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Bullock, Katherine and Nesbitt-Larking, Paul

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# Becoming 'Holistically Indigenous': Young Muslims and Political Participation in Canada

PAUL NESBITT LARKING and KATHY BULLOCK

*Abstract*

*While media and the government often focus on the supposed 'radicalisation' of Muslim youth in Canada, our research explores the more complicated and nuanced political identities of twenty young Canadian Muslims. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews with these youth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and London, Ontario, we explore these young citizen's concepts of political participation, conceptions of the self as a political actor, formal, informal and civic political involvement, and the relationship between their religious and Canadian identities. Our research is grounded in a positive and pluralistic politics of care, respect, and engagement. We treated Muslim youth as similar to other Canadian youth and designed our study guided by other contemporary research into Canadian youth and political participation. While our interviewees noted the impact of negative public discourse about Muslims and some experiences of racism, the research results revealed an overwhelming commitment to Canada and political engagement, evidenced most fully by a high level of civic engagement.*

## Introduction

On April 12th 2012, Tarek Mehanna, twenty-nine years old and a US citizen, was convicted for seventeen and a half years for material support of terrorism. Newspaper reports, along with the prosecution, outlined a transitional movement of "radicalisation" from "American" to "Al Qaeda supporter."[1] At the same time, twenty-six year old Canadian Omar Khadr, held in the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp since 2002, petitioned the Canadian government to serve the remainder of his jail term in Canada. Referring to him as one of Canada's "most notorious citizens,"[2] *The Globe and Mail* presented Khadr as another youth "radicalised" by Islamic extremism. Mehanna and Khadr represent the common discourse through which the media, the state (notably the security apparatus), and the general public construct Muslim youth in North America today: alienated and vulnerable to "radicalisation" and anti-Western messages of "extremist" imams and community leaders.[3]

The Canadian media have sensationalised stories of those few Muslim youths who have chosen violence,[4] implicating them under the more general and historic orientalist theme of "Muslims as barbarians."[5] Equally disturbing is the ease with which the Canadian government

has adopted a similar paradigm, viewing Muslim religiosity through the lenses of "radicalisation," hence a potential threat to Canada.[6] This was implied in a public lecture by Andrew Ellis, director general of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) for Toronto, in which he stated that in his interviews with young Canadian Muslims he is often told "I can't participate in the political process because it's against my religion."[7]

But how much do we really know about the relationship of Canadian Muslim youths to the Canadian political community? Should the perspective of Ellis's interviewees be generalised to become the foundation of a government policy that considers religious orthodoxy as part of a "conveyor belt" to terrorism?[8] It is our argument that it should not. While there has been almost no research on the political participation of Canadian Muslim youth, (indeed Canadian Muslims in general),[9] sociological research on other aspects of Canadian Muslim youth identity, (social, cultural citizenship, education),[10] leads to data suggesting a more complex and complicated relationship of youth to religion and their Canadian communities than the simplistic one operationalized in government circles.

Notwithstanding the importance of their cases, this article is not about Mehanna or Khadr; nor is it about any other Muslim youth, who engage in violent acts in the name of Islam. It is an exploration of twenty Canadian Muslim youth and their political identities – their sense of themselves as political actors (or non-actors) in a Canadian context.[11] It is meant to address the lacunae in our existing knowledge on the civic and political participation of Muslims in Canada. The article begins in the next section with an introduction to the framework that has guided us in our readings and interpretations of the interviews. We then turn to the analysis of the data, focusing on the most important themes giving us insight into our interviewees' concepts of political participation. These themes move in overlapping points from a more specific focus on political participation toward more general matters: conceptions of the self as a political actor, from formal to informal to civic political involvement and the relationship between religious and Canadian identities. We identify each interviewee anonymously through pseudonyms. Appendix One lists some basic information for each interviewee.

**Research Framework, Methodology and Data Collection**

Our principal methodology is semi-structured in-depth interviewing. As with all qualitative research, our aim is to explore the lived experiences and constructed identities of our interviewees in depth, to capture nuance, ambiguity, and complexity. Our core approach to interviewing is what Silverman refers to as "realist." He says: "Interviews….offer a rich source of data which provide access to how people account for both their troubles and good fortune."[12] The interview process is dialogical (conversational) and interactive and we pay attention both to the content of the material and to the context and form or style of delivery. Behind these proximate settings, we take into account the structural bases of the insertion of mostly new Muslim immigrants and their children into the citizenship regime of Canadian multicultural integration. We are further informed, more generally, by the global historical forces that have shaped and conditioned the life-chances of Muslims in Canada. Our objective is not so much to

discern the singular truth through our questions, but rather to explore the displays and accounts of attitudes, perspectives, morals, and reconstructed biographies.[13]

As mentioned above, our research calls into question the dominance of anti-terrorism discourses, through opening up an academic enquiry into the lived experiences of young Muslims in Canada. We made a conscious decision to avoid producing a study framed through the "Muslim youth are radicalising" framework. It became clear to us early in the designing of our study that such a framework was of little relevance to the lived experiences of our interviewees. Moreover, we believe that no matter how well-intentioned, terrorism-framed studies create an archetype of an "unlikeable character" – a citizen prone to violence against his own community. We focus on another set of questions, grounded in a more positive and pluralistic politics of care, respect, and engagement. While we begin with few substantive assumptions, our empirical enquiry invites young Muslims to respond to a more generic set of prompts regarding their routine, integrated, and political practices. Guided by the research of Adsett,[14] Bastedo,[15] Chareka and Sears,[16] Gauthier,[17] O'Neill,[18] Stolle and Cruz,[19] and others on Canadian youth and political participation, we examine patterns of political participation among twenty Muslim youth in Canada. To what extent do the young Muslim women and men already engage in political activity and how far do they want to contribute to the political fabric of Canada through encounter, dialogue, and participation? Our research assumption was that when it comes to political participation, young Muslims share much in common with other young people. Therefore, to study Canadian Muslim youth, our chosen research framework was that of Canadian and other studies in youth political participation.

We conducted twenty interviews in late 2010 and early 2011 (ten each in London and the Greater Toronto Area). Each interview lasted between twenty-five minutes and more than two hours. Our criterion for selecting interviewees was deliberately broad. While being aware that qualitative research never makes claims of generalizability, to ensure that our group of interviewees was not all from the same ethnic group, we sought as broad a spectrum as possible of youth from different ethnic backgrounds. We set the definition of "youth" according to the United Nations as individuals aged between fifteen and twenty-four. We aimed for gender balance and each of us sought five female and five male interviewees. We also tried to find youth from different social classes (though were not successful, as all of the interviewees were university students, or university bound, with middle-class family status). We aimed for a balance between practicing and non-practicing Muslim youth, though naturally, such distinctions are hard to know in advance. Our interviews were obtained through our network of personal contacts in the Muslim community. Any process of selection of interviewees carries with it the challenges of selection bias. In the case of our interviewees, the generalized atmosphere of anti-Muslim sentiments and the radicalization/terrorism frame required us to establish bonds of trust. Such a necessity placed us closer to our interviewees than is often the case in studies of this kind. However, we are confident in light of our data that their responses were not shaped by "social desirability" propensities such as the "Hawthorne Effect." We are confident that each of our interviewees spoke frankly, fully and without fear or favour.

**Political Participation among the Interviewees**

There is deep and long-standing concern among political commentators and academics at the lack of political engagement among Canada's youth. It is significant to note that this is not merely a Canadian issue. Concern at the lack of political engagement among youth is widespread in the West. Gauthier reports that the decline in electoral participation among youth has been widespread throughout Western societies.[20]

A readily available measure of conventional political participation is voting. To vote is to engage in the simplest of political acts. Voter turnout among youth in Canada has been declining for some decades. Adsett chronicles "a large decline in the voter turnout rates of the two youngest age groups…between 1980 and 1984."[21] According to Barnes, voter turnout rates for Canadians aged 18-24 and 25-29 declined further and substantially in the early part of the 21st century.  Referring to the Canadian federal elections of 2004, 2006, and 2008, Barnes says: "the gap between the estimated average voter turnout and the estimated turnout of the second youngest age cohort was in the order of 15%, while the same gap for the youngest cohort was in the order of 20%."[22] Barnes notes that voter turnout among the youngest age cohort was around 37% in 2004 and 2008, but spiked up to 44% in 2006.

Declines in the youth vote are not principally "life-cycle" effects, that is, those caused by the relative lack of interest among youth in contrast with their more mature peers. They are also more likely to be the result of a "generational" effect, and, as Stolle and Cruz put it: "today's youth are voting at significantly lower rates than previous generations at the same age."[23]Amongst our interviewees, out of the sixteen old enough to vote, an impressive nine have done so in the last 24 months (See Appendix Two).  This is interesting since only three of our interviewees give an affirmative to the question, "Do you regard yourself as a political person?" Nine say "No," and eight are in-between, expressing either an interest in following the news, and politics, with a good general knowledge of basic political questions, but are not actively involved in the formal political process.[24]  This suggests a complicated relationship between the act of voting and conceptions of politics in relationship to the self.  A few think of themselves as not politically engaged yet participate in highly politicised events in the informal sector, such as signing a petition against Bill 94 (a Quebec Bill requiring women wearing the *niqab* to reveal their faces in their interactions with the Quebec government), or demonstrating on behalf of Palestinians.

In contrast to the claim made by Andrew Ellis of CSIS, that Canadian Muslim youth tell him that they do not participate because of their religion, it is important to note that only one of our interviewees mentioned religious or philosophical reasons as to why he is not involved in the formal political process, his rationale is in part pragmatic. In fact, religious reasons are central as motivators for those of our interviewees most highly engaged in formal politics and civic engagement. This finding is consistent with other studies.[25]

Throughout this article, we follow O'Neill in drawing a distinction between being engaged in formal politics (the electoral process), informal politics (including lobbying, activism on political issues, letter writing, petition signing, and attending rallies), and civic engagement (volunteerism in community-based activities). What emerges from the data are three broad clustering of responses to questions designed to explore the interviewees' interest in politics, engagement in politics, and sense of self as a political actor. These are typologised as: Not Politically Engaged (NPE); Sometimes Politically Engaged (SPE); and Politically Engaged (PE). For the purposes of data analysis, the interviewees have been grouped into these three categories, but should be thought of as loosely placed. Sometimes, an interviewee is potentially interested in politics but not actively engaged. These interviewees have been placed into the middle category, (SPE). Naturally, a single person can move back or forth on the spectrum over time, depending on issues involved. Non-involvement in formal politics does not signify being politically unengaged. Indeed, in the area of civic activism and volunteerism, our research shows an impressively high involvement, since all of our twenty interviewees are involved, to varying degrees, in the civic sector. Our presentation of the data in subsequent sections makes reference to these classifications, but is not organized according to them. To summarize our findings in one phrase, our interviewees display a generalized willingness to engage and a strong desire to be involved in the political and social fabric of Canada.[26]

*Not Involved In Formal Politics*

The most commonly stated reasons for non-participation in formal politics were: lack of interest; lack of time; the belief that politics is boring; the belief that things are smooth in Canada, not like "back home" (so there's no need to be involved); and being under age (with the expectation of becoming interested in politics once reaching the legal age for voting).

Chareka and Sears' qualitative study seeking to explain why youth vote less concluded that most reasons are due to the fact that politicians are seen to be: "largely ineffective, that there is little real difference among political parties, and that politicians cannot be trusted."[27] In their study, the immigrant and other youth report knowing the importance and value of democratic choice and the vote, and are concerned with contributing to public life. However, they do not believe that conventional political activity is the best way in which to achieve it. Bastedo, Goodman, LeDuc and Pammett's analysis confirms this. Their qualitative study concludes that for youth, voting may be linked to a deeper concept of citizenship that includes a sense of obligation to contribute, but which is balanced against a perception of efficacy. "The turnout decline may in part be a result of gradual replacement of a generation that viewed voting as a 'civic duty' by one that is more inclined to feel that voting is simply not worthwhile."[28]

Similarly, amongst our interviewees, it was neither apathy nor lack of knowledge that kept some of them uninvolved in formal politics. A few interviewees articulate trenchant criticisms of electoral politics. Hebba follows politics, in terms of general knowledge, but has made a decision not to get involved in electoral politics, because she feels it is more effective to

help people through grass-roots activism than through politics. Like Aliya ("Even if you vote them in, I don't think citizens really have a say in what happens in politics."), Nader ("I feel like I would probably be a drop in the ocean. It won't make a difference,"), (and Qayyum, see below) Hebba regards politics as a bit of a game, an elite activity, upon which she can have little impact:

> [When I think of politics] I think of also pretending, and what I mean by that is, there are a lot of individuals that are or say that they will represent the people but then in hindsight they're representing their own political party and their own ideologies and own voices, and in my opinion what's effective is the way they sell to the people how they're going to represent the people... …. (NPE)

Other interviewees, including those three who see themselves as "political," express reservations about being involved in formal politics based in the language of democratic theory: that the institutions of Canadian liberal democracy have been compromised by racism (Qais, NPE); the Harper government's "[un]-productive" practices (Aminah, PE); the need for reform in the electoral system, especially the issue of first past the post and proportional representation (Aminah (PE), Irfan, (SPE), Sumayyah (PE));  the problem of low voter turnout (Aisha (PE), Aliya (SPE)); and the problem of the party system and being tied to a platform, rather than being able to disaggregate policy options (Farouq, NPE).  Nader argued that Canada was a "pseudo-democracy" because the Senate is appointed, and because the current prime minister is voted in without a majority of the votes.

Suheil's experiences with corruption in his native country influenced his view of political participation in Canada:

> I do follow politics.  But to me…a lot of politics has a lot of lies, I think…  The reason we ran away, well, the reason we came to Canada, and one of the main reasons why we decided to stay, was because of political problems back home…
> if I have to rate myself 1 to 10, I would say 4, as a 4. (SPE)

Only Qayyum comes close to advancing a religious/ideological reason for not voting: "…I don't think they [Islam and democracy] are compatible, only because Islam is -- when there's something written in the Quran, you can't change it, right.  In a democracy, it can be changed (NPE)."  But as he combined this with a more traditional reason for non-participation, we cannot conclude that his decision not to be involved in the political process was solely religiously motivated. He says: "I tend to move away from politics only because I feel like I don't have a say in it... people will vote, yeah, you gave your vote in, however, do they really have a say in politics, I don't believe they do.  That's why I don't vote (NPE)."  Like some of the others, Qayyum perceives politics as an elite game in which he is unable to make a positive impact on the youth whose lives he cares so much about.  However, at the end of the interview, he argues that he would get more involved in political organizations if he felt it could bring about

positive change: "For me I am starting off, you know, actually I will go into politics hopefully if it interests me a little, if I feel I can make a difference in there (NPE)." Qayyum thus begins the interview confirming Andrew Ellis' claim about Muslim youth not participating in politics for religious reasons, but he ends his interview echoing ideas of other Canadian youth more generally. It is worth asking whether Ellis's interviewees would give similarly nuanced answers, given the opportunity fully to express themselves.

It is these beliefs, that as an individual they cannot exert an impact on government, which had led some of the SPE/NPE to disengage from electoral politics. These insights turn the tables on the non-participation issue of youth in the political process: if someone believes participation will not make a difference, and/or that the system is in strong need of reform, it is not surprising that they lose interest. We need to turn our attention to the political system itself and question its responsiveness.

*Interested but Sometimes Engaged in Formal Politics*

Other interviewees were interested in politics, but not actively or frequently engaged. Irfan, Nader, and Aliyah mentioned lack of time (not interest) as a factor, and also expressed some degree of guilt at not being more involved. In Nader's words: "I have a lot of things to contribute. However right now, due to like school and you know million other things going in your life at this point, I feel like I – I don't have the wherewithal to which actually give back right now as much as I'd like [sic] (SPE)."

As O'Neill has observed, there is a disconnect between youth politics and the adult world of politics. Our own research confirms this. Asiya says "[I do not regard myself a political person] Not at all. I have never taken politics. I'm not into politics at all (NPE)." However, during the interview we discovered that she always voted in student elections at her university. Further questioning revealed she had been elected for four years as an executive member of her high school *Muslim Student Association*. This kind of discrepancy between actual political activity and not regarding oneself a political person was found in several interviewees. It is best explained by assuming that by "politics" our interviewees take a traditional view which equates politics with the adult world of elections. It also means that the potential for deeper engagement with Canadian politics is there, waiting to be tapped.

Other examples of a middle ground in terms of interest and engagement are seen through the eyes of Habib and Fatima, both of whom could see themselves as being elected to Prime Minister. "A political person? Oh, well, I like to -- I like politics. I actually wanted to be like a political leader myself like -- well, like a prime minister, the Prime Minister of Canada (Habib, SPE)." And in spite of not being able to define "democracy," Fatima responds with a laugh that she could see herself as a candidate for Prime Minister. But then she adds that it would be difficult to achieve: "Yeah. But then you realize then yeah, it's too much -- too much work, too hard to reach (SPE)."

Other interviewees expressed the sense that a Muslim would not be seen as eligible for office by other non-Muslim Canadians, being penalised for their "Muslimness." However, to find young Muslim Canadians dreaming about holding the highest political office is extremely important. This kind of yearning and ambition, is very important for inclusion in a society, as it is a signal of integration at all levels, political, social, economic.

*Politically Engaged*

Whether in terms of party support or their general values on social and economic issues, the interviewees exhibit little ideological conservatism. Of the fifteen who state a political party that is closest to representing their views, all name the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party. When it comes to social issues, six claim to be progressive and ten are somewhere in the middle. Only two are conservative. Similar patterns are evident regarding economic issues, even though fewer give a definitive response. Six are progressive, six are in the middle, and one is conservative on economic issues. From the responses of many of our interviewees, it is clear that they are not familiar with the "conservative" and "progressive" ideological labels. In some instances, the interviewees asked for further explanations and elaborations and we responded accordingly.

Only three of our interviewees (Sumayyah, Aminah and Aisha) consider themselves very much a "political person." Sumayyah is very active in informal, not formal politics (see the next subsection below), Aminah follows politics closely, but is not a member of any party, and Aisha is highly engaged in the formal political sector, being a member of the Liberal Party. It is noteworthy that given the widespread media image of the "submissive veiled Muslim woman," all three interviewees in the most highly engaged category are women: Aminah wears a *niqab* (face-veil), while Sumayyah and Aisha wear *hijab*. The face-veil has not hindered Aminah from being interested or involved in politics:

> Yes, I would consider [myself a political person]… try to keep myself aware of
> what's going on, I -- I look at different parties that are in the Canadian system, at
> the electoral system…. I haven't voted yet but because I wasn't much in politics
> before but now that I'm like I'm becoming interested and when the time comes
> I'll probably vote as well…(PE)

While talking about having an impact on the government, Aminah is open to the idea of joining a political party, but holds back because she is unenthusiastic about her political choices: "."(PE) Aminah's ambivalence on joining a political party is not uncommon, except that she wears a face veil, a garment that is usually associated either with submissiveness or extreme radicalisation, neither of which lends itself to the idea of joining a political party in order to influence government. Considering the widespread public approval for banning the *niqab*, her responses are an important research finding.

Only one of our interviewees, Aisha, is both politically interested and politically engaged in formal politics, being a member of a political party. She became involved when someone her family knew personally ran for office. The whole family volunteered on his campaign, and through this became politically sensitized. She joined the candidate's political party, later interned for a sitting politician, and attended a youth summit for Muslim youth interested in politics. Her involvement in the candidate's campaign began to sensitize her to local issues. Her trip to the youth summit was an eye opener as she met Muslim youth from across North America who were involved in their local communities. She came to believe that Muslims ought to be more involved in their local communities, rather than international issues, in order to be "true citizens." (PE)

(Aisha. PE)

Aisha argues that Muslims should become politically involved, "I honestly believe if you don't feel the need to speak out and to … become involved, then you have no right to complain (PE)." She thinks this would also lead to more respect for Muslims in Canada.

*Informal Political Activity*

An important facet of the conundrum of declining youth involvement in formal politics is explored in O'Neill's research. O'Neill points out that while young Canadians tend not to engage in traditional political activities, such as voting and joining political parties, and while their level of political knowledge is lower than other Canadians, nevertheless, they do participate extensively in non-traditional political activities, such as demonstrations, signing petitions, boycotts, buycotts, and belong to community groups and organizations that meets or exceeds the levels of all adult Canadians.[29] Stolle and Cruz conclude that young Canadians perceive interest groups to be more effective agents of change than parties.[30] Adsett reports that Canadian and other youth become politically engaged over issues such as equality, justice, civil rights, or nationalism that inspire and mobilize through a shared sense of vision.[31]

In other words, Canadian youth engage in non-traditional political participation and civic participation, even if their levels of traditional political participation are low. As O'Neill says, "generalizations of political apathy among youth adopt a very narrow definition of political engagement."[32] She contends that "…political science has to reconceptualize political participation to include activity aimed at shaping society rather than simply aimed at influencing those institutions associated directly with representative democracy."[33]

Our research is consistent with these findings. While very few of our interviewees are interested in following formal politics, and even less actively involved in traditional parties, at least half of those who say they are not political, or interested in politics, have participated in rallies, protests, petitions, or had conversations with friends about political issues thought directly to affect them, such as lobbying against the *niqab* ban or Palestinian issues. This pattern resonates with Hamdani's study of Muslim women, who found that while voter turnout was low,

Muslim women were more likely to engage in informal than formal politics, with signing a petition as the most frequent activity.[34]

Sumayyah is one of a few interviewees who sees herself as a political person and is highly engaged in the informal (non-traditional) sector. "That's how I start my morning and ended my day (*sic.)*" (PE)  She grew up in a non-political Palestinian refugee family in Kuwait. After moving to Canada, she began her own education about the issues: "I wasn't raised in a political household. We didn't have political discussions. Yes, my parents watched the news a lot. But it was not discussed around the house. "  Sumayyah  considers herself "blessed" to be in Canada, and "I – I believe in giving back because – because of where I've come from, because of what I've seen my parents go through, I really believe that simply being here is a gift."  She has become deeply engaged in volunteering in the charitable sector, and also in activism in the informal political arena, especially around Palestinian issues.  She started volunteering for the local *Muslim Student Association* at her university, which led to other volunteer opportunities, including *Oxfam* and her local television station.

*Attitudes Toward The Self As A Political Actor*

We have demonstrated how non-participation in formal politics might not be linked to apathy, but rather to intelligent criticisms of the political process. Maymuna, who is not politically engaged, nevertheless displays a belief in the  efficacy of an individual influencing politics saying simply "Yes…Because every vote counts (NPE)." She looks forward to voting once she turns 18.  Likewise, Luqman is more optimistic: "…there is definitely ways to be able to send it [a political claim] up – to be able to get up to a parliament and they can look at it. So I think it – yeah if I needed, if I wanted something to be changed, I could – I'd be able to some degree." (SPE)

Aisha is our most highly engaged interviewee in the formal sector. Despite her criticisms of the system based on her experience as a parliamentary intern,she says "so long as there is  a group behind you… it's possible to do things on your own, but I -- I think you will only get to a certain point and then you will realize that power is in numbers (PE).

Huda, Habib, Sumayyah, amongst others also feel that to effect change in the political realm it was necessary to be a part of a group.  As Huda says, "I have been kind of involved in that [protests and petition] in the past.  And I think it's not so much making politicians aware, but its people in general, and then we get a lot of people together, I guess it can make an impact." (SPE)

*Involvement in Civic And Volunteer Activism*

Our interviewees display an impressive commitment toward civic engagement and community volunteerism. Fourteen of the twenty are involved with volunteering for one or more non-profit organizations consistently; three volunteer on an ad-hoc basis; two are available during summer holidays only; and only one does not volunteer at present. The extent of volunteer activity varies, from being involved in multiple organisations with a high monthly time commitment, to involvement in fewer organisations, or less frequently. Significantly, twelve interviewees volunteer at non-Muslim organisations, some exclusively and some in addition to volunteering for the local mosque, MSA or other Muslim groups. While volunteering for an MSA, our interviewees fundraise not only for Muslim causes, but also non-Muslim charities. Fatima, whose volunteer work is "only" with the MSA, has been managing fundraising both for the London food bank, collecting over 2000 cans of food, and raising over $700 for breast cancer research (SPE).

Qayyum, who had earlier expressed his hesitation about not being politically involved because it was against Islam, nevertheless is involved as a volunteer:

> Well, I do a lot for youth. I target inner city youth. I started up a non-profit organization…and we've made one video and a trailer right now, sort of to show them how crime can be deterred and how crime is, you know, it's all you, it's not really anybody else, like you're responsible for your actions, right? I work with a… refugee treatment house and I work with the youth there on Saturdays. I work with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel and I coach as an assistant [with another group] and I have my own basketball youth clinic for Muslim youth. That's the only thing that's just for Muslim youth…(NPE)

Given the widespread negative media narrative that Muslim youth are alienated loners, vulnerable to extremism, do not integrate, or make positive contributions to their society, this youth involvement in charitable work is noteworthy. Significantly, nearly every interviewee argues that charitable work should not be confined to Muslims only, but given to anyone who needs help. Interestingly, there do not appear to be any significant gender differences pertaining to either political or civic engagement. Hence our research corroborates other studies of Canadian youth and volunteerism. O'Neill found that: "Young Canadians report higher rates of volunteering activity than all other Canadians."[35] Similar research has also demonstrated that, while not necessarily participating in formal politics, immigrant and minority political activity, especially among women, is highly concentrated in the informal sector.[36]

Volunteerism is clearly a good for society, which benefits from free labour, skills, time and care and love given by volunteers, none of which is easily replaced by the government or

private sector.   Gauthier rightly concludes from this kind of finding that "despite commonly held opinions, contemporary young people are far from apathetic. They are active at various levels of involvement in community life, although political partisanship is often considered suspect."[37] Some research highlights that civic engagement can lead to engagement in formal politics,[38] but others has not.  Tossutti, in her study of Canadian immigrants between 15 and 34 years, reported that membership in voluntary organizations was positively correlated with voting and interest in politics. [39] However, her research demonstrated that individual-level voluntary work (outside of organized voluntary groups) did not correlate with higher levels of political engagement.[40] Moosa-Mitha's study of Canadian Muslim youth concluded that high levels of civic engagement were a way of coping against the largely negative mainstream discourse of the Muslim identity as a "security risk."[41]

These findings find a powerful echo in the American research of Lance Bennett. Noting that voluntary work, consumer activism, socio-economic justice causes, and on-line community building are prominent areas of youth political engagement, Bennett makes the astute observation that "managed environments seem inauthentic and irrelevant to many young people."[42] This search for authenticity and direct relevance leads Bennett to echo the claim of Peter Levine that citizens should not only be prepared for politics, but the realm of political life needs to reshape itself so that it might better serve the needs and requirements of a new generation of citizens. Bennett expresses this as a cross-national shift in the West from the model of the "dutiful citizen" to the "actualizing citizen" model which favours "loosely networked activism to address issues that reflect personal values."[43]

Our study gives us hope for engaged, caring and active Canadian Muslim citizens.  When asked whether Canadian Muslims should become more involved in the political process, a full seventeen said "yes," while three said that it depends if the person is interested in politics. It is evident that this group wants others to join them in their high degree of political engagement, which is at least a personal aspiration, if not quite a reality.

**Religion and Canadian Identities**

Canada has earned a positive reputation as a peaceful and just society in which an increasingly diverse polyethnic community lives together in a pluralistic and multicultural order.[44] Despite this, Canada's history as a white-settler colony,[45] with its associated racist and ethnic exclusionary and discriminatory policies, combined with the rise of recent global tensions and panics regarding Islam and Muslims, has generated a political culture of fear and insecurity that has affected both Muslim and other Canadians.[46] Generalized anti-terrorism discourses have conditioned fear, retreat, and essentialism on the part of at least some Canadians (non-Muslim and Muslim). These discourses have also conditioned a climate of social exclusion and hostility that has found expression both in the broader culture and institutional practices. This climate of fear and mistrust has conditioned both hate crimes and the erosion of Muslim civil liberties.[47]

How does this context affect our interviewees' sense of religious and Canadian identity and their views of citizenship?

One of the strongest themes that emerged from our interviewees is their commitment to their faith: every single interviewee states that their religion is a very important part of their identity, even those that look on the surface too "cool" or "fashionable" to be religious. It turns out that this is consistent with other studies of Canadian and US Muslim youth.[48] Rabia captures this theme well: "I think it's [religion] really important. I identify myself with my religion. In terms of who I am, I guess, I mean, my religion has certain guidelines that I should abide by and… I have a calling to something greater that it really… shapes who I am." (NPE)

*Religion and Citizenship*

In terms of the key research question of this article – young Muslims and their perceptions of political participation in Canada – it is significant to note when interviewees mention compatibility issues, many draw the distinction between deeper commitments to moral values versus superficial differences in customs, such as, sex/modest dress or alcohol. Most of our interviewees found a *modus vivendi* between their "Canadian" and "Muslim" identities. Nearly all of them said it was possible to be a devout Muslim and an active citizen in Canada. Reservations to this generalization include those of Rabia :

> Well, our values, they're not exactly compatible…. the underlying values, I would say are compatible…You know, respect each other…You know, I guess our morals and our ethics are there, they are all the same. Be kind to each other, these kinds of things…In terms of social aspects, being a Canadian, there is a lot of, I guess, indulgence into desires and something like that, which you know, we tend to stay away from…[like] Hmm. Alcohol, sex…Nudity and all that stuff. (Rabia, NPE)

> Hebba, Asiya and others draw a distinction between national identity and religious identity:
> Of course, I think you can be a devout Muslim and an engaged citizen, Canadian citizen. Being Canadian, that's a nationality, being a Muslim, that's a religion…(Hebba, NPE)

> Even Aminah, who wears a face veil does not consider it to be a barrier to her active citizenship:

Regardless with the veil like if I want to do something I would do it like even if -- even if I wasn't wearing the veil I would ….If I want to become a part of the organization and the veil is not really stopping me, I mean it may discomfort some other people but that's their problem like with me it's my choice so, it -- I don't think it really -- for me it's fine, I mean I think I can operate in the society without having a problem (PE).

A few sites of tension emerged for some interviewees at the possibility of complete compatibility between devoutness and active citizenship. Nader's reservations come from his fragile sense of Muslim belonging to Canada (see below), that Canada would not accept a fully devout Muslim as being part of political society:

……if you want to have a beard and you want to be involved politically, I don't know how well you're going to do. (SPE).

Aliya and Qassim's reservations are based on a sense that being involved in Canadian politics would most likely mean you would have to give up aspects of your Islamic practice in order to succeed. For example, having to stand up for the Canadian anthem, which is " a ritual or outside of the Muslim faith (SPE)."
Aliya also feels that hijab would be a barrier, and personally had gone through a difficult process for several years during high school, where she had been unable to establish comfort wearing the *hijab* because she felt people saw her through a stereotype rather than for who she was. She eventually removed her *hijab* (three years before the interview).[49]

Qassim is worried that (from his perspective) politicians are only out to serve themselves and that back room deal-making compromises a religious commitment to loyalty and justice. He goes further, stating that it is possible to be a devout Muslim and an active citizen if by going into politics you help the Muslim community. Conversely, if by entering politics you are not helping the Muslim community, then you should not pursue that endeavour. This is interesting, given his earlier arguments that Islam and democracy are not compatible. He raises the thorny issue of Canadians abroad killing other Muslims: "If they are going and killing people in Afghanistan, they're killing people in Muslim countries, then no. If you are going -- if you go into politics to change that, then yes, go ahead (NPE)."

Being an army cadet and considering an army career, this issue has real salience for Luqman:

I think that contradiction [between being a devout Muslim and a fully engaged Canadian citizen] would come if you go -- if I end up having to go overseas because then it could be looked at 'Oh yeah, I am in the Canadian military killing other Muslims' and that's like -- that's the big thing that a lot of people -- that's the first thing they say like oh, it's a Muslim and go to Muslim country and go

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killing Muslims but I think if I were to join the military and be able to stay in Canada and not have to go overseas like that I don't think it would, it gets in the way because they're really -- like just being in army cadets they're -- all the military guys that I've been with they're all understanding and they know that okay, if it's prayer time you can go pray or you need to do something you could have that time (SPE).

Luqman believes that he could resolve such an issue by joining as a cadet instructor. Andrew March has explored this dilemma from the point of view of liberal theory. He argues that a liberal theory of citizenship could articulate a conscientious objection to fighting a Muslim majority army on behalf of the Muslim citizen solider, without compromising that Muslim soldier's citizenship status and belonging in a liberal-democratic society.[50]

*The Bases of Political Interest – Religious and Secular Beliefs*

Several interviewees express a wish to "give back" to Canada through volunteerism. Their motivations have two sources: first, they feel very grateful for the opportunities present in Canada as compared to the corruption, poverty, lack of opportunities from their parents' country; and, second, from a sense of duty to contribute springing from their religion or their sense of citizenship, often articulated through the concepts of liberal-democratic theory. As Hebba puts it, "I grew up in Canada, so I consider Canada to be my home above any other place in the world, and that's my sincere opinion… I want to make sure that I stand out, not only as a Canadian but as a Muslim Canadian who can make a difference for Canadian society as a whole (NPE)."

Significantly, the most highly politically engaged (Aisha) is also the only interviewee who explains her involvement in formal politics from a directly religious perspective. "I think it's about learning from -- the Prophet (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*)…and trying to implement situations that are relatable to us today and his example " Her Islamic sense of duty regarding being politically involved has merged with a sense of citizenship "duty" that is found in liberal-democratic theory:

"I just want to say on the flip side that citizenship is not only enjoying your right, it's also about giving other people their -- their rights ….you sort of need to become a part to change."

Conventional wisdom in the security community is that religiosity, especially that connected to major Islamic grassroots organisations, such as ISNA/ICNA, MAC, Al Huda, is part of the conveyor belt to radicalization. [51] But Aisha and Aminah, who are active members of MAC and Al Huda respectively, and wear *hijab*/*niqab* respectively, challenge such assumptions. In line with other research conducted by Amaney Jamal, it appears that increased religiosity and active membership in traditional conservative Muslim groups often translates into high political and/or

civic engagement.  MAC, in particular, has stressed active citizenship as part of one's religious duty.[52]  It has a big presence in London, and as we can see from the high civic engagement from the youth there, its message resonates with many Canadian Muslim youth.

*Canadian Muslims as Citizens of Canada.*

So far we have been investigating the concepts of religious identity and its compatibility with the Canadian identity from the perspectives of our Muslim interviewees.  When we flip the perspectives around, and ask similar questions from the perspectives of wider Canadian society, we find a different story.  A recent *Environics* survey found that "...while Muslims see themselves as wanting to participate in and adapt to Canadian society...the population at large tends to doubt this willingness."[53]  Hamdani cites a 2004 Ipsos-Reid poll, which found that "30% of the respondents said that they would not vote for a political party led by a Muslim leader – the highest negative sentiment among several groups which included people of different genders, sexual orientation and ethnic backgrounds."[54]

Our interviewees are able to differentiate between an abstract notion of citizenship, ("What does citizenship mean to you?"), and the specific inflection of being Muslim during a time when the national citizenship narrative of Muslims is that of a "security risk."[55]  Even though our interviewees express their sense of Canadianness and *modus vivendi* with these different identities, they are well aware of how they are perceived through non-Muslim Canadian lenses.  All our interviewees feel that, some tolerant and educated Canadians notwithstanding, in general (mostly due to the media), Canadian non-Muslims do not understand Islam.   This affects their sense of belonging in a negative way, for it has given many of them a sense that while they themselves feel to be citizens, their citizenship is fragile and at risk. [56]  These themes emerge most strongly when discussing the Canadian justice system, and questions related to Canadian/Muslim citizenship.

Owing to their class status, most of our interviewees have had little contact with the police, other than being ticketed or present while a friend/parent was ticketed for speeding or not wearing a bike helmet.  Nevertheless, only a minority express unreserved faith in Canada's justice system, most of them from the group not interested in politics. Several interviewees articulate that although the system is generally just, they have seen others, or have personally experienced themselves what they perceive as unjust treatment. That unjust treatment is specified as wrongful arrests,[57] or being unable to afford a lawyer, and therefore unable to pursue justice.[58] Sumayyah (PE) lost faith after the problems with policing at the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto.

There are two specific events, whether from the politically engaged, sometimes politically engaged, or not politically engaged, that have led these youth to a "decline[…](Asiya, NPE)" in their faith in the Canadian justice system: (i) the Omar Khadr case; and (ii) the trial of the Toronto 18.  Qassim sums it up: "Oh yeah, Muslims get penalized more than I think they should.  Like the Omar, I don't know if you, I read up on it and I read that he was, you know, punished a bit more than he should have (NPE)." Or, in Aliya's words:

I do have faith in it but then there are some points where I just -- I remember one time I was reading on the Toronto 18 and everything that I felt about Canadian politics just plummeted like that was the worse point that I've ever been in as being a Canadian citizen and I don't know why I felt so hurt by it but I was really really hurt by what I was seeing what was happening to, like, guys who live within my neighborhood kind of thing, right…(Aliyah, SPE)

These feelings of betrayal, disappointment and the targeted policing of Muslims, cut across all groups in our study.[59] While no interviewee approves of the use of violence to make changes in political society (barring the few who said violence might be necessary in a war of liberation), and while none approves of, and several are explicitly critical of, the Toronto 18, a sense of common identity with these young people transcends those critiques.[60] These young Muslims are keenly aware, whether or not they actually follow politics, that post 9/11, "being Muslim" is an identity that has been singled out in mainstream discourse for disapproval.[61]

Two additional interesting findings emerge out of this question on the Canadian justice system that are relevant both to the question of faith in the justice system and ultimately to political engagement. They are nearly identical, but should be articulated separately in order to catch their nuance: First a surprising number of the London youth have not heard of the Toronto 18. By contrast, most of the GTA youth have heard of the Toronto 18,indeed, a few know personally one who had been arrested. Second, of the interviewees who mention the Toronto 18, quite a few make comments along the lines of "Oh yes, I have heard something about them." On being asked to comment on the Toronto 18, Umar (NPE) says "What is that?" and Hebba (NPE) asks "what do you mean by the Toronto 18?"

It is significant that many of these Muslim youth have not heard of the Toronto 18, or may only have heard of them in some kind of distant way. Not being on the radar means that the burning issues which are said to have motivated the Toronto 18 are not widespread amongst the youth, especially outside of Toronto. There is clearly no network or even the existence of basic channels of communication regarding these incidents. This calls into question the government's "Muslim youth as radicalized" approach to counter-terrorism, because that approach assumes guilt before innocence, whereas our interviewees have little idea of the issues involved. If it is said that we interviewed only twenty youth for this article, given how involved they are in their communities, it would be a very odd bubble indeed for most Muslim youth around them to be radicalizing and them not to know of it or notice it. It is more likely the other way around – that the few youth that come under the security apparatus' radar are isolated and in bubbles, disconnected from their communities. This is a crucial point in addressing counter-terrorism.

The *Demos* report found that outreach work by the RCMP was often focused on the Muslim community as suspects or requests that Muslims spy on fellow Muslims.[62] Nader's story is consistent with this finding. The RCMP visited the MSA at his university in London,

ostensibly doing "outreach" and "prevention" work. However, Nader feels insulted and alienated by this visit:

> We like – I was in the MSA Executive, my second year, and I remember the police coming to speak – speak to us saying that, I think this is like during the Toronto 18 thing…And they were like, hey, listen… I am constable so and so, you know, if you ever want to talk to us about any terrorists within your like, I mean coming to a bunch of students, okay, who truly, I mean all the MSA does is feed people…That's our – that's our mandate, give people a place to pray and feed them…That's it. There is no grand scheme here. That's it (SPE).

Nader believes the media "lied" a lot, and that the youth were, most likely, "entrapped" by a CSIS mole. The police visit made him question his Canadian citizenship, and suddenly feel vulnerable in Canada.

> I feel like that Toronto 18 scenario or event, whatever you call it, those are citizens and their lives were – were revoked, suspended, destroyed or whatever….And that could easily happen to me. So it makes me wary of being a Canadian citizen. It makes me doubt the validity of that institution (SPE).[63]

But, as Sirin and Fine learned in their study, the experiences of US Muslim youth are diverse and complex.[64] Marginalisation, alienation and exclusionary institutional policies are not a singular erasing experience. Aminah also relates being questioned by the RCMP because she attended a summer camp in 2008 which the December 24 bomber had also attended.[65] However, she is one of the three most politically engaged interviewees, so this visit has not alienated her. Suheil recounts having been wrongfully arrested, but was treated respectfully by the police and "saved" by a judge, restoring his faith in the Canadian justice system. Nevertheless, more than half our interviewees question whether or not Muslims enjoy full and equal rights of citizenship in Canada. As Sumayyah puts it:

> Again, with – with things like, you know, security certificates, detentions, you know interrogation, questioning at airports, this government hasn't made things any easier. Foreign policy is having a huge effect on domestic issues…
> I too have my names on petitions. I too have made charitable donations to certain causes. …I have also travelled to territories in the Middle East.
> I mean, where do you really – where do you draw the line? How do I know that – that I am safe doing those things and I should be because I have a right to and there's nothing wrong, and I've never harmed anybody. But that scared a lot of people...and now there is a culture of fear. And it's subtle but it's

there. And it dictates how I behave and I don't like it. I feel really restricted. That's not why I came to Canada. So it angers me to feel this way (PE).

It is notable, however, that in spite of Islamophobia, and the sense of being pushed out from the Canadian polity, our interviewees are able to transcend and forgive these incidents, and still exhibit a strong willingness to engage with the Canadian polity. A smaller example of such openness comes through the interviews from the young men, many of whom mention being teased about being a "terrorist," being called "Osama", for instance. However, they seem to take it in stride and report, without being able to give an example, they would tease back about that person's heritage. Sirin and Fine's view of their interviewees applies equally to ours: "[their] experiences are…not simply about alienation and struggle but also about their engagement with mainstream U.S. culture. Contrary to what many have predicted, Muslims in this country have not 'given up' their American identity for the sake of their Muslim identity…"[66]

## Conclusion

The *Demos* Report opens with the following unqualified and unsubstantiated claim: "The path that some individuals take to a point at which they may be willing to kill others and themselves in the name of Islam is today's most pressing security concern."[67] While any act of terrorism must be of concern to each of us, and is certainly of deep concern to our interviewees, the data demonstrate that in the post-9/11 United States, of the 139 reported terrorist plots recorded by official sources, 93 of them (67 percent) originated from non-Muslim sources,[68] many of them white supremacists or radical anti-government elements. The persistent claims that terrorism is largely conducted in the name of Islam are not only misleading and racist, but crowd out the countervailing message of our interviewees that they want to contribute positively to the development of our political society.

The more politically engaged of our interviewees underline this very point. Aliya says: "…right now there is too much dialogue on terrorism and war and militancy kind of thing, so they [non-Muslims in Canada] would think of political Islam rather than spiritual Islam (SPE)." Hebba introduces the political concept of "holistic indigenousness" to underscore a very similar contention: "until we are holistically indigenous here in Canada like other minorities – visible minorities – that's when…you'll see a lot who are engaged in mainstream Canadian politics (NPE)." To become holistically engaged, there needs to be a range of processes that reduce the propensity for the Muslim to be "othered."

While the radicalisation agenda driven by governments and the security apparatus focus on certain groups deemed by them to hold problematic views, those of our interviewees who belonged to such groups (Al Huda, MAC), were amongst the most highly engaged and positive in their attitudes towards holding Canadian citizenship. Again, this is a research finding of importance. Deep piety, such as wearing a face veil, is not connected to disengagement from Canadian society, in fact, quite the contrary. Some of the least vigilant in their daily prayers are

also the least interested in politics. If associations are actively seeking to develop deep piety in their adherents as well as positive and deeply engaged citizens, these groups should not be targeted by the security forces. As was the case with the RCMP visit to Nader, which affected him negatively and rocked his sense of belonging in Canada, if such groups feel their efforts stymied, ignored, or unappreciated by the policy and security community, this is a cause for concern. Research on Islamic political activism in Muslim-majority countries has found that exclusion from the political realm encourages a turn to violence as the only way to achieve a goal.[69] Open and inclusive systems are better buttresses than closed and exclusionary systems against radicalisation leading to violence.[70]

The twenty Muslim youths interviewed for this report have been able to transcend feelings of being negatively perceived by others. They have all arrived mostly at positions of deep affection and attachment to Canada, if a fragile sense of being welcomed and included, and this is in spite of an overriding sense that they and their faith are misunderstood by the wider Canadian society and having experienced some societal or institutional Islamophobia. It is commendable how most of them have been able to separate a sense of being misunderstood from their own sense of identity and commitment to Canada. This is extremely significant, especially for a long term goal of social and political integration of Muslims into Canada. It is also an engagement that ought to be capitalised on by policy-makers and the intellectual elite, not frittered away by alienation and targeting the youth as sources of radicalisation.

## Appendix One

Grid of interviewees identified by initial descriptor, displaying quantifiable data on political participation, socio-demographic and other characteristics.

| ID | M/F | Age | Ethnicity | YIC | IS | PS | HS | Level of Education | Occ/*Field* | Level of Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Qais** | M | 21 | Indian | 5 | N | Y | N | College | Teacher | NPE |
| **Aisha** | F | 23 | Syrian | 23 | | Y | | BA | *Political Science* | PE |
| **Asiya** | F | 21 | Pakistani/Canadian | 16 | N | Y | N | Uni 3 | *Business* | NPE |
| **Farouq** | M | 19 | Quebec/Sudani | 19 | Y | Y | Y | Uni 1 | *Computer Engineer* | NPE |
| **Qassim** | M | 21 | Indian | 18 | N | Y | N | | *Student* | NPE |
| **Dawud** | M | 15 | Algerian | 15 | N | Y | N | Gr.10 | | NPE |
| **Maymuna** | F | 17 | Syria/British | 14 | Y | Y | N | Gr.12 | *Psychology* | NPE |
| **Aliya** | F | 20 | Indian | 20 | Y | Y | N | Uni 1 | *Political Science* | SPE |
| **Luqman** | M | 17 | Guyana/Egypt | 17 | Y | Y | N | Gr.12 | Part-time Lifeguard | SPE |
| **Aminah** | F | 19 | Pakistani | 8 | N | Y | Y | Uni | *Poli Sci/History* | PE |

| Umar | M | 20 | Iraqi | 7 | Y | Y | N | Uni | | NPE |
|------|---|-----|-------|---|---|---|---|-----|--|-----|
| Irfan | M | 20 | South Asian | 20 | N | Y | N | Uni | *Business* | SPE |
| Huda | F | 20 | Egyptian/Canadian | 16 | Y | N | Y | Uni | *Biomedical* | SPE |
| Habib | M | 18 | South Asian | 11 | N | Y | N | Gr.12 | *Engineering* | SPE |
| Fatima | F | 20 | Lebanese/Canadian | 20 | Y | Y | N | Gr.12 | *Family Studies* | SPE |
| Rabia | F | 21 | Pakistani | 11 | N | Y | N | Gr.12 | *Finance* | NPE |
| Hebba | F | 23 | Palestinian | 17 | N | Y | N | BA | Settlement Worker | NPE |
| Sumayyah | F | 24 | Palestinian | 8.5 | N | Y | N | BA | Settlement Worker | PE |
| Nader | M | 22 | Pakistani | 22 | Y | Y | N | HBA | *Business* | SPE |
| Suheil | M | 21 | Middle East | 9.5 | N | Y | N | Uni 3 | *Finance* | SPE |

**Key: M/F** = Male or Female; **YIC** = Years in Canada; **IS** = Attended Islamic School; **PS** = Attended Public School; HS= Home Schooled; **Level of Education** = Highest level of education attained by the interviewee; **Occ/*Field*** = Occupation for interviewees who are in the workforce or (in italics) field of study for those interviewees who are students; **Level of Engagement** = **PE** = Politically Engaged; **SPE** = Sometimes Politically Engaged; **NPE** = Not Politically Engaged.

## Appendix Two

Political activities taken part in during the past 24 months.

| ID | V | H P | MP P | P M | R M | C T | P O | P R | P D | F A | S P | W B | W L | I P | A T |
|----|---|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Qais | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aisha | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| Asiya | X | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Farouq | X | | | X | | | | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Qassim | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | X | |
| Dawud | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maymuna | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| Aliya | X | | | X | X | X | | X | | | X | | | X | X |
| Luqman | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | V | HP | MPP | PM | RM | CT | PO | PR | FA | SP | WB | WL | IP | AT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aminah** | X | | | | | | X | | X | X | X | | X | |
| **Umar** | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Irfan** | X | | X | | | | X | X | X | | X | | X | X |
| **Huda** | | | | | | | | X | | X | X | | | |
| **Habib** | | | | | | | | | | X | X | | X | X |
| **Fatima** | | | | | | | | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| **Rabia** | | | | | | | | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| **Hebba** | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| **Sumayyah** | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **Nader** | X | | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| **Suheil** | | | X | | | | X | | | | X | | X | X |

**Key: Political activities taken part in during the past 24 months**

V = Voting; HP = Holding public office or a formal position in a political party or interest group; MPP = Being a member of a political party or interest group; PM = Attending a political meeting or a public meeting; RM = Giving or helping to raise money for a candidate, party, or political cause; CT = Contributing time to a political campaign; PO = Contacting a public official or political leader; PR = Attending a demonstration or a protest rally; PD = Participating in a political discussion on line; FA = Joining a Facebook political or protest group; SP = Signing a petition on paper or on line; WB = Wearing a button or putting a sticker on a personal item; WL = Writing a letter to an editor or writing an opinion piece for a newspaper or a blog; IP = Initiating a political discussion in person; AT = Attempting to talk another person into voting a certain way.

NOTES

[1] Milton J. Valencia and Martin Finucane, "Tarek Mehanna, homegrown terrorist from Boston area who promoted Al Qaeda on Internet, sentenced to 17 1/2 years," *The Boston Globe*, 12 April, 2012, http://www.boston.com/metrodesk/2012/04/federal-judge-prepares-sentence-sudbury-man-convicted-supporting-qaeda/JkENQGZ2NGWovs5BakVzhP/index.html

[2] Steven Chase, "Spin war erupts over Omar Khadr's return to Canada," *The Globe and Mail*, 19 April, 2012, http://m.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/spin-war-erupts-over-omar-khadrs-return-to-canada/article2407134/?service=mobile

[3] Mark Steyn, "The future belongs to Islam," *Macleans*, 20 Oct, 2006, http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20061023_134898_134898

[4] Raveena Aulakh, "Desperate Times in the Diaspora; Somali Canadians Grapple with Terrorism's Appeal to their Youth," *Toronto Star*, 9 April, 2011, p. GT.1; Stewart Bell, "Volunteer Work Seen As Answer To Jihad; 'Different Pathway'; Programs Urged for Muslim Youth at Risk of Radicalization," *National Post*, 8 Dec, 2010, p. A.1; Isabel Teotonio, "Youth 'brainwashed', Report says; Extremist views of Islam on the Rise in Toronto, According to Young Muslim Men," *Toronto Star,* 8 Dec, 2010, p. A.4; Ali Zafar, "Muslim Youth Helpline Launched; Counsellors all First-Generation Muslim Canadian," *National Post*, 6 Mar, 2008, p. A.11.

[5] There is an extensive literature examining media representations of Muslims which demonstrates largely negative stereotypes predominate. See for example, Katherine Bullock and Gul J. Jafri *"Media (Mis)Representations: Muslim Women in the Canadian Nation,"* Canadian Woman Studies, vol 20, No 2, Summer 2000, pp. 35-40; Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Discourses Of Domination: Racial Bias In The Canadian English-Language Press*, Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 2002; Karim H Karim, *Islamic Peril: Media and Global Violence*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2003; Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "Canadian Muslims: Political Discourses in Tension." *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 20, No 1, 2007, pp. 1-24; Elisabeth Poole *Reporting Islam: Media Representations and British Muslims*, London: IB Tauris, 2002; Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

[6] Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed*, June 2009, http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/nsci-ecrsn/radical-eng.htm

[7] Andrew Ellis, "The Role of Muslims in Enhancing Canada's Security," The World Islamic People's Leadership and Taric Islamic Centre Symposium, *Muslims - A Minority in the Canadian Mosaic*, Renaissance Hotel, Toronto, July 22, 2007.

[8] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell, and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence: A Radical Approach to Extremism.* London, UK: Demos, 2010, p. 42, http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Edge_of_Violence_-_full_-_web.pdf?1291806916

[9] For Muslims in general in studies that do not control for age, see Hamdani's survey of Canadian Muslims and political participation based on data from 200, which found that Muslims voted less than Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian faith groups. (Daood Hamdani, *Engaging Muslim Women: Issues and Needs*, Toronto: Canadian Council of Muslim Women. 2006, pp. 15-16, http://scholar.google.ca/scholar?q=hamdani+faith+participation+canada+politics&hl=en&as_sdt =0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart. Hamdani, Bhatti, and Munawar discuss the role the IHYA Foundation played in the 2004 election (Hussein A Hamdani, Kamran Bhatti, and Nabila Munawar, "Muslim Political Participation in Canada: From Marginalization to Empowerment," *Canadian Issues: Newcomers, Minorities and Political Participation in Canada*, Summer: 2005, pp.27-30) , while Bullock focuses on Muslim women and formal politics and informal activism respectively (Katherine Bullock, "Women, Gender and Political Participation and Political Parties: Canada," in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, general editor, Suad Joseph, Leiden: Brill, 2004). Environics conducted a landmark survey of Canadian Muslims in 2007, which yielded important data about Muslim perceptions on racism and integration in Canada, (Michael Adams, *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism,* Toronto: Viking, 2007) however, no questions about civic or political participation were explicitly asked. Paul Nesbitt-Larking and Catarina Kinnvall have studied the political psychology of Muslims in Canada, Denmark, France, Sweden, The Netherlands, and The United

Kingdom, (Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "The Political Psychology of (De)securitization: Place-making Strategies in Denmark, Sweden, and Canada," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol 28, no 6, 2010, pp. 1051-1070; Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, *The Political Psychology of Globalization: Muslims in the West*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).  Research is also sparse on political participation of other minority groups in Canada.  Abu-Laban's work focuses on the broader questions of belonging, rather than civic/political participation (Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "Challenging the Gendered Vertical Mosaic: Immigrants, Ethnic minorities, Gender and Political Participation," in *Citizen Politics: Research and Theory in Canadian Political Behaviour*, edited by J. Everitt and B O'Neill, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002).   Ginieniewicz and Schugurensky have examined the political participation of Latin Americans in Canada (Jorge Ginieniewicz, and Daniel Schugurensky, (eds), *Ruptures, Continuities and Re-learning: The Political Participation of Latin Americans in Canada*, Transformative Learning Centre, OISE, 2nd ed, 2007). For the perceptions of political participation among Aboriginal youth, see Taiaiake Alfred, Brock Pitawanakwat, and Jackie Price, *The Meaning of Political Participation for Indigenous Youth: Charting the Course for Youth Civic and Political Participation*, Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks report, June 2007, http://www.cprn.org/documents/48503_EN.pdf.  There is also very little scholarship on Muslims and political participation in other countries.  See Mumtaz Ahmad, "Political Participation of US Muslims," Fulbright Symposium, *Muslim Citizens in the West: Promoting Social Inclusion*, the Centre for Muslim States and Societies, University of Western Australia, 2007; Anna Boucher, "The Political Participation of Berlin's Turkish Migrants in the Dual Citizenship and Headscarf Debates: A Multilevel Comparison," in *Migration and Activism in Europe Since 1945*, edited by Wendy Pojmann, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Amaney Jamal, "The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans: Mosque Involvement and Group Consciousness," *American Politics Research,* Vol 33, no 4, 2005, pp. 521-44; W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld (eds.), *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in non-Muslim States*, Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Phaos, 1996.

[10]  Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha,"Social Citizenship Rights of Canadian Muslim Youth: Youth Resiliencies and the Claims for Social Inclusion," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol 31, nos 1-2, Winter-Spring 2009, pp.121 – 140; Jasmin Zine, "Safe Havens or Religious 'Ghettos'? Narratives of Islamic Schooling in Canada," *Race Ethnicity and Education*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 2007, pp 71-92.

[11] The research was conducted for *The Tessellate Institute* and funded by the *Olive Tree Foundation*.

[12] David Silverman, *Qualitative Method and Sociology*, Aldershot: Gower, 1985, p.176

[13] Corinne Squire, Molly Andrews, and Maria Tamboukou, "What is Narrative Research?"  In *Doing Narrative Research,* edited by M. Andrews, C. Squire, and M. Tamboukou, Los Angeles: Sage, 2008, pp. 1-21; Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*, London: Sage, 1987, p. 165; Ann Oakley, *Telling the Truth About Jerusalem*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, p.240.

[14] Margaret Adsett, "Change in Political Era and Demographic Weight as Explanations of Youth 'Disenfranchisement' in Federal Elections in Canada, 1965-2000," *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 6, no 3, 2003, pp. 247-264.

[15]  Heather Bastedo, Nicole Goodman, Lawrence LeDuc, and Jon H Pammett,"Facebooking' Young Voters in 2008 Federal Election Campaign: Perceptions of Citizenship and Participation,"

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Carleton University, May 27, 2009.

[16] Ottilia Chareka, and Alan Sears, "Civic Duty: Young People's Conceptions of Voting as a Means of Political Participation," *Canadian Journal of Education,* Vol 29, no 2, 2006, pp.521-540.

[17] Madeleine Gauthier, "The Inadequacy of Concepts: The Rise of Youth Interest in Civic Participation," *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 6, no 3, 2003, pp. 265-276.

[18] Brenda O'Neill, *Indifferent or Just Different? The Political and Civic Engagement of Young People in Canada: Charting the Course for Youth Democratic and Political Participation,* Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks report, June 2007, http://www.cprn.org/documents/48504_EN.pdf.

[19] Dietlind Stolle and Cesi Cruz, "Youth Civic Engagement in Canada: Implications for Public Policy," In *Government of Canada, Policy Research Initiative Social Capital in Action*, Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2005 pp.82-114.

[20] Gauthier, "The Inadequacy of Concepts," *op.cit*, p. 266.

[21] Adsett, "Change in Political Era and Demographic Weight," *op.cit*, p.251.

[22] André Barnes, "Youth Voter Turnout in Canada: 1. Trends and Issues," *Ottawa: Legal and Legislative Affairs Division. Parliamentary Information and Research Service. Publication No. 2010-19-E*, 7 April 2010, http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/2010-19-e.pdf, p. 5.

[23] Stolle and Cruz, "Youth Civic Engagement in Canada," *op.cit*, p. 84.

[24] When it comes to their conventional political knowledge, each of them knows the name of the Prime Minister and all but three know that the Liberal Party is the Official Opposition. (The interviews were conducted before the Federal Election in 2011 which brought the NDP to Official Opposition status.) However, only six of them know the name of the Minister of Finance.

[25] Jamal, "The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans," *op.cit.*

[26] See our report for the Tessellate Institute "Canadian Muslim Youth and Political Participation: A Willingness to Engage," which is a longer study as well as an early draft of this paper. http://www.tessellateinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Canadian-Muslim-Youth-and-Political-Participation-A-Willingness-to-Engage.June-2011.pdf

[27] Chareka and Sears, "Civic Duty," *op.cit., p.* 530.

[28] Bastedo, Goodman, LeDuc and Pammett, Young Voters," *op.cit.*, p.31.

[29] O'Neill, *Indifferent or Just Different? op.cit.*

[30] Stolle and Cruz, "Youth Civic Engagement in Canada," *op.cit.*, p.85

[31] Adsett, "Change in Political Era and Demographic Weight," *op.cit*, p.253.

[32] O'Neill, *Indifferent or Just Different? op.cit.*, p.11.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[34] Hamdani, *Engaging Muslim Women, op.cit.*, p. 18.

[35] O'Neill, *Indifferent or Just Different? op.cit.*, p.17.

[36] Abu-Laban, "Challenging the Gendered Vertical Mosaic," *op.cit.*; Bullock, "Women, Gender and Political Participation," *op.cit.*; Katherine Bullock, "Toward A Framework For Investigating Muslim Women And Activism In Canada," in *Islam in the Hinterlands: A Canadian Muslim Studies Anthology*, edited by Jasmin Zine, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012; Hamdani, Bhatti, and

Munawar, "Muslim Political Participation in Canada," *op.cit*.; Ahmad, "Political Participation of US Muslims," *op.cit.*

[37] Gauthier, "The Inadequacy of Concepts," *op.cit*, p. 274.

[38] Abu-Laban, "Challenging the Gendered Vertical Mosaic," *op.cit* p. 279.

[39] Livianna S. Tossuti, "Does Voluntarism Encourage Young Newcomers to Participate in Politics?: An Assessment of Individual and Group-Based Forms of Unpaid Service," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol 35, no 3, pp.1-15.

[40] In the US, Jamal found that mosque involvement led to higher civic engagement and political participation for Arab American Muslims, though not for African American or Asian American Muslims, and to higher rates of civic engagement only for Asian American Muslims. Jamal, "The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans," *op.cit.*, p.535.

[41] Moosa-Mitha,"Social Citizenship Rights of Canadian Muslim Youth,"*op.cit*, pp.131, 133-4.

[42] W. Lance Bennett, "Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age," in *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth*, edited by W. Lance Bennett, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008, p.4.

[43] *Ibid.*, p.14.

[44] Adams, *Unlikely Utopia*, *op.cit.;* Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, "The Political Psychology of (De)securitization," *op.cit;* Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, *op.cit.*; Will Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998; Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010; Phil Triadafilopoulos, "A Model for Europe? An appraisal of Canadian Integration Policies," in *Politische Steuerung von Integrationsprozesessen: Inetnionen und Wirkungen*, edited by K. Schönwälder, S. Baringhorst and U. Hunger, Wiesbaden: Verlag fur Sozialwissenschaften, 2006; Jennifer Welsh, *At Home in the World: Canada's Global Vision for the 21st Century,* Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004.

[45] Frances Abele and Daiva Stasiulis, "Canada as a "White Settler Colony": What About Natives and Immigrants?" in *The New Canadian Political Economy*, edited by W. Clement and G. Williams, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, pp. 240-277.

[46] Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, "The Political Psychology of (De)securitization," *op.cit;* Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, *op.cit.*; Nesbitt-Larking, "Canadian Muslims," *op.cit.*, Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "Dissolving the Diaspora: Dialogical Practice in the Development of Deep Multiculturalism," *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology,* vol 18, 2008, pp. 351-362; Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "Terrible Beauty: Globalization, Consciousness, and Ethics," in *On Behalf of Others: The Psychology of Care in a Global World*, edited by S. Scuzzarello, C. Kinnvall and Kristen R. Monroe, New York: Oxford University Press,2009, pp.15-34; Sherene H Razack, *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008; Jasmin Zine, "Unsettling the Nation: Gender, Race and Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism,* Vol. 9, No. 1, 2009, pp. 146-163.

[47] Nesbitt-Larking, "Canadian Muslims," *op.cit*; Razack, *Casting Out*, *op.cit.*

[48] Selcuk R Sirin, and Michelle Fine, *Muslim American Youth: Understanding Hyphenated Identities through Multiple Methods*, New York: New York University Press, 2008; Sunaina Marr Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2009; Moosa-Mitha, "Social Citizenship Rights," *op.cit.*

[49] Aisha had had a similar struggle with wearing hijab, based on a sense that it prompted others to put her in a box.  She took it off for six months, and then put it back on, with a sense of being ready to handle the reactions.  She had made a "conscious decision to -- to identify myself as a Muslim and to be part of that and to do everything that I can to represent myself and hopefully my community in -- in a positive…[way] (PE)."

[50] Andrew F. March, *Islamic and Liberal Citizenship: The Search for an Overlapping Consensus*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[51] Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Radicalistion, op.cit*; Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, *Edge of Violence*, *op. cit.*

[52] http://www.macnet.ca/about/

[53] Adams, *Unlikely Utopia*,  *op.cit*, p. 94.

[54] Hamdani, *Engaging Muslim Women*, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

[55] Moosa-Mitha, "Social Citizenship Rights," *op.cit.,* pp. 131, 133-4.

[56] Maymuna argued Muslims should join non-Muslim political parties, rather than establishing their own "because -- I mean, no one is going to vote for a Muslim party except Muslims but that's I mean, I don't think that would really work out just because there's not enough Muslims for that and it would really terrify people.  But if you have, like a Muslim presence in a certain party, then I guess it would make Muslim, like the Muslims can just vote for that, right, if they know that there is like a Muslim influence in there" (NPE).

[57] Suheil had been wrongfully arrested (most likely racially profiled), but because a judge dismissed his case, his faith in the Canadian justice system was restored, even though he thinks others are not always treated as fairly.  He was able to remain positive, augmented by his feeling that he had been treated respectfully by the police during the whole process.

[58] Nader (SPE) argued "…the Canadian justice system is set up in such a way that it – it aids and abets white-collar criminals …we left Pakistan as we felt that you know people are too easily bribed.  It's no different in Canada. It's just harder to do. It just costs more. It's not open."

[59] This is especially notable in the frequent mention of Omar Khadr, since his situation is actually a question of politics in Canada, not the justice system.  Khadr is, in fact, being treated under the US justice system, and the Canadian courts ordered the Canadian government to bring Khadr back to Canada, a directive that the government ignored.  This bespeaks of a disconnect between Canadian Muslims and their government.

[60] Several of them had conflicting feelings and, it is arguable that this was due to a narrative in the Muslim community that the Toronto 18 were set up by CSIS and entrapped by the placement of two "moles," in order to demonstrate that the Canadian government is "tough on terrorism."

[61] Nesbitt-Larking, "Canadian Muslims," *op.cit*.  The situation for Muslim youth in the US is similar, possibly worse, given the US mass round-ups and deportation of hundreds of Muslims post 9/11. Sirin and Fine, *Muslim American Youth, op.cit*; Maira, *Missing, op.cit*.

[62] Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, *Edge of Violence*, *op. cit.*

[63] Nader had even been unsure of our research out of a similar fear, and called a trusted friend for a reference check on the interviewer.  Two other negative experiences have contributed to his fears, first, at the time of the interview his family was in court for having been swindled, a process that convinced him that corruption was present in Canada, just like back home in Pakistan; and second, his father's business had donated over $10 000 in charity to a Palestinian organisation, which had led to annual CRA audits, on suspicion of donating to terrorism.  After thirty years in Canada his father now thinks in spite of legal citizenship, "he's a visitor here and he's not welcome, and at any moment they can kick him out."

[64] Sirin and Fine, *Muslim American Youth, op.cit*

[65] She was also hesitant to relate this story until confidentiality was assured.

[66] Sirin and Fine, *Muslim American Youth, op.cit.,* p.2.

[67] Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, *Edge of Violence*, *op. cit.,* p. 7.

[68] Alejandro, J Beutel, *Policy Report: Data on Post 9/11 Terrorism in the United States*, Washington DC: Muslim Public Affairs Council, http://www.mpac.org/publications/policy-papers/post-911-terrorism-database.php, 2011, p.2.

[69] Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, *op.cit.*

[70] Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers,2003.