign-born Muslims. This reveals a depth of diversity rarely exposed in other narratives of Muslim belonging. Uncovering the subtle sites and moments in the city through which individuals find, even temporarily, a place to call home reveals that Muslim belongings are taking place in the most mundane ways and at the most mundane times just as they are in those definitive moments where racism and discrimination on the one hand or declarations of whole-hearted hospitality on the other tear down or create space for belonging.

Importantly, this research highlights the urban geographies of smaller cities in Canada, from which little is heard, and the geographies of identity, difference and belonging found within them (Bell and Jayne 2009). Beyond the ‘metrocentre’ of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver more specifically, the stories of Muslims rarely surface except in those moments where their belonging comes under question. By situating my research in the context of Halifax, a second-tier city in Canada, my research contributes to a growing literature on the importance of understanding processes of belonging as well as issues around diversity, faith and immigrant identities and the intimate geographies of smaller cities (Bradford 2002; Walton-Roberts 2004). More specifically, it contributes to a building up in understanding the unique geographies of faith and identity in Halifax as a city with a growing and increasingly diverse population (Byers and Tastsoglou 2008; Abdul-Razzaq 2008). The Muslim community is a small community in a small city and yet, the cultural and ideological differences that cross-cut the community have resulted, over time, in multiple mosques across the city: so many, in fact that Duke, for example, has argued they are unsustainable. On the other hand, the ‘smallness’ of the city and the focus of most participants’ everyday life being centred in Halifax proper has likely made it easier for those new to the city to find places, people and communities with which to develop a sense of belonging. As such, this research runs counter to the metrocentricity of urban geographies, particularly in Canada, and begins to shed light on the heterogeneity of city life represented in smaller cities. To build up comparable research and a more sustained understanding of diversity and faith in small cities across Canada, this research needs to be replicated in other small cities with growing Muslim populations (e.g. Cambridge, Brantford, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, London). This will further not only an understanding of the experiences of Muslims in cities less diverse but also their strategies for negotiating internal differences in an effort to create a more cohesive faith community, or sense of ummah.

‘Halalifax’ must be read as multiple, diverse, and heterogeneous not as a simple counter mapping against the non-Muslim community. The various maps of ‘Halalifax’ produced by participants do not reflect what some have suggested is a deep sense of feeling alienated, besieged or banished from full engagement or participation in Canada felt by the Muslim community (Bakht 2008; Arat-Koc 2006; Arthur et al. 2008). Yet there are moments and sites at which feeling ‘othered’ is salient and, thus, have become part of participants’ maps of meaning. In Chapter’s Three and Four, the narratives provided by Maria, Sara, Lulwa, and Amy, who all

choose to wear hijab, speak to these feelings at different times providing deeply contextual contributions to the established literature that explores women's reasons for and experiences of wearing the hijab (see Haw 2010; Abdul-Razzaq 2008; Aitchison, Hopkins and Kwan 2007; Dwyer 2002; Secor 2002; Franks 2000). Afshar (2008) argues that there are multiple reasons women choose to wear the hijab but most women represent it as a 'freedom of choice'. Likewise, all of the women in my research have clearly indicated to me that wearing the hijab or not is a choice they have made. Maria and Amy, for example, wear the hijab as converts to distinguish themselves from their life before Islam as well as to be identified by others as Muslim. More complicated than the hijab as a site through which non-Muslims identify them as 'other' wearing the hijab creates multiple lines of both belonging and non-belonging in and outside of the Muslim community. Maria reveals the nuances of internal exclusions discussing the ways that differences in ethnicity and class complicate feeling a sense of belonging through wearing the hijab. Amy discusses the ways in which being visibly Muslim has invited violent public altercations while at the same time provides a sense of security and strength in her faith. As McAndrew (2006) suggests, symbolically Muslim women wear more than one hijab. The diverse reasons for wearing the hijab as well as the diversity in how Muslim women interpret and practice this form of modesty belies any easy or straight-forward reading of Muslim identity.

The claims of belonging, both explicit and implicit in participants' narratives, do not produce simple maps with clear boundaries. For many of the participants, the mainstream social spaces of Halifax, such as bars and clubs, are completely 'off the map'. Yet for Malcolm X and Kareem, for example, these have been and, at least for Malcolm X, continue to be important social spaces through which they negotiate their Muslim belonging among non-Muslims.

This dissertation has exposed multiple lines of tension and conflict based on practices of faith as well as class, culture, ethnicity that are not only sites for negotiating belonging but also sites through which difference operates as boundaries to belonging. Clearly, the boundaries of belonging produced through one participant's map are not the same for another participant. The complexity of their intersectional identities is transferred onto their maps of halal social space and faith spaces in different ways revealing the processes and geographies of inclusions and exclusions outside of, but more importantly, within Muslim identity and community. Amy, for example, draws out the boundaries of acceptable Muslim appearance for women based on her conversion and practice of Islam yet admits to 'haram' (Islamically unacceptable) behaviour in

her smoking. While Amy does not discriminate against those who deviate from her guidelines of proper Islamic dress, it highlights the ways in which internal divisions operate. Talal and Duke draw boundaries along ideological lines. The Bangladeshi participants have shared maps of belonging created, in part, by feeling excluded from groups and events they experience as being dominated by either Arabs or Indians. As a counter move, Bangladeshis in Halifax have coalesced around Bangladeshi culture and not the larger faith-based community. Having grown up in Halifax, Amira speaks of internal exclusions along lines of faith and culture that she says have placed her very differently compared to other Muslim Egyptians.

Against the oversimplified and taken for granted (and often over-looked) concept of belonging within geography, these examples, and the many more discussed throughout the dissertation, reveal the multilayered and multidimensional nature of belonging (Antonsich 2010; Mee and Wright 2009; Fenster 2005; Probyn 1996). Rather than replicate the current discourse of Muslim belonging as a question of nationalism or a postmodern foray into global diasporic identities and relations, I explore the decidedly 'local modes of belonging' (though these are not disconnected from other scales and modes of belonging). I focus on the lived spaces of belonging sometimes expressed in terms of national belonging but always lived in the local spaces of everyday life (Wood 2002, xiv). I argue that the thoughts and memories of Muslims in Halifax are implicated, through both material and affective (dis)connections, in place-making processes and notions of place-belonging, and that 'place', as a process of both becoming and belonging, emerges over time and through the practical knowledge of everyday life (Cresswell 2004; Amin 2002; Massey 2005; Relph 1976; de Certeau 1988).

Qureshi (1996) draws attention to the Muslim home as a central place for the practice of Islam and expression of Muslim identity. Participants in my research have focused on the public spaces of the city in addressing their dimensions of belonging including the practice of Islam and identification as Muslim. Few participants took photographs or discussed the home as an important place of belonging. Lulwa took several photographs in her home, however, they were images taken to represent her feelings of connection to Algeria as a kind of imagined homeland to which she felt a deep belonging. Malcolm X similarly took photographs of his bedroom representing different aspects of his identity. The example provided by the Bangladeshi participants, Trishana in particular, demonstrated how the private space of the home does become an important social and cultural space if not space for religious expression and practice.

What accounts for the absence of ‘home’ in this research? Perhaps participants take belonging in one’s own home for granted. Perhaps they have interpreted geography as ‘out there’ and thus took questions of the geography of belonging to mean those that take place beyond the home and in public space. Most certainly, it is the public spaces through which they move in and out of in their everyday lives where they are engaged in processes of belonging whether it is through work, school or social activities.

Overall, participants expose the ‘homespaces’ of faith and identity in the places and landscapes of Halifax revealing them as spaces of negotiation as well as sites of personal and intimate connection. Participants’ diverse autobiographical journeys of faith and place reveal the complexity in being, becoming and finding belonging as a Muslim in Halifax. I analyze how the diversity and complexity of these negotiations matters to the social and cultural dimensions of belonging in participants’ everyday life. Their photographs and interviews reveal the various ways through which they negotiate belonging at school and work, through social and community participation and engagement activities and at the very site of their own bodies and the performances of being Muslim. Discovering or creating spaces in which Muslims express their identities and engage in social relationships in ways that do not compromise their faith or values become the local sites through which they not only find a sense of belonging among peers but also negotiate a space for belonging alongside non-Muslims. Their sense of self-identity and place-belonging is a constant process of negotiation, not only with themselves as they move along on their journeys of faith and place, but also with friends, family members, strangers in public spaces. And their sense of self-identity and place-belonging is shaped by the Muslim community and Islamic institutional shifts, past and present, that present “terrains for the creation of a collective sense of belonging” (Fortier 2000, 2) and that change the landscape of Halifax.

As students, as immigrants, as converts, participants’ own sense of self-identity and place-belonging is engagingly produced through their desires to practice their faith, create spaces in which they feel safe, comfortable, accepted, and connect and form attachments by participating locally and making contributions of their time and energy. Metcalf (1996) argues that Muslim converts play an important role at the institutional level, advocating and being responsible for organizing mosque-related activities. Convert participants in my research also share their geographies of engagement both within and outside of the mosque. Each in their own

way, the convert participants have played an important role in shaping the institutional landscapes of Islam as well as introducing Islam into non-Muslim spaces. While Talal and Talib have both helped to create spaces for daily prayer, Amy sits on the board of the Maritime Muslim Academy, volunteers at the Centre for Islamic Development and has been working alongside others in the development of UMMAH masjid. Maria actively works to make recreation spaces inclusive to Muslim women who want to work out in women's only gyms bringing awareness to Muslim women's issues of modesty to the workplace and her employers as well as to its Muslim and non-Muslim clientele. These 'halal' sites of creativity, negotiation and struggle provide another layer to a remapping of the city: a map of 'Halalifax' that reveals multiple ways that Muslims work at belonging.

Insofar as I argue that belonging is a geographical process implicated in personal, social and cultural connections to place, it is a concept and process that also captures a broader sense of multidimensionality that can be lost in the concepts of identity or citizenship. I have explored the journeys of faith and place across different dimensions of formal and substantive citizenship and identity at different sites and scales. In a sense, formal citizenship, at least, and identity are traps; boxes we check off to declare that we 'are' something. There may be more than one box at any given time to check off and we may check many off at once. However, in and off themselves, they lack the ability to articulate the 'how' and 'why' we arrive at some point in time and space to check them off (Fortier 2000, 152).

Painter (1995) argues that meaningful engagement with the concept must turn to the substantive notion of citizenship based on feelings of belonging to and being able to participate in society as an active citizen. This distinction indicates why cities remain important sites for exploring difference and the ways in which processes of inclusion and exclusion work (see Bender 1999). Holston & Appadurai (1999) argue that bestowing formal citizenship (to Muslims in Canada for example) does not guarantee that substantive citizenship simply or unproblematically follows. Wood (2002) argues for a more robust and locally grounded examination of identity and citizenship through the sites of their everyday practice and experience because this is how and where they are produced.

Belonging, as Crowley (1999) suggests is 'thicker' in that the ability to understand what belonging means requires a journey. It requires a journey into the depths of time and space, of movement and attachment, and mobilities and place. As Bhimji (2008) suggests a critical

conceptualization of belonging includes notions of formal and substantive citizenship as well as notions of identity such as race, gender, and ethnicity. Belonging captures these as processes of not only ‘things we are or have’ but also ‘things we do’. Uncovering the processes of belonging exposes the ways in which Muslims seek out, find, create, claim, and sometimes conflict over a range of sites, places, and landscapes in the city to which they moor their own set of belongings (Amin 2002). Therefore, this critical take on belonging includes both our emotional feelings about such aspects of citizenship and identity and our practices and performances of them. These belonging practices and performances make and remake our daily lives, individually and collectively, in ways that push through and beyond identity and citizenship.

Through their remapping of the city, participants have surfaced issues related to both identity and citizenship and in ways that go beyond our normative assumptions about them. Belongings emerge and are claimed through participants’ experiences, perceptions and imaginations of whatever kind of connections and attachments are important to them individually. These become evident through their photographs and interviews during which belonging can be read through claims made in association with presence, duration, and knowledge sharing. First, they speak about their own presence in place: of being ‘here’ or ‘there’ and being part of something larger than their own self over time. Second, participants speak with pride of certain places or in ways that invoke an emotional sense of ownership of place. Third, presence and ownership coalesce around knowledge claims in ways that communicate an understanding of belonging. Sharing special or ‘insider’ knowledge with me about the places and spaces in their everyday lives and in their city is a way of claiming these deep feelings of belonging as their own. In other words, they invoke both their identities and citizenship rights (formal and substantive) in their maps of belonging.

Finally, what has this dissertation made evident about the idea of community and in particular about the Muslim community in Halifax? Chapter Three reveals that the differences in journeys of place and faith result in very different connections and disconnections in the city and in the Muslim community. Chapter Four demonstrates the multiple ways that different participants develop their own dimensions of belonging through a range of strategies in the city including making ‘halal’ space, expressing identity through appearance and practice, and various forms of community involvement. Chapter Five draws in both the unifying potential of ‘ummah’

as well as the boundary politics of ethnicity and religiosity that threatens the attempts at a cohesive community among Muslims.

External assumptions and stereotypes that produces an essentialist reading of ‘Muslim’ creates an ‘invented’ Muslim community, and in so doing, makes invisible the diversity of, and conflicting and contested identifications within it. Moreover, the efforts of forging a Muslim ‘ummah’ from within follows along the lines of an ‘imagined’ community (Anderson 1983). With all the diverse subjectivities and narratives of place and belonging contained in this dissertation, I offer a response to those who call for a critical engagement with Muslim identity and community in Canada (Arat-Koc 2006; Mehdi 2008; Ramji 2008; McDonough and Hoodfar, 2005; Arthur et al. 2008; Delic 2008). The Muslim community in Halifax is highly diverse, and it is this diversity that must force us to reconsider it through the lens of the politics of community and difference (Young 1990). There are multiple communities based on age and generation, race, nationality and ethnicity, degree, practice and origins of one’s faith, as well as other social and civic engagements at work and school. Chapter Five surfaces how the boundaries of many of these are created, maintained, and even challenged. And, while ‘Muslim community’ is often used strategically by some participants, particularly in expressions of belonging, their own narratives of belonging and place reveal that even in a small city with relatively small numbers of Muslims and Muslim centres, finding those places, moments, events and lines of interpersonal connection remain elusive enough that any claim to ‘a Muslim community’ in Halifax is problematic.

Moving Forward

Many of the challenges faced in this research stem from the sample of participants taking part. As Jackson, Crang and Dwyer (2004) suggest “our surroundings, our places of settlement, our belongings in the literal sense of material culture [I would also add ‘belongings’ as I have conceptualized it], are all constituted through much wider flows and circuitries” (Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer 2004, 7). Given the diversity of the group in age, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, nationality, degree of religiosity and path to religious identity, however, it is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully explore the histories and politics of such diverse subjectivities beyond what they themselves raised in interviews. The focus of the research was on the everyday experiences of place and belonging in Halifax as photographed and narrated by

participants at a specific time. Therefore, many aspects, particularly the broader historical and political contexts of how they came to be Muslim or came to be in Halifax may not have been raised. There were moments in the interview during which small windows of opportunity may have opened during which such lines of inquiry could have been explored. In reviewing transcripts there were indeed missed opportunities for follow up questions that may have captured more detail in these areas. Additionally, I wanted to honour how participants charted through their photographs and was hesitant to interject with other agendas that would shift them from talking about everyday life in Halifax. However, these are important questions that no doubt consciously and unconsciously shape the broader context for Muslims in Halifax. Sara and Jane, for example, do discuss their migration story and draw comparisons between living in India, the United States and Canada revealing the different ways that experiences elsewhere have shaped their own negotiations of place and belonging. Similarly, Abdullah discusses living in Saudi Arabia and how his experiences there influenced his religious identity once in Halifax. Kareem and Catharine represent those younger Muslims who came to Canada with their parents following the Gulf War in the early 1990s who then grew up alongside other second-generation Muslims like Amira and Malcolm X. Finally, the growing trend in Canada, and Halifax in particular, for attracting international students and the geographies of source countries provides further context for understanding the experiences of Tarek, Kuyasha, Sabir and Trishana among others. The broader social and political contexts of each of these individual participants' narratives may be important to the ways in which identity, place and belonging are experienced and negotiated beyond what they have revealed in our interviews. A much deeper and perhaps ethnographic study could excavate these in more detail as they relate to negotiating everyday life in Halifax.

My own framing at the beginning of this research shaped the expectations I had of what kinds of photographs might be taken and what kinds of stories Muslim participants might have about living in Halifax. As I outline in Chapter 1, I expected to see the impact of post 9/11 Islamophobia and racism be a primary factor shaping participants sense of place and belonging. I also suspected that the history of racial segregation in Halifax and erasure of Africville from the city's landscape would also have some influence on how Muslims were negotiating a sense of belonging in a city with a majority white, Christian and third or more generation population. However, these narratives, while raised by a few participants, were not centrally important to the

ways that participants were either experiencing everyday life in the city or finding a sense of belonging. In fact, Malcolm X is the only participant to raise the issue of Halifax's black history, Africville and the racist and violent removal and relocation of its residents in one of his photographs of social housing.

A number of things might account for this absence and the absence of broader discourses and discussions of racism in Halifax. Most of the participants are either new to the city or are young enough that the social history of the city has not been made available. When participants did discuss racist comments or attacks, they were related as things that happened to a friend or acquaintance and not to themselves. When Malcolm X, for example, discuss some of the racists slurs hurled his way, or Talal discusses the negative comments made by co-workers, they are dismissed as immature or ignorant. This might reflect a hesitancy to reveal the impact of such personal attacks in an interview. However, it may also be a reflection of the methodology used. I took the lead from participants and their narratives based on their photographs. As such, if things were not raised, I did not try to inject those issues into our discussion with a direct question. Each interview is different and the issues raised and discussions that took place are largely the ones that participants wanted to share.

For two of the converts, Amy and Talal, 9/11 did provide a central narrative for their sense of belonging and in their journey to becoming Muslim. Other participants have discussed the events of September 11, 2001 and the post 9/11 context within which Muslims are represented in negative ways that conjure suspicion and fear. But few have discussed this narrative in any length or depth that indicates it continues to influence their everyday lives. Recall, this research explores place-belongingness: how and why we connect to place and how and why we negotiate our different dimensions of belongings. Immediately following the terrorist attacks, the Halifax Commoner, a student newspaper published by the University of King's College School of Journalism published an entire issue devoted to exploring how the daily lives of Muslims in Halifax were impacted (Halifax Commoner 2001). In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, there were reports of harassment, mosque vandalism, feelings of alienation and being unwelcome in their own home (Halifax) and being 'singled out' as Muslims. However, it seems that for most participants, the legacy of 9/11 may be within their peripheral vision but when it came time to focus the frame on their everyday sense of place in belonging in Halifax in 2010, it did not surface as a central narrative.

Despite the demonstrated diversity among participants and the complex ways that they negotiate multiple belongings through their personal journeys and social and cultural experiences and engagement, there are a number of others absences to be acknowledged. While this kind of richly detailed qualitative exploration and analysis of everyday life is not meant to be representative in the true sense of the term, the inclusion of an even greater diversity of Muslim subjectivities would have enhanced our appreciation for the negotiation of belonging among Muslims in Halifax. In Chapter One, I discuss the effects of a culture of suspicion of, not simply non-Muslims, but certainly non-Muslims wishing to ‘conduct research on’ Muslims in Canada, from inside some parts of the Muslim community; in part, this is due to a conflation with media and both the perceived and actual misrepresentation of Muslims and Muslim communities in Canada and elsewhere. This was raised as a significant issue by a number of participants. However, while quantity of participants is not necessarily indicative of the quality or rigour of research analysis, there are a number of ways in which the diversity of participants could have been broadened in ways that would contribute to an even deeper analysis.

First, all the participants were Sunni Muslim. As mentioned in Chapter Five, several attempts were made to contact Shia Muslims through the Al-Rasoul Islamic Society Centre in Halifax and the Ismaili Jamatkhana and Centre in Dartmouth. Given the sectarian division between Sunni and Shia, the perspectives of Shia Muslims as part of the remapping of Halifax are missing. How different would the Shia map of Halifax be from those drawn by Sunni Muslims? How is the city experienced, perceived, and lived differently among Shias? In which spaces, place, landscape and times do these maps overlap? Limitations, however, are only one side of the coin. The other side represents opportunity. In order to both understand the unique geographies of the Shia Muslim community in Halifax, as I have done with the Sunni Muslim participants, and then to compare these alternative mappings, this research project could be paralleled with an auto-photography research project with Shia participants in Halifax.

Second, alternative mappings of Halifax constructed through the photographs and experiences of first-generation Muslim immigrants are absent. While some of the international Muslim students may, indeed, stay on in Halifax to become first-generation immigrants, those who resettled ten or twenty years ago and who now have families of their own are not represented in this research. The ways in which they experienced settling in to the city and sought their own dimensions of belonging in the generation previous to those that form the

majority of participants in my research would further add to the complex and diverse topography of the alternative map of 'Halalifax'. With established social, cultural and faith networks and relations, how would their maps of the city differ from the ones produced here? How would their earlier experiences of becoming part of the city (or feeling disconnected from it) reshape 'Halalifax'? These inclusions would, in particular, make valuable contributions to the critical mass of studies on immigrant retention and integration so important from a policy standpoint as well as to a more intimate long-term understanding of processes of belonging among immigrants in Canada.

Third, the narratives of place and belonging from the perspective of more conservative Muslims remain absent. First, those with a conservative ideology that are hesitant and/or suspicious of Muslim/non-Muslim interaction might not want to participate in research conducted by a non-Muslim especially if they were unclear as to the aim of such research. Duke, Amira, and Catherine all suggested this as one of the issues I was having with finding new participants as did my own experiences with representative from the Centre for Islamic Development. This suggests a possible second reason for the absence of more conservative Muslim participants: emails and letters that explained my research and its goals along with my call for Muslim participants may simply have never gone past the gatekeepers of the organization to which the material was sent. It is possible that after my introduction to and interchange with a representative at the Centre for Islamic Development that my information was never passed along to members of his community. I know that this did not happen with organizations such as the Islamic Association of Nova Scotia and Dartmouth mosque and the Muslim Student Association. Participants who are members of one or both of these told me that they received my call for participants more than once suggesting that my information was being circulated by several organizations. Finally, if more conservative Muslims were getting access to my call for participants, other social and cultural factors at the individual level may have prevented them participating. Lack of interest, language barriers, and social, cultural and faith-based norms and values (perhaps particularly among women) will have prevented me from including their geographies in the alternative mappings of Halifax.

All of this suggests that future research must make greater efforts to include a wider range of ideological positions that would better represent a diverse and complex alternative geography of the city. My fear is that the absence of a more conservative perspective in this

research furthers a perception that Conservative Muslims are opting out of Canadian society by maintaining distance through non-participation and self-segregation. Regardless, they too are negotiating their own sense of belonging in Canada in various ways. They too are experiencing the public spaces of the city in ways that influence their sense of connection or disconnection. In other words a ‘halal’ methodological approach that includes the diversity of positions with the Muslim community might include their experiences and suggest how we might not only re-imagine what tolerance, acceptance, integration and belonging looks like in alternative mappings of the city but also understand the processes and places through which belonging emerges.

Team research can be a successful strategy to include a broader set of participant subjectivities by balancing out some of the differences, perceived and otherwise (Houston, McLean, Hyndman and Jamal 2010; Houston, Hyndman, Mclean and Jamal 2010). Conducting research with team members that can bridge differences of age, gender, faith, and culture might be a more ‘halal’ methodology that would include the still marginalized voices of some parts of the Muslim community.

Fourth, the identities, communities and geographies of Muslim converts in Canada is poorly represented and understood. There is no statistical data available in Canada on the number of Muslim converts, however, it has been suggested that the Centre for Islamic Development in Halifax sees 300-400 conversions a year (Spurr 2009). While there are a number of convert testimonials available on the internet, there has not been an engagement with converts by geographers to understand both the social and spatial transformations that take place when one accepts Islam and begins to live life as a practicing Muslim. Research dedicated to this particular group is necessary in order to understand their unique negotiations of social and cultural life, including experiences in public space as well as acceptance in Muslim and non-Muslim circles once they have accepted Islam. The inclusion of four converts in this research, quite diverse from one another in their own ways, sheds light on the different subjectivities within the Muslim community. Not only are their journeys to Islam and the everyday practice of faith different from those who are born into Muslim families but their experiences of both inclusion and exclusion and their negotiation of multiple belongings suggests the need for further research with an intersectional approach.

Conclusion

The goal of any alternative mapping of the city is to reveal the contradictions that normative mappings have distorted or, indeed, erased and to argue that cities and those who live within them are far more complex and diverse than we often imagine. Muslim communities are as complex and diverse as any community. A critical and intersectional understanding of Muslim identities, practices, and belongings in Canadian cities like Halifax provides a counter discourse to those that construct Muslim identities, at the scale of the nation or the city, as singular and uniform. Moreover, these counter discourses remain unfixed and are always part of a process of becoming across both space and time. The taken for granted assumptions of what being Muslim and belonging in Canada means are challenged by the processes of negotiating belonging that the Muslim men and women in this research have shared. Their experiences of everyday life in Halifax have shaped their maps of 'Halifax' that, in turn, continue to shape their journeys to and through the city and their faith.

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Appendix A: Participant Photography Information Sheet

Name _____
Please print

Camera # _____ Date Assigned _____

Pick Up Date _____ Interview Date _____

Taking Pictures

- You have a week to take photographs of places and spaces that are significant to you – to the many ways to which you might identify
 - Think of places in your home, school, work, street, neighbourhood, community, city, etc. that have some meaning to you, your identity, how you see yourself, how others may see you
 - Think of places that connect to a sense of belonging for you – and those that may raise a sense of non-belonging
 - Think of places and spaces that are safe and comfortable as well as unwelcoming and uncomfortable for you
- Take pictures wherever and whenever you like – this is about your perspective on being Muslim and living in Halifax!
 - Please be respectful when taking photographs
 - If you wish to take a picture of a special site or building you should get permission
 - If you wish to include people in your photographs, let them know that the pictures are being used for research and seek their permission

Date _____ Signature _____