

CANADIAN MUSLIM YOUTH AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

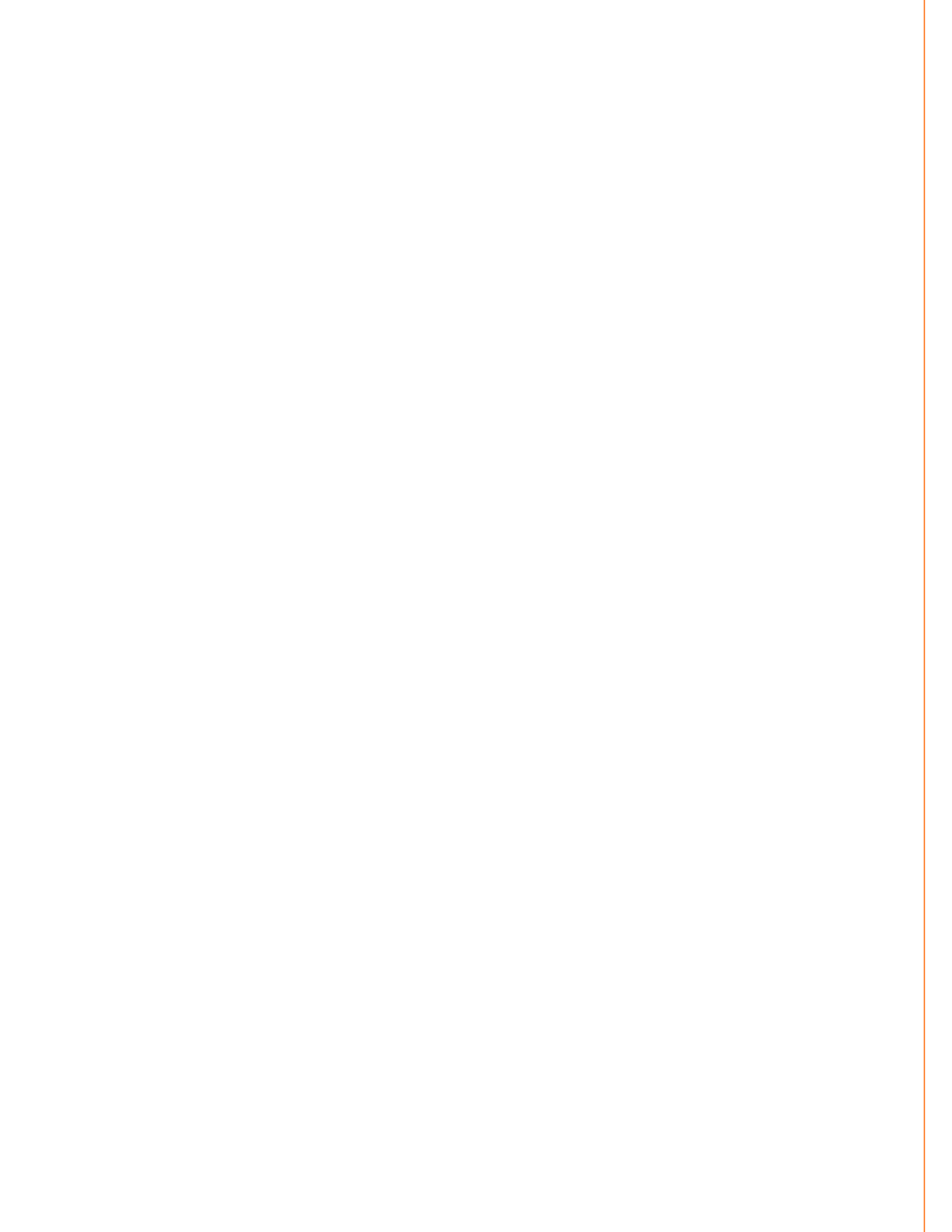
A Willingness to Engage

A policy report advocating recognition of the positive contribution Muslim youth make to Canadian civil society.

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June 26, 2011







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This policy report forms part of our larger study of Muslim civic and political engagement. The analyses and perspectives contained in this report are solely those of the authors.

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We thank the young women and men who freely gave their time to share their experiences and wisdom. They truly were our teachers and we were struck by their thoughtfulness and positive sense of engagement with their social and political worlds.

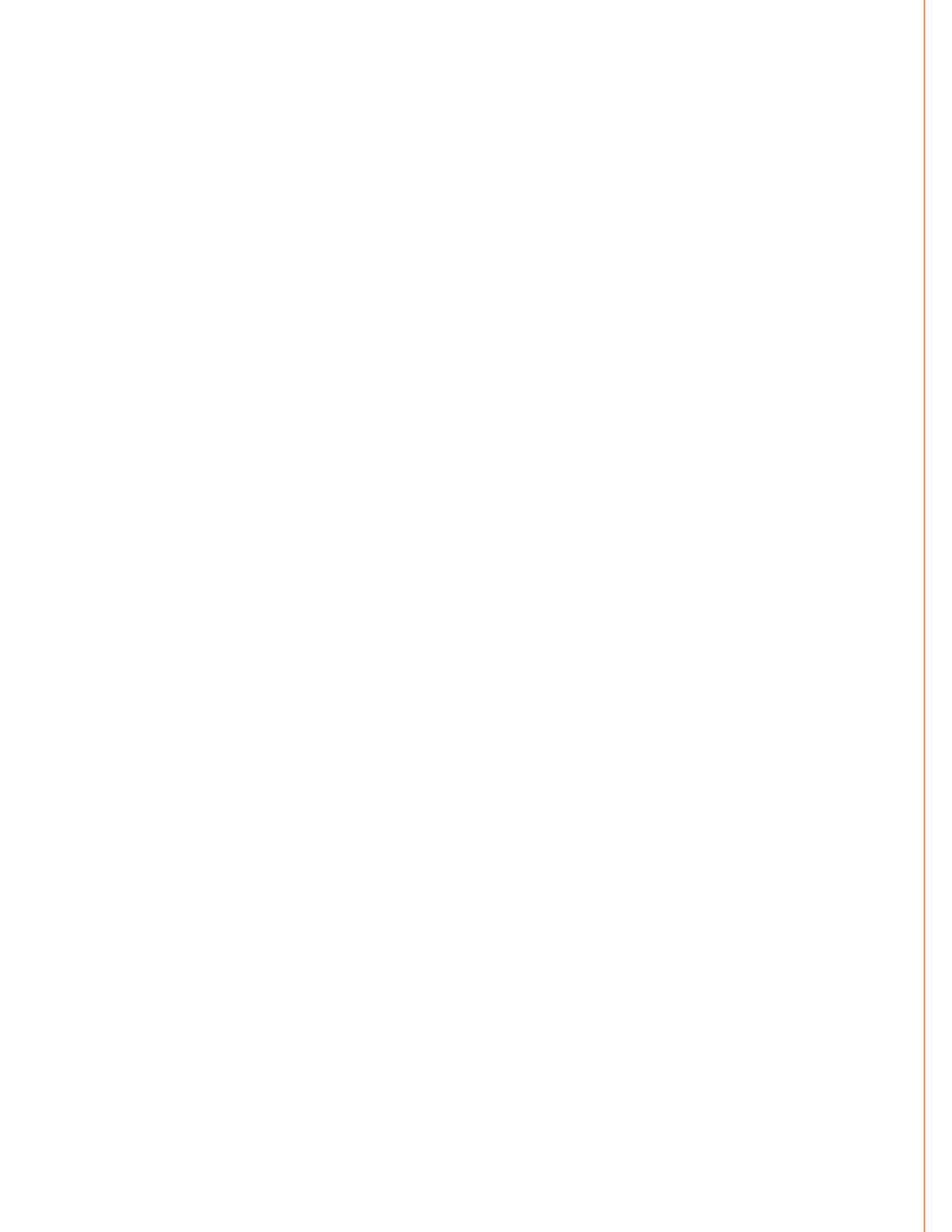
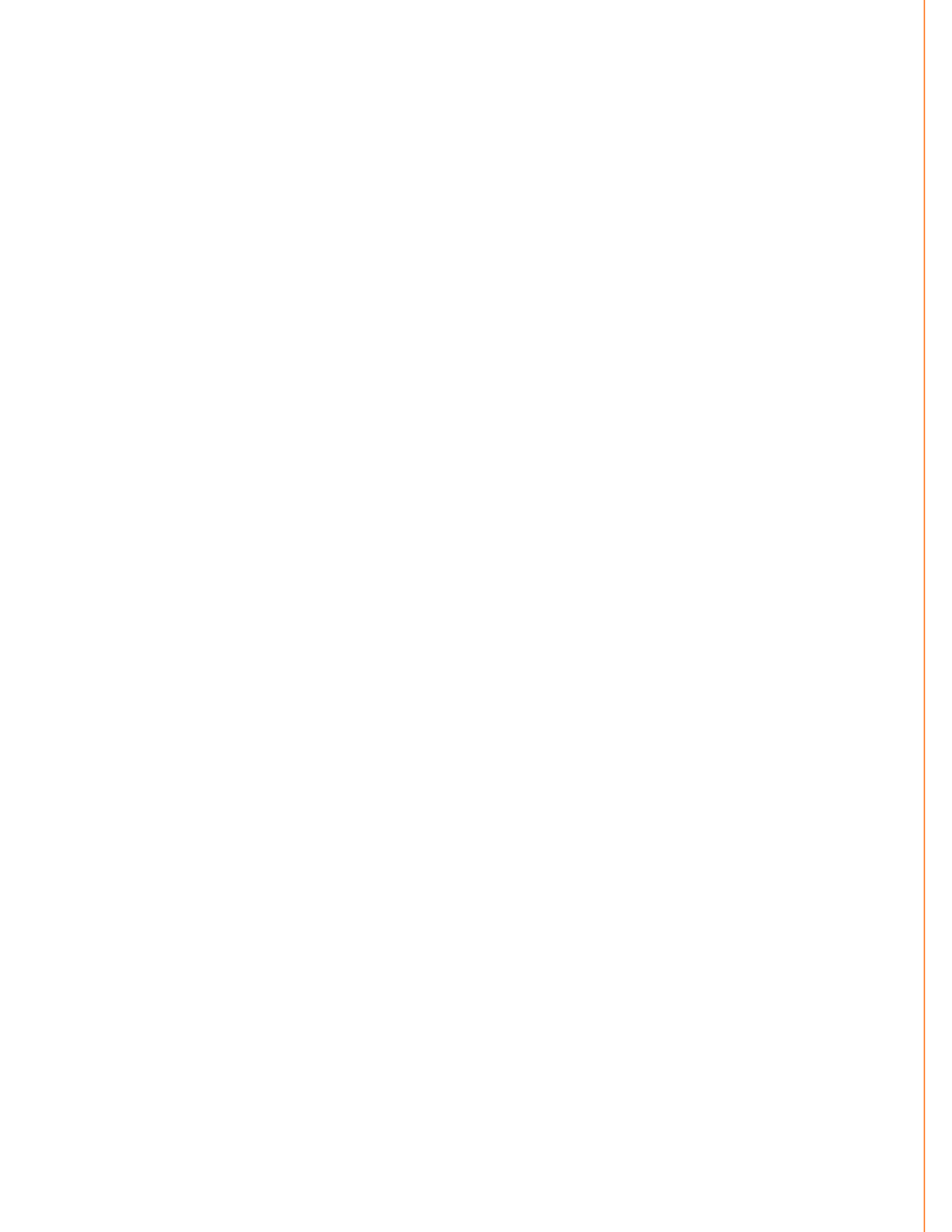


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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadian Muslim Youth and Political Participation: A Willingness to Engage is based upon a series of encounters between the researchers and twenty young Muslims in two Ontario communities: London and the Greater Toronto Area (mostly Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville). The twenty interviews were conducted in late 2010 and early 2011. Each interview was transcribed and the transcripts total 413 pages in length. The theoretical and methodological bases for the report combined studies in youth political participation in Western societies with techniques of semi-structured interviewing.

On the basis of our findings, we were able to classify our interviewees into three broad groups: those not politically engaged in formal politics (NPE), those sometimes politically engaged (SPE), and those politically engaged (PE). Our findings uncovered a generalized willingness to engage in the Canadian political society and voluntary sector. Like Canadian youth in general, most of our interviewees were not particularly interested or involved in politics, and very few were active in formal and/or informal politics. Those that were attentive to politics raised a range of general broad-based critiques of democracy in Canada that included calls for less partisanship, electoral reform and Senate reform. Our interviewees were highly involved in the voluntary sector, devoting considerable time and energy to charitable pursuits. With some misgivings, grounded in experiences of discrimination and anti-Muslim racism, they expressed relative satisfaction with policing. However, they raised serious concerns regarding the Canadian justice system and an associated degree of insecurity in their human rights and legal rights of citizenship. A majority of the interviewees felt politically satisfied with the workings of Canadian democracy and their capabilities as political agents and active citizens. Yet, some expressed reservations concerning their capacity as a group to make a difference in Canadian political life. The interviewees exhibited a minimal amount of the political extremism often attributed to them. There was no radical or extremist discourse and little interest in politics pertaining to the home countries of their parents. Religion was an important element in the lives of the interviewees. Religious belief and observance acted as a source of encouragement to political and civic activism. With some minor exceptions, most interviewees regarded Canadian and Islamic values to be very close. Despite the perception that non-Muslims and the media had little understanding of Islam, the interviewees exhibited a willingness to engage in the broader political society and political processes. Our core recommendations urge government and community leaders, politicians, parties, interest groups, educators, the media, and citizens in general to refocus attention away from discourses of anti-terrorism and community division toward the great potential of political, civic, and voluntary engagement among Muslim youth. Rather than problematizing religious identity, we should celebrate its contributions to encouraging individuals to promote the effective functioning of the good society. We need to generate and encourage more positive reports of the extensive good will and climate of engagement that exists among Muslim youth, and encourage them to take next steps. Young Muslims

are inspired to engage in dialogue and work with other Canadians in making Canadian society a better place for all. Future training and education of key front-line community workers, police, judges, educators, and the media ought to be informed by these findings.

2. INTRODUCTION

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. (Adams, 2007; Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2010, 2011; Kymlicka, 1998; Ryan, 2010; Triadafilopoulos, 2006; Welsh, 2004)

Despite this, Canada's history as a white-settler colony (Abele and Stasiulis, 1989), 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. (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2010, 2011; Nesbitt-Larking, 2007, 2008, 2009; Razack, 2008) Generalized anti-terrorism discourses have conditioned fear, retreat, and essentialism on the part of at least some Canadians. 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. (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007; Razack, 2008.)

Canadian Muslim Youth and Political Participation: A Willingness to Engage was conceived in response to a public lecture by CSIS Director General for Toronto, Andrew Ellis, who 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." (Ellis, 2007). The widespread absence of Muslim youth from the political process could be both a cause of, and a consequence of, a more generalized alienation from society, and so we decided to investigate.

Both the approach of Andrew Ellis and the findings of certain studies of Muslim youth, such as the Demos study (Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, 2010; see also Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009) frame the principal challenges facing Muslim youth as those of vulnerability to radical and extremist "Islamist" organizations and movements. Such views echo as the predominant media narrative of the "alienated Muslim youth gravitating to anti-Western Islamist groups." In this regard, no matter how well-intentioned, such reports and media narratives contribute to discourses of anti-terrorism that we believe further alienate and divide communities, and as such, are counter-productive to the building of good community relations. In our research, we focused on another set of questions, grounded in a more positive and pluralistic politics of care, respect, and engagement. To what extent did the young Muslim women and men with whom we spoke already engage in political activity and how far did 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.

Although we began the project with no preconceptions regarding the nature of our interview data, we regarded ethno-religious particularism, isolation, and

fragmentation, along with anti-Muslim racism and exclusion, as serious challenges to the health of Canada's political society. While neither we nor our interviewees chose to dwell on the matter, our previous research and personal experience (Bullock) has detailed widespread and troubling experiences among young Muslims of anti-Muslim deeds and words, both institutional and societal. (Bullock, 2002, 2005; Nesbitt-Larking, 2007; Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011) In the context of such experiences, the determination of young Muslims to engage in the broader political society is both notable and admirable. Research that studies contact between groups demonstrates the positive impact of encounter and dialogue in reducing prejudice. (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Thus, we hope our research makes a contribution to policy development as well as to a generalised reduction of anti-Muslim prejudice.

Our analysis was based on a series of encounters between ourselves and young Muslims in two Ontario communities: London and the Greater Toronto Area (mostly Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville). The twenty interviews were conducted in late 2010 and early 2011. Each interview lasted between twenty-five minutes and more than two hours. Each interview was based upon the "prompts for interviewees" listed in Appendix One. However, interviewees were encouraged to elaborate and each interviewer entered into further exploration with the interviewees. Consequently, the interviews are in depth and detailed which permits the kind of analysis that we present below regarding the psychology of young Muslim political involvement. Each interview was transcribed and the transcripts total 413 pages in length. The interviews were conducted prior to the "Arab spring" and the 2011 Federal Election. While we were unable to assess the impact of these life-altering events in this round of interviews, it would be possible to do so in a follow-up study.

The Report begins in Section Three below with a brief background on our knowledge of Canadian youth and political involvement. This is followed in Section Four by an introduction to the research theory and methodology that guided us in our readings and interpretations of the interviews. In Section Five, we analyze the data and explore Muslim youth involvement in politics and civic/voluntary activism, attitudes toward political life – both the authorities and the self as a political actor, and the relationship between religion and Canadian identity in the lives of our interviewees. Our Report concludes with policy recommendations based on our findings. There are also two appendixes. The first lists the prompts for interviewees. The second is a presentation on certain characteristics of each interviewee and their responses to certain questions of fact.

3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUTH

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 (2003: 266) reports that the decline in electoral participation among youth has been widespread throughout Western societies.

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 reports "a large decline in the voter turnout rates of the two youngest age groups...between 1980 and 1984." (Adsett, 2003: 251) According to Barnes (2010), 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%." (Barnes, 2010: 5) Barnes notes that voter turnout among the youngest age cohort was around 37% in 2004 and 2008, but spiked up to 44% in 2006.

In 2006, Elections Canada conducted a sustained campaign at encouraging the youth vote and was somewhat successful. Official efforts such as this campaign made a difference and illustrate that leadership and government support can make a difference in political mobilization. It will be interesting to interpret the results of the recent civil-society based "vote mobs" that sprang up in the Canadian federal election of 2011. How far did they stimulate political activism and get out the vote?

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. There is also a "generational" effect, and, as Stolle and Cruz (2005) put it: "today's youth are voting at significantly lower rates than previous generations at the same age." (2005: 84)

Why do the youth vote less? A qualitative study by Chareka and Sears explains 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." (Chareka and Sears, 2006: 530) In Chareka and Sears' 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 (2009) analysis seems to confirm 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.” (Bastedo, Goodman, LeDuc and Pammett 2009: 31)

Voting is only one measure of political involvement, and yet it serves as a troubling indicator of disengagement among youth. Disengagement opens the question of causation. If young people are not voting, is it because they are apathetic or because they perceive the political system to be unresponsive to their needs or even corrupt? Are they “tuning out” or “turned off”? This report delves deeper into assessing this matter in the responses of our interviewees. How far do they express indifference, ignorance, and apathy? To what extent do they raise specific criticisms of the political system and their opportunities within it? Are they alienated from formal political organizations, such as political parties? Do they have specific criticisms of the nature of political representation, such as the electoral system or the opportunities for MPs in the legislatures? Do they regard political choice as genuine or are “they all the same”? Do they experience a strong sense of political efficacy, a feeling that their voices actually count for something?

An important facet of this issue is developed in the recent research of Brenda O’Neill (2007), who points out that young Canadians tend not to engage in traditional political activities, such as voting and joining political parties. Their level of political knowledge is lower than other Canadians, at least when it comes to measures of conventional politics. However, they do participate extensively in non-traditional political activities, such as signing petitions, boycotts, and buycotts, and do so at a level that meets or exceeds the levels of all adult Canadians. Stolle and Cruz add that young Canadians perceive interest groups to be more effective agents of change than parties. (Stolle and Cruz, 2005: 85) With respect to participation in demonstrations, and belonging to community groups and organizations, O’Neill reports that youth activism levels exceed those of other adult Canadians. They also take part in voluntary and civic activities. O’Neill says: “Young Canadians report higher rates of volunteering activity than all other Canadians.” (2007: 17) 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. (Adsett, 2003: 253)

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.” (O’Neill, 2007: 11) Gauthier adds 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.” (Gauthier, 2003: 274)

Scholarship attuned to minority and immigrant political participation indicates that racism and discrimination, as well as lack of familiarity with local political culture, contributes to minority exclusion from formal politics. Exclusion also contributes to feelings of alienation on the part of minorities. (Abu-Laban 2002; Alfred, Pitawanakwat, and Price, 2007; Dahlstedt, 2008; Ginieniewicz and Schugurensky, 2007; Purdam, 1996). Boucher’s study of Turkish migrants in Germany found their

political participation was related to the ease of access to policymakers (Boucher, 2008).

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 (Abu-Laban 2002; Bullock, 2004, 2011; Hamdani, Bhatti, and Munawar 2005; Ahmad, 2007).

Tossutti, (2003) 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. Interestingly, however, her research demonstrated that individual-level voluntary work (outside of organized voluntary groups) did not correlate with higher levels of political engagement. Hamdani's survey of Canadian Muslims and political participation based on data from 2003 found that Muslims voted less than Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian faith groups. (Hamdani, 2006: 15-16).

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 2005: 535.) Moosa-Mitha's study of Canadian Muslim youth found high levels of civic engagement as a way of coping against the largely negative mainstream discourse of the Muslim identity as a "security risk." (Moosa-Mitha, 2009: 131, 133-4)

When it comes to young Muslims we interviewed for this project, it will be interesting to see how far their patterns of participation and political knowledge echo those of O'Neill's, Tossutti's, Jamel's, Hamdani's and Moosa-Mitha's samples. To what extent does civic and non-traditional participation exceed traditional political participation and knowledge among our interviewees? We will also be concerned to explore how far O'Neill's contention regarding the objective of "shaping society" holds true among the women and men of our sample:

...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. (O'Neill, 2007: 31)

O'Neill's findings find a powerful echo in the American research of Lance Bennett (2008). 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." 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, 2008: 4) 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.” (Bennett, 2008: 14)

Later, we explore the personal values of our young Muslim women and men and investigate how their sense of duty and need to self-actualize shape their political selves. Their insights take us beyond the standard politics of political parties, campaigns, elites, interests, and politicians. Instead, they assist us in thinking through new ways to engage in deliberation, dialogue, and decision-making.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE AND HOW TO LISTEN

The conduct of interviews is a long-established qualitative methodology across the social sciences. Thus, we established our own approach toward our interviews.

For the purposes of this report, the most adequate approach toward gaining knowledge and insight from our young Muslim interviewees was to establish a protocol of prompts (see Appendix One) and then work within the “semi-structured” in-depth interview mode. We were prepared to prompt our interviewees with supplementary questions. This was done to encourage an in-depth dialogue with the interviewees and it also necessitated an interactive approach.

Our criterion for selecting interviewees was deliberately broad. While being aware that qualitative research never makes claims of generalisability, we nevertheless sought a broad spectrum of youth from different ethnic backgrounds. We set the definition of “youth” according to the United Nations of fifteen to twenty-four. We aimed for gender balance and each interviewer sought five female and five male interviewees. We also sought youth across class distinctions (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. We approached people we knew who fit the criterion if they would like to be interviewed or if they knew someone who would be interested. So, we had several contacts in the Muslim community helping find us interviewees.

Our core approach to interviewing is interactive, and we pay attention both to the content of the material and to the context and form or style of delivery. With respect to the latter, we are aware that ten interviews were conducted in London, Ontario, by a non-Muslim man, and a further ten in the GTA, by a Muslim woman. These sociological and cultural points of reference are important – if not definitive - points of sensitization in the interpretation of the data. Behind these immediate settings, we take into account the structural realities 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 and the West. (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2010, 2011)

In the dramatic exchange of each interview, both the researcher and the interviewee bring specialized knowledge and insight to the encounter and the transcripts afford an extensive, if necessarily limited, record of the dialogue. Silverman is correct in stating that “the context of the production of a recognizable interview is intrinsic to understanding any data that are obtained.” (Silverman, 1985: 162) 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.

Our principal focus is on our interviewee's narratives, or their relayed experiences in terms of how they want to be understood. We are able to, both, respect and acknowledge the accounts that interviewees give as authentic for them, and yet, potentially, open each encounter to further question and analysis.

We make use of the layers and reworking of our interviewees' practices and experiences. We pay particular attention whenever the interviewee expresses the openness of self-reflection – when they explore and qualify the nature of who they think they have become or what they think they might believe. Interpretations are always partial, provisional and part of an ongoing dialogue. No interpretation, role or identity is fixed forever, and the interview is an opportunity to assess the nature of their own identity(ies) and those of others. (Squire et al., 2008) Part of the role of the researchers is to encourage the telling of stories and the recounting of narratives of the self in a social context. There is, both, an emotional and a cognitive pleasure in unfolding oneself to others through a biographical account. The interviewees are treated as “active participants rather than like speaking questionnaires.” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 165)

Our interview technique has also been informed by feminist methodology. (Oakley, 1986) Importantly, we concur with Oakley that “interviewers are human beings and...they do not work identically.” (Oakley, 1986: 248) Like Oakley, we have discovered that our interviewees ask us many questions, which we feel are important to address to the best of our abilities. Second, we and the interviewees have a level of personal investment in the current situation of Muslims in Canada that we find important to acknowledge and often to integrate into our ongoing interviews. (Oakley, 1986: 240)

5 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND YOUNG MUSLIMS IN CANADA

In this section, we set out our principal findings regarding political participation among the twenty young Muslim men and women who we interviewed. We identify each anonymously through the initials of each interviewer (KB and PNL) as well as identifying numbers. These conventions are used in Appendix Two, which contains basic information on each interviewee.

To summarize our findings in one phrase, these young women and men reveal a willingness to engage and a strong desire to be involved in the political and social fabric of Canada. As evident in Appendix Two, their degree of political activism is variable, with most interviewees having engaged in the more readily available non-traditional political activities, including joining a Facebook political or protest group, signing a petition on paper or on line, and initiating a political discussion in person. Of the sixteen interviewees old enough to vote, an impressive nine have done so. Their degree of activism, as revealed in the political activism questionnaire, ranges from nothing in the case of KB 1 and KB 6 to engagement in all fifteen forms of political participation on the part of PNL 8.

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. However, only six of them know the name of the Minister of Finance. Overall, this is an impressive result, given the fact that only four of them claim to follow politics more than somewhat, and most do not follow politics very much at all.

Whether in terms of party support or their general values on social and economic issues, the interviewees exhibit little conservatism. Of the fifteen who state a political party that is closest to representing their views, all name the Liberal Party or the NDP. 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.

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.

This section on political participation among young Muslims consists of seven subsections.

In the first subsection, “Involvement in Politics,” we follow O’Neill in distinguishing between formal and informal (non-traditional) political participation. When it comes to formal politics, we distinguish between those not politically engaged (NPE), sometimes politically engaged (SPE), and politically engaged (PE). We also present data on engagement in informal political activity.

The second subsection presents findings on civic engagement and evidence of impressive community volunteerism among the interviewees.

The third subsection reports attitudes toward provincial and federal authorities, including the police, and the justice system.

The fourth subsection explores attitudes toward oneself as a political actor. Here we investigate satisfaction with Canadian democracy and degrees of political efficacy.

The fifth subsection takes the analysis deeper and explores how this group of mostly committed and devout Muslims reconciles their religious beliefs with engagement in Canadian politics. We look at how religion affects a sense of political interest and obligation toward Canadian citizenship, and a sense of being Canadian and supporting Canadian values. We ask how far our interviewees are focused on Canadian or foreign political issues, and where they see any conflicts between Muslim and more general Canadian values.

Subsection six asks questions of what discourses are absent from the words of our interviewees, and the final seventh subsection lists our key findings.

5.1 INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

Throughout this report, we make a distinction between being engaged in formal politics (the electoral process), and informal politics (including lobbying, activism on political issues, letter writing, petition signing, and attending rallies). What emerges from the data are three broad clusterings of responses to questions designed to explore the interviewees’ interest in politics, engagement in politics, and sense of self as a political actor. As previously mentioned, these are typologised as: Politically Engaged (PE); Sometimes Politically Engaged (SPE), and Not Politically Engaged (NPE). 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. Naturally, a single person can move back or forth on the spectrum over time, and depending on issues involved.

5.1.1 Not Involved In Formal Politics

One of the most fascinating findings of our research is that Canadian Muslim youth fit a similar broad pattern as other Canadian youth, when it comes to involvement in both formal and informal politics. This holds true whether they have been to public or Islamic school, have been homeschooled, were born in Canada, or immigrated as a young child or as a teenager. Only three gave an affirmative “Yes” to the question, “Do you regard yourself as a political person?” Nine gave a definite “No,” and eight were in-between, expressing either an interest in following the news, and politics, with a good general knowledge of basic political questions, but were not actively involved in the formal political process. A few thought themselves to be not politically engaged yet participated in highly politicised events in the informal sector, such as, signing petitions against Bill 94 (a Quebec Bill requiring women wearing the *niqab* to reveal their faces in their interactions with the Quebec state), or demonstrating on behalf of Palestinians. However, as O’Neill and other researchers have found, 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 informal sector.

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 none of our interviewees mentioned religious or philosophical reasons as to why they are not involved in the formal political process. In fact, the most highly engaged in formal politics and civic engagement advanced religious reasons for being involved. This finding is consistent with other studies. (Jamel, 2005)

The most commonly stated reasons for non-participation in formal politics were lack of interest; lack of time; boredom; the belief that things are smooth in Canada, not like back home; and being under age (with the expectation of becoming interested in politics once reaching the legal age for voting).

Do you regard yourself as a political person?

[No] You don’t got time to go to Internet and see what’s going on in Iraq, you don’t got time to see what’s going in Somalia,.... People don’t think about that. What people think about oh, ya bro, let me call this guy and see when his next party is at; let’s call this guy and see if we can get some money, make some cash, stuff like that... And I am not going to lie; I think like that too. (PNL 1. NPE)

Not at all, I’ve never been interested in politics. From back home, I was never interested and even over here, I don’t follow it at all. I don’t know, like, I know it’s my right to be, you know, voting and things like that but it’s always been on my mind not to vote because I never felt a keen interest into something...so I don’t even bother, you know, paying attention on what’s on the surface there. (KB 1. NPE)

I don’t -- I don’t like politics, no...I’m not interested in that.

Can you -- Can you say why?

I don't know, I just -- I think it's I don't know, a boring topic. I'm just -- I'm just not interested. (KB 6. NPE)

Hmm. I guess [I follow politics] as closely as my time allows it. (Laughs) I guess, I do here and there try to look, you know, look at the news websites, try to stay against the odds, updated as I can, but I wouldn't say that I'm very, I guess, politically aware. (PNL 6. NPE)

However, it was not due to apathy or lack of smarts that kept many interviewees uninvolved in formal politics. A few interviewees articulated trenchant criticisms of electoral politics. PNL 7 followed politics, in terms of general knowledge, but made a decision not to get involved in electoral politics, similar to KB 5, because she felt it was more effective to help people through grass-roots activism than through politics, which was to her a bit of a game.

[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... I don't take part in voting ...because ...what's more powerful than one vote is working, say for example with an immigrant who does not know how to fill in certain applications because no one else can help him or her because of a language barrier. I feel like that's more powerful than a vote. Because then what happens, it's like a ripple effect. You help that immigrant who goes back to his family, the applications are done, probably Ontario Works for example or housing, or any kind of application and it just has a ripple effect, it's a positive impact on the family, which is a positive impact on the children who will go to school and then, and I feel like that's where it changes it's active roots and not at a political level.... (PNL 7. NPE)

PNL 10's experiences with corruption with his/her native country had 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...And when you -- when I came here, I didn't get involved as much. But then some things changed in the last four years. And now I am a bit more active, but I won't say -- if I have to rate myself 1 to 10, I would say 4, as a 4. (PNL 10. SPE)

Only one interviewee came 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. (KB 5. 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. (KB 5. NPE)

Throughout the interview, KB 5 talked about his lack of involvement stemming mostly from his sense of politics. He perceived it as an elite game in which he is unable to make a positive impact on the youth whose lives he cared so much about. However, at the end of the interview, he argued 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. (KB 5. NPE)

His interview demonstrates a range of complexity and nuance that is rarely captured in mainstream accounts of Muslim youth and their alienation from Canadian society.

5.1.2 Interested but Sometimes Engaged in Formal Politics

Like other Canadian youth, a good proportion of our interviewees were not interested in formal politics. Others were interested in politics, but not actively or frequently engaged. Some mentioned lack of time (not interest) as a factor, and also expressed some degree of guilt at not being more involved:

I haven't always been as interested in it as I should be, not because I feel one way or another about my identity as a Canadian Muslim, but just because naturally intuitively I don't always feel as interested in that that I would be at something else. That being said, though, I understand the importance of it and I still make a constant effort to learn about what's happening in the political environment when I get a chance. (PNL 2. SPE)

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]. (PNL 9. SPE)

I don't do it [get politically involved] as actively as I should, like exactly I should be doing it because I do have my political views and in order to show that there is some principle or some substance to those views, I should be putting them into action. But for now, all I have is my thoughts and my opinions in my head and I've never actually -- I do voice them at points where I have to but I wouldn't actively go out of my way and/or express them. (KB 8. SPE)

KB 8 had spent time studying the NDP website, as it is the political party she feels most drawn to, but she didn't join because in the last federal election (2008), she voted strategically for a Liberal candidate to defeat the Conservative government.

As O'Neill has learned through her research, there is a disconnect between youth politics and the adult world of politics. Some interviewees had been involved in student politics on campus, being elected themselves to positions, and yet did not consider themselves political. For instance, KB 3 said "[I do not regard myself a political person] Not at all. I have never taken politics. I'm not into politics at all." (KB 3. NPE). However, during the interview it was discovered that she always followed and 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 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 took 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 PNL 4 and PNL 5, 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." (PNL 4. SPE)

PNL 4 followed this up with a sentiment 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."

PNL 5 characterised herself as "I'm not so political. ...I'm very opinionated, so if there is a political discussion going on, I will support my own views towards it, keeping on track on the latest politics or anything political, I'm not a big fan of, but I do try to read The National Post or The Globe and Mail here and there just to get a gist of what's going on...yeah. (PNL 5. SPE). More active involvement depended on politics being more interesting to her, "Oh, yeah. I feel like if I update myself even more, if I'm involved in my daily lifestyle around gaining more knowledge in the political sector, then I know I would..." And in spite of not being able to define "democracy," she responded with a laugh that she could see herself as a candidate for Prime Minister.

This kind of visualising is surprising, as 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, of ambition, is very important for inclusion in a society, as it is a

signal of (would be a symbol of) proper integration at all levels, political, social, economic.

5.1.3 Politically Engaged

Only three of our interviewees considered themselves very much as a “political person.” Of these, one (PNL 8) was very active in informal, not formal politics (see the next subsection below for more on PNL 8), one followed politics closely, but was not a member of any party, and one was highly engaged in the formal political sector.

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 ---(KB 10. PE)

While talking about having an impact on the government, KB 10 was open to the idea of joining a political party:

How about becoming a member of a party and try to work from the inside?
I could -- yeah I could like join a party, I'm not really too keen on any of the parties right now in, you know Canadian politics, but yeah. (KB 10. PE)

This is not necessarily a noteworthy comment, except that KB 10 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 impact government. Considering the widespread public approval for banning the *niqab*, her responses are a very important research finding.

Only one of our interviewees, KB 2, was both politically interested and politically engaged in formal politics, being a member of a political party. She had become 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, interned for a sitting politician, and attended a youth summit for Muslim youth interested in politics. She became interested in politics in the grade 10 civics class and, until recently, had been interested only in international issues. 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 in order to be “true citizens.”

I guess I have been so like focused on international issues that I sort of forget sometimes what -- what's going on here in our community. And if there's one thing I learned from that summit that I was just attending, it's that we should never forget, you know international issues and -- and you know our country's foreign policies and -- and what's going on in places like Palestine

and Sudan and things like that. But, if -- if we forget about what's going on around us, we forget ourselves, we forget our community and we don't allow ourselves to become true citizens....(KB 2. PE)

She elaborated that after these experiences with Canadian politics she feels that Muslims in Canada are often focused only on international issues, or issues relating to their own problems as a stigmatized minority in Canada. However, she thinks it was time for Muslims to go beyond this and start contributing as whole citizens, which in turn, would lead to more respect for Muslims in Canada:

If there's one thing that I think Muslims need to focus on, it's becoming aware of what's going on in their communities, because that's what's going to allow us to become productive citizens and participants. And -- and sort of dispel all of -- many of the stereotypes that people have about Muslims.... and it's good to care about your brothers and sisters and other parts of the world, but we need to really think about what we are willing to do for our communities and what -- what we want to do to progress as a society as a whole. And when we start agreeing, you know doors open and people become open to one another and more -- and become respectful to one another, but if we are just going to focus on issues that affect us as Muslims, then I think we are taking a step back and -- and we are not thinking about moving forward. (KB 2. PE)

5.1.4 Informal Political Activity

Our research is consistent with O'Neill's survey of Canadian youth and political participation. O'Neill concluded that while Canadian youth participation in formal politics is low, a wider understanding of political participation to include "non-traditional activities," such as protesting, revealed Canadian youth to be more highly engaged than could be discerned from looking simply at conventional political activity. This pattern holds true for our research as well. While very few were interested in following formal politics, and even less actively involved in traditional parties, at least half of those who said they were not political, or interested in politics, had 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 (Hamdani, 2006: 18).

PNL 8 was one of a few interviewees who saw herself as a political person and was highly engaged in the informal (non-traditional) sector. "That's how I start my morning and ended my day." (*sic*. PNL 8. PE) She had grown 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. Yes, you could -- you could tell on

their faces when things were happening. But it was not discussed around the house. (PNL 8. PE)

PNL 8 related that she considered 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.” (PNL 8. PE)

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.

And [I volunteered with] what was then called the SPHR, *Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights*, I did a few things with them, with *Oxfam*, for a couple of years. And – and once I finished I would say that because my – my biggest passion is I’m a news junkie and I did the post-grad in television news. I was volunteering at Rogers Television. I really believe in the power of local TV...And – and I would say that was my biggest love. And of course I – for a year, I was with the *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East*. I was sort of one of their PR reps from here in London. That was tremendous for me. I enjoyed that more than anything. It was an incredible amount of work, but it was very, very rewarding. (PNL 8. PE)

5.2. 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 varied, from being involved in multiple organisations with a high monthly time commitment, to involvement in fewer organisations, or less frequently. Significantly, twelve interviewees volunteered 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 fundraised not only for Muslim causes, but also non-Muslim charities. PNL 5, whose volunteer work was “only” with the MSA, had been managing fundraising both for the food bank and for breast cancer research:

As like a Muslim leader in the MSA, I’m in-charge of facilitating managers, so I have the humanitarian managers, so I make sure that they facilitate or create events which motivate others to donate, and to donate for a better cause, so we did a Can-Drive competition where we collected over 2000 cans for the London Food Bank. We partook in the Canadian Breast Cancer Run For Cure in October, and we raised over \$700 from my own community or

from our own members, and that was also donated for the Breast Cancer Foundation...(PNL 5. SPE)

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... (KB 5. 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 both noteworthy and commendable. Significantly, nearly every interviewee argued that charitable work should not be confined to Muslims only, but given to anyone who needed help.

I'm very involved, not just with Muslim organizations and our public sector but also in non-Muslim organizations. Charitable work cannot, in my opinion, be confined to religion. So if I'm doing charity, I should be able to help everyone. I shouldn't segregate certain groups and ostracize some groups because they are not of a certain religion or a certain background. (PNL 7. NPE)

Because we cannot donate for the mosque and then forget breast cancer. (PNL 10. SPE)

I know at mosque, they have like charity events or, you know, welfare for Muslims and stuff. But I think charity, you can give charity to anyone, yeah, you should be involved in charity in a broad way. (KB 3. NPE)

These broad sentiments are shared by KB 10, our *niqabi* interviewee:

...donating to or becoming part of a charity that's more like a Canadian charity, I think that's also a good, ...like you have the Red Cross, you have those Wildlife Protection, you can join that as well, like -- there shouldn't be a limitation that you should only join Muslim charities because they're Muslim; like you should go for everything. (KB 10. PE)

There does not appear to be any significant gender differences pertaining to either political or civic engagement. In fact, in contradistinction to the widespread media image of the "submissive veiled Muslim woman," all the interviewees in the most highly engaged category were women – one wearing a *niqab* (face-veil), and two in *hijab*.

5.3. ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICAL AUTHORITIES

Political scientists regard the well-functioning state or the political system as a complex of institutions that receive political inputs through the democratic process and then convert those inputs into legitimate and authoritative outputs. In this subsection, we explore the extent to which the young Muslim interviewees trust and support the authoritative outputs of the Canadian state, particularly, the work of the police and the judicial system.

Given the societal discrimination against Muslims that peaked in the immediate years following 9/11, and the still present erosion of Muslim civil liberties, we inquired as to how our interviewees experience their lives as subjects of the Canadian state? Later, in subsection four, we assess our interviewees' reflections on their role as democratic participants and as political actors with a range of demands and supports for the political system.

Our interviewees were 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." (Moosa-Mitha, 2009: 131, 133-4). When asked in the abstract, as explained below, a typical range of responses from more "passive" to "more active" emerged.

A few interviewees, such as KB 1, adopted a largely "subject" orientation toward their political citizenship. KB 1 says:

Well, being a citizen, you have to follow all the rules, whatever they tell you, you know, like the proper way of living as a Canadian citizen. If you're talking about Canadian citizenship, I think being a citizen of that country, you know, you got to be loyal for that. (KB 1. SPE)

Other interviewees adopted a more participatory concept, like PNL 7, who stated, "Citizenship for me means sharing, it means contributing and learning." (PNL 7. NPE).

Another common theme joined the concept of citizenship to identity: "Shows you the rights you have to your country...The honour you have or you have to have for that country. It shows – it shows who you are." (PNL 10. SPE)

Section 5.3.2 explores the more specific question of Muslims and citizenship, which tell a more complicated story.

5.3.1 Police

Overall, our research found that the interviewees had reasonably good relations with the police. Given the problems some Muslims have had with racial profiling, this was perhaps a surprising finding (see PNL 10 below). Most of our interviewees had 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. A couple of interviewees felt that they had been racially profiled and singled out for receiving a ticket as 'brown' people, but others did not feel that race had been an issue. One interviewee commented that the police were merely after money when ticketing them.

They are very friendly and the only time I've encountered, the only time I've actually encountered a police officer was when I was getting speeding tickets (laughs)...That was okay. They did their job [in an even handed manner]. Um-hmm. (PNL 7. NPE)

I haven't had very much contact with the police, but they seemed fine, they seemed good that they're doing their job. (KB 4. NPE)

A few interviewees had longer stories to tell about their interactions with the police that reveal important themes for police forces and policymakers to consider.

PNL 1's story of transitioning from hating the police to liking them highlights the importance of developing good police-community relations. PNL 1 explains that he used to "hate them for no reason," and not due to any religious perspective, but due to the influence of the music he listened to, whose lyrics swear at the police and inculcate a sense of "screw the police." But the police used to be around where he played basketball, and he found that if he smiled at them, they would smile back, and then he started talking to them. Through this process he came to feel that "...if you think about other human beings like us, you know, they are working to get -- they're not -- they're not there to get behind your back... they seemed very nice." (PNL 1. NPE).

One of the authors of this report (Bullock) used to attend training sessions for police in the Hate Crimes Unit for Peel Regional Police. Part of her job was to explain Muslim religious and cultural reactions to police that might assist them in their visits to/arrests of Muslims. For instance, if a man avoids the eye of a female officer (and visa versa), this is not (necessarily) a sign of guilt, but of modesty, as Muslim cultures teach male and female not to look at each other directly in the eye. She used also to explain that since many Muslim immigrants come from countries where police are very corrupt, any contact with or approach by the police can be an extremely intimidating and fearful experience. Since good policing relies on open communication with the police, these are fears that must be addressed and not dismissed. KB 2's reaction to her contact with the police is very revealing in this regard. Although she has never committed a crime, and was born and raised in Canada, her parents immigrated from a society where the police were tied to a brutal regime that maintains its grip on power with a network of spies and secret police:

The only times I ever had contact with the police is if they stop me in my vehicle and it's usually a very, you know, your heart starts pounding kind of situation. I mean...it's not that they really have the right to do -- to harm you in any way and I don't know why people are so afraid and -- but it's just -- it's I guess the intimidation in knowing that -- that they have the right to

basically stop you for any reason when you're actually innocent and you know you haven't done anything wrong but for some reason, you're still scared.
(KB 2. PE)

PNL 8's response picks up on this theme highlighting the importance of having respect for the police and viewing them as instruments of justice, not otherwise. While she had "not had any contact at all" with the police, she says, "I've never even been pulled over which is nice." From her perspective as a settlement worker, the problems with policing at the G20 summit in Toronto (2010) had negatively affected how she views the police. She argued they have a lot of work to do to regain her trust:

I work with a lot of clients. Because I am a settlement worker, I work with a lot of people that have fled countries where the word police...is the scariest thing they will ever hear. So you don't bring it up, you don't talk about it... it will scare them to death... it's hard to try to sit here and reassure them that everything is going to be okay knowing in the back of my mind that – that it might not be. (PNL 8. PE)

While she differentiates between Canada and her native home country, the G20 experience has nevertheless unnerved her:

I will trust the police here more than, you know, or any authorities more than I would have, say, back in [the Middle East] ...where there is a lot of corruption. But you know, again with recent events, that changes your perspective. (PNL 8. PE)

KB 5's story highlights the crucial importance of good community relations with the police. He narrates how positive contact with the police during a suspension from school helped him remove himself from a life headed towards criminal activity to one dedicated to assisting youth:

I got suspended for about 20 days. And the police officer, he didn't kick me out, he didn't arrest me, he didn't discourage me, didn't yell at me, he's more like what are you doing. ...And it took me that suspension, that twenty -- it turned out to be 14 days eventually, but it took my 14 days to realize, hey, I got to get into university and I got to stop this stuff and I got to stop it now. And if he had got me in more trouble than I was already in, then I probably wouldn't have been given that opportunity. So, yes, I've seen a lot of cops be very stereotypical and be very rude; at the same time I have seen a balance. ...One cop was such a -- he was such a bad person, like, he was so rude. ...And at that time I was being the same way and that [other] police officer was as -- equally as polite as me or even more. (KB 5. NPE)

In the next section on the Canadian justice system, the importance of having a sense of being treated justly and fairly is underscored by two contrasting stories of being arrested.

5.3.2 Justice

Until this point, we can say that Canadian Muslim youth, by and large, do not exhibit any special characteristics related to their “Muslimness” that sets them apart from others. However, such special characteristics began to emerge with the question: “How much faith do you have in the Canadian justice system?” We are concerned to report, but perhaps not surprisingly, that only a minority expressed unreserved faith in Canada’s justice system, most of them from the group not interested in politics.

Canadian justice system? Yeah, I have lots of faith in them. Just because there is no death penalty that, like, sums up everything, because you don’t want -- you don’t want people being hanged or anything or like --- (PNL 4. SPE)

I haven’t really thought of that. I think it is pretty -- pretty just. (PNL 3. NPE)

Several interviewees articulated that although the system is, overall, just they had seen others or personally experienced what they perceived as being treated unjustly by the system with wrongful arrests, or being unable to afford a lawyer, hence, being treated unjustly in the courts.

...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. (PNL 9. SPE)

PNL 10 (SPE) was a notable exception. He 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.

However, a significant number of interviewees, whether from the politically engaged, sometimes politically engaged, or not politically engaged groups said that their faith in the Canadian justice system had “declined” (KB 3. NPE) due to one or both of two factors: (i) the Omar Khadr case and (ii) the trial of the Toronto 18.

I have been involved a little bit in the campaign for Omar Khadr...And within that, I – I feel betrayed and – and cheated by the system. And I don’t know if it’s wrong to feel that personally, but – but it’s not right. ...and other issues such as security certificates...What they call Guantanamo North in Kingston, things like that. That’s where I feel that the justice system has let me down. Now in other areas such as the – the very speedy conviction of, for example, Col. Russ Williams--that I find was swift and effective, and – and he got what he deserved. So, some areas more than others. (PNL 8 PE)

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. (KB 5. NPE)

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..(KB 8. SPE)

Since these feelings of betrayal, disappointment and targeted policing of Muslims, cut across all groups in our study, we can surmise that it is here that the interviewees "Muslimness" becomes salient. It highlights the young Muslims' keen awareness, 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 (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007). The situation for Muslim youth in the US is similar, indeed, possibly worse, given the US mass round-ups and deportation of hundreds of Muslims post 9/11. (Sirin and Fine 2008; Maira, 2009).

So, while no interviewee approved 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 approved of, and several were explicitly critical of, the Toronto 18, a sense of common identity with these young people transcended those critiques. 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, as KB 8 said, of a disconnect between Canadian Muslims and their government.

Two additional interesting findings emerged 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 had not even heard of the Toronto 18. By contrast, most of the GTA youth had heard of the Toronto 18, and not surprisingly, a few had known personally one of those arrested. Second, of the interviewees who mentioned the Toronto 18, quite a few made comments along the lines of "Oh yes, I have heard something about them."

What do you think of the Toronto 18?

Toronto 18.

18, yeah.

What is that? (PNL 1. NPE)

Sorry?

The Toronto 18.

What do you mean by the Toronto 18, sorry I'm...(PNL 7. NPE)

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.”

How much faith do you have in the Canadian justice system as opposed to the political system?

This is a difficult question...Not only because of, I guess, you know the Toronto 18, you know that kind of stuff because I feel like, I mean, the – the justice process there. To be honest, I don't know if they're guilty or innocent...But I know that, I mean, keeping them on trial for such a long time, not letting them, I mean, the whole habeas corpus like you know... I mean if these guys weren't guilty, I mean these are young people who lost the best years of their lives who will never be accepted back into university after this. ...these people's lives are destroyed whether or not they're innocent or guilty...They might as well kill themselves. Like there's no – there's no future like for them. You know what I mean? (PNL 9. SPE)

Despite these comments, we learned that for most of our interviewees, the Toronto 18 were “not on the radar.”

It is significant that Muslim youth have not heard of the Toronto 18, or may only have heard of them in some kind of distant way. In light of our findings, it is reasonable to ask why our interviewees should be required to condemn matters unrelated to their existences. Most Christians do not feel moved to condemn and issue press releases every time a Christian anti-abortion activist kills a doctor who performs abortion.

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.

The DEMOS report (Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, 2010), found that outreach work by the RCMP was often focused on the Muslim community as suspects or requests that Muslims spy on fellow Muslims. PNL 9's story is consistent with this finding. The RCMP had visited the MSA at his university in London, ostensibly doing “outreach” and “prevention” work. However, PNL 9's felt 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.
(PNL 9. SPE)

PNL 9 believed the media “lied” a lot, and that the youth were, most likely, “entrapped” by a CSIS mole. He said: “The Toronto 18 makes me worried about my own situation...So unless I see some concrete evidence, I don't think they are guilty.”

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.
(PNL 9. SPE)

PNL 9 admitted that he was unsure of participating in the interview out of a similar fear, and called a trusted friend to learn more about Dr. Paul Nesbitt-Larking and the study we are conducting.

As articulated above, PNL 9's story is troubling, because several embittering experiences have made him question his Canadian citizenship. His family emigrated to Canada to escape poverty and corruption in Pakistan. They held Canada in high regard until a recent civil litigation issue. At the time of the interview, his family was in court over having been “swindled” in their family business. He was not happy with the court process, which made him conclude that corruption is present in Canada, just more hidden. “And that – that was the most sad realization I've had in – in many years.”

In addition, from his perspective, he said that the Canadian Revenue Agency audits them every year because his father donates too much to charity, which leads the CRA to assume that they are financing terrorism.

So they think I'm giving fake charity because I'm giving too much. Or the government has contacted me and they're inquiring about the nature of the charity because they think it's a terrorist organization, right?...And especially under the Stephen Harper's administration, it's been extremely hard for us to give to Palestine. (PNL 9. SPE)

He is embittered by this experience:

We actually have to limit, I am telling you, our family business has to limit the amount of charity we give so as not to come under suspicion of terrorism...How ridiculous is that? (PNL 9. SPE)

Although, his parents have been citizens for thirty years, and despite being born in Canada, he has now a fragile sense of citizenship and belonging. He thinks that due to discrimination against Muslims and fear of terrorism, the government could

introduce laws that would penalise them just for being Muslim, and against which their citizenship would not aid them.

I feel like our – our elder generation--...--is very disillusioned about politics, the government, everything in general. Like they – they feel like they have no say, they have no power, they are visitors here and they always will be. And if Canada has a chance, they would pick them up.

He couldn't be kicked out.

Well, he couldn't be kicked out now--...--but he doesn't – I think that doesn't give him solace. It doesn't give me solace...And I mean if you're asking, I guess, again how – what my father thinks of politics, it's – it's truly that he's – he's a visitor here and he's not welcome, and at any moment they can kick him out. (PNL 9. SPE)

PNL 9's story encapsulates many of the challenges faced by some Canadian Muslims under a citizenship regime that, in spite of its official multiculturalism policies, has been able to exclude Muslims from certain legal protections. (Razack, 2008). His experience also resonates for many US Muslims. (Sirin and Fine 2008; Maira, 2009).

But, as Sirin and Fine (2008) learned in their study, the experiences of US Muslim youth are diverse and complex. Marginalisation, alienation and exclusionary institutional policies are not a singular erasing experience. KB 10 also relates being questioned by the RCMP because she attended a summer camp in 2008 which the December 24 bomber had also attended. However, as we see, she is one of the three most politically engaged interviewees, so this visit has not alienated her or her religious perspective. PNL 10 relates having been wrongfully arrested, but treated respectfully by the police and “saved” by a judge, restoring his faith in the Canadian justice system. But the picture that emerges with PNL 9's experience describes a series of disillusioning events with Canada external to his world-view, which have “pushed” him out and alienated him from his Canadian citizenship.

These feelings of injustice crossed all our groups, the PE, SPE and NPE, and forced many of them to question whether or not Muslims enjoy full and equal rights of citizenship in Canada.

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. What does that make? ...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. (PNL 8. PE)

5.4 ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SELF AS A POLITICAL ACTOR

To be interested or engaged in formal politics, one must have a sense that it is a worthy cause and that they are able to make a positive difference. Thus far, we have seen that variations in civic engagement and attitudes to political authority are not necessarily linked in any way to only one particular group of PE, SPE or NPE. A similar diversity arises in the attitudes towards the self as a political actor.

Several of the NPE felt that they could not have an impact on policy making in Queens Park or Ottawa. Perhaps it is not surprising that if someone is not interested in politics, it may stem from a feeling that one cannot make a difference. Quite a few of those who said they were not interested in following politics also believed they could not make a difference. However, of these, a few stated that because they were not well versed in politics, they were unsure of whether they could make a difference or not. Interestingly, although they were aware of differential, racist and exclusionary treatment Muslims have experienced in Canada, such a sentiment did not seem to cross over (neatly) into their own personal sense of political efficacy. Regarding questions about participation in formal politics, a range of answers were given about impacting policy that are completely in tune with other Canadian youths' perceptions of the ability of being able to affect policymaking. It is in this ability to transcend (at least in thought) being "pushed out" that our interviewees best expressed their willingness to engage in the Canadian political process.

Do you believe that your political involvement can have an impact on what the government does in Ottawa or Queen's Park?

Though I believe I do not right now, ...-- but -- I am not going to say I will later on ...I think like studying is very, very important like because talk and, like, writing stuff is very important, letting people know what's going on. But if you don't know anything, like if you don't know -- if you don't have knowledge about what is going on and what's really going on, what can you say? So. (PNL 1. NPE)

KB 9 was 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 to some degree. (KB 9. SPE)

KB 2 recalls the powerful impact of her Civics teacher and where it has taken her sense of political engagement:

I gave you the example of what my high school teacher said to me and my Civics class, when you give people positive reinforcement and make them feel

like what they have to say matters, that will only bring them closer to you, and will only make them more active and....more positively engaged....I think that we all have responsibility to strive towards creating...a system of equality and justice for everyone...and I think that - I honestly believe if you don't feel the need to speak out and to - and to become involved, then you have no right to complain. (KB 2. PE)

Amongst those who are sometimes politically engaged, emerged the view that politics was an elite activity that they could have little impact upon.

I feel like I would probably be a drop in the ocean. It won't make a difference. Hopefully, when I get - when I get a few degrees behind me, when I have some credibility, when I can, I guess, move a bunch of people towards a certain thing...--then - then maybe, inshallah. (PNL 9. SPE)

I do have an interest in that but I don't think at the end of the day that it will make a difference. If the political leaders have decided on a certain course, that is what will happen. Even if you vote them in, I don't think citizens really have a say in what happens in politics. (KB 8. SPE)

Our most highly engaged interviewee in the formal sector, having had experience as an intern in a couple of MPs offices, expressed a similar view.

I mean you -- I, I wish that everyone's voice could be heard, but...I think there has to be a group behind you. I think we -- we live a type -- that type of political culture where it's very difficult to be heard as, like as one person and -- and you need -- there needs to be support behind you...And 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. (KB 2. PE)

Quite a few of our interviewees demonstrated keen insight into democratic political processes, even those from the NPE group, that to effect change in the political realm it was necessary to be a part of a group. (And there was also a sense that as an individual they could not have an impact on government which led to some of the SPE/NPE to disengage from electoral politics). As mentioned above, several were, nevertheless, active in campus politics, being elected to the *Muslim Student Association*, or the *Student Athletic Association*.

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. (PNL 3. SPE)

I am [a] student like -- and if students like me all had like one view on something, -- then it might make a big difference because like we're students, we're like the future in a way of Canada. So if we had something in common and we want it to change, then I think that might affect Ottawa. (PNL 4. SPE)

Yes. I used to think it was cliché that one person could think that, but – but not any more...Because – because one person can start a domino effect and – and you – you don't know where that will – that will end up specially now just with technology. With – with one video being put on YouTube and going viral, I think things like that can have a tremendous effect. (PNL 8. PE)

Yes...Because every vote counts. (KB 7. NPE)

5.4.1 Satisfaction with Canadian Democracy

Significantly, a majority (fourteen) of the interviewees expressed satisfaction with democracy in Canada. Such satisfaction was not related to where they fell on the “politically engaged/not engaged spectrum,” crossing between all three groups.

Democracy. It's, it's so much the level of democracy in Canada is so much higher than the democracy in other countries, I think, in my opinion. (PNL 4. SPE)

It's more satisfying than – well, it's the most satisfied I've been so far in my life because it's the only system that I've really had the privilege of being a part of – of experiencing, of voting it. Now of course, I – I've been engaged in some debates with people about, you know, the switch to proportional representation. (PNL 8. PE)

I'm actually very satisfied with democracy in Canada, because a lot of -- like, if you look at a lot of countries, they don't -- they have democracy, but they don't follow it. But, with Canada, it's -- like, everyone has a right to go. So, I'm satisfied with that, yeah. (KB 3. NPE)

I think it's going pretty good for us because it's still running, so, it can't be that bad, right? (KB 9. SPE)

Since some of the interviewees acknowledged a lack of interest in politics, this included a lack of knowledge about the system, hence an inability to say if they were satisfied or not. One was not sure what “democracy” was, and another said.

Pretty satisfied from my kind of not really knowing exactly what's going on kind of view. (KB 7. NPE)

Those interviewees who did not express unreserved satisfaction with the state of democracy in Canada, expressed their reservations not in religious terminology, but in the language of democratic theory.

I think it is a fairly democratic country... but there are certain instances where, you know, there's like racism going on behind the scenes, like we know it happens even at workplaces you can see it happening but it's not like, you know, obvious (KB 1. NPE)

Several interviewees argued there needed to be reform in the electoral system. PNL 2 (SPE) said he was not “overly satisfied” with Canadian democracy because there needed to be some “refinement” in the electoral system; KB 10, a *niqabi*, argued that although Canadian democracy was “pretty good” (one reason for this is “female quality” [sic], under Harper it hasn’t been “productive”) and, like PNL 2, would like to see some changes in the electoral system:

I feel that the electoral system is not really good because I know that there are some parties that they -- since a lot of people voted for them nationwide, they only got one seat and they’re -- it’s a good party if you’re with the Green Party, they only got one seat(KB 10. PE)

PNL 8 (PE) talked about electoral reform and proportional representation; and KB 2 (PE) and KB 8 (SPE) talked about the problem of low voter turnout.

A few interviewees articulated more penetrating criticisms: PNL 9 (SPE) expressed his belief that Canada was a “pseudo-democracy” because the Senate is appointed, and because the current prime minister was voted in without a majority of the votes. KB 4 (NPE) was only “relatively satisfied” about Canadian democracy, referring to the problem of the party system and being tied to a platform, rather than being able to disaggregate policy options.

5.5. RELIGION AND CANADIAN IDENTITY

5.5.1 *Commitment to Islamic religion*

One could speculate that given the similarities in patterns of political and civic engagement between our Canadian Muslim interviewees and others, coupled with their articulation of motivations and rationale largely in secular liberal-democratic terms that these youth have been secularised and are disconnected from their Islamic heritage. However, every single interviewee stated that their religion was a very important part of their identity. This was true of all three groups, the PE, SPE; NPE. This is consistent with other studies of Canadian and US Muslim youth. (Sirin and Fine 2008; Maira, 2009; Moosa-Mitha, 2009)

How important is your religion to the sense of being who you are?

That is very amazing question. I try to -- I try to take religion, I’m not going to say seriously, but I try to take it as a way of life. (PNL 1. NPE)

I think it’s 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. (PNL 6. NPE)

I think my religion is very important in -- because it's a big part of my life and -- and -- yeah...I place a lot of importance to that. I -- I pray my five prayers and I always fast my 30 days. (KB 6. NPE)

5.5.2 *Being Canadian*

How does this religious identity relate to being Canadian? Overall, it was striking how almost all the interviewees spoke of Canada and being Canadian, in terms of attachment to the broader political community, speaking very highly of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada. (Only one interviewee did not fit this pattern of attachment. He had come as an adult to attend high school, but found the pace of life here too fast compared to back home, and was looking forward to going back once his studies had finished, but even he appreciated Canada and diversity.) With respect to US Muslim youth interviewed by Sirin and Fine, the authors write:

[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...(2008: p.2).

The same can be said about our interviewees.

I feel very Canadian. (PNL 2. SPE)

Well, I think in Canada, there is a huge, diverse population, so as a Muslim Canadian, I could know, I'm part of that diverse population, I feel that...I don't know, it is just a nice feeling to know that I'm Canadian and it's just the diversity of it. (PNL 5. SPE)

I respect Canadian laws. I see how Canada has so much respect towards its minorities. And I try to -- I try to be as much Canadian as I can. (PNL 4. SPE)

So, if I understood the question correctly, 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. (PNL 7. NPE)

Well, being part of Canada, basically I have a Canadian citizenship, so I just take an active role in the Canadian society. Like, I'm -- like, since Canada is so diverse, everyone is equal, so I feel like I'm at an equal status than everyone else. (KB 3. NPE)

I contribute to Canadian society, I feel like I fit in and stuff as well. A big thing for me is army cadets and there -- because I've gone through the program and stuff and I've helped out with so many different projects and just not in my town but I've gone to other places, likeNew Orleans, I went

for Hurricane Katrina, helping to rebuild and everyone, like, just loved the Canadians and I feel that, like, because being -- doing that I feel more, like -- that I'm helping my country at the most. (KB 9. SPE)

KB 8 articulated a clear distinction in her mind between secular and religious existence:

...if I'm putting my check box or like an "X" on a ballot, I don't think of myself as trying to create a Muslim nation that will assimilate as many cultures as possible and I have to take into account that I'm -- just because I'm a Muslim doesn't mean that Muslim values have to be within this nation, right? It's just -- as many values as possible within Canada. (KB 8. PE)

Some referred to the idea that Canada's multiculturalism makes it difficult to define a Canadian. They took solace in this, as it gave them space to be who they were.

And on being a Canadian citizen, it depends on how the individual defines being a Canadian citizen.... there's a lot of diverse Canadians, so to pinpoint the typical Canadian is very hard. (PNL 5. SPE)

I think in a country like Canada where there are a lot of immigrants and stuff, at least in this area, the definition of Canadian is constantly changing, so it's very hard to say what it means to be Canadian at the moment. (KB 4. NPE)

...if we do want to have a certain value it will work within the Canadian system, not -- not so much that it's going to become a part of the Canadian system but it's not going to be crushed or changed by it.... for the most part I think that is -- Canadians don't have any values that contradict Muslim values, so like, if you think of America where patriotism comes first, Canadians don't really have that and that living as a Muslim in America that might change you, like, not change your values but it might contradict your Muslim values where your -- your *deen* [Islamic faith and lifestyle] comes first, not your nation, right? But in Canada nothing like that happens. So -- yeah, the values are similar but they are not exactly the same. (KB 8. SPE)

Only KB 2 expressed a sense of tension, ironically, or perhaps due to this, she being the most highly politically engaged of the whole interview pool. In spite of being born here, she spoke about growing up not feeling Canadian. She believes that it is in part because her parents kept such a strong linkage to their culture and raised their children by talking about Canadians as "them," versus the "us" Muslims. However, she has achieved a sense of balance:

You know, but it's like, I'm -- I am a Canadian and what is Canadian if I'm not Canadian, really, what is. If I'm not Canadian then there are no Canadians, really. That's how I see it now and so, I -- I'm trying really hard to -- to create this, like, fusion identity now that I think a lot of people share with me and in a different way but I think it's going to be very different for our children in the future for sure. (KB 2. PE)

Young KB 6, is one of the least interested in politics in our group, expressed in less depth, possibly because he is still young and has not had the identity-searing experience of university, spoke of a similar phenomenon in his home: “I feel both but I think I feel more Algerian because of, you know, my parents.” (NPE)

Here is an important clue for the Muslim community and policy-makers, that, along with feelings of being excluded by Canadian society due to anti-Muslim sentiments, deeds and racism, there is an internal, reaffirming dynamic to this: Muslim parents treating “Canada” as a foreign society in which they live. Muslim parenting must allow that children born or growing up here are Canadian, and allow them to embrace this identity. This will have an important flow-through effect on civic and political participation, especially if we remember that these youth do not feel strong connections to “back home,” as evidenced in the later section how far these youth follow events in their or their parents’ natal country.

5.5.3 Canadian values?

In probing the interviewees’ sense of attachment to Canada and its relationship to their religious identity, we learned that most of them think Muslim values and Canadian values are highly compatible. Given the overriding media narratives and anti-terrorist discourses, which place Muslim values as outside Canadian values, this was both a significant and interesting finding.

Muslims are often held up as the “illiberal minority that may or may not be tolerated by a liberal society,” but these youth consistently value diversity and Canadian multiculturalism, a few even on a sensitive issue like homosexuality. This is consistent with the landmark Environics survey of Canadian Muslims in 2007:

Muslim Canadians tell us that they're proud of Canadian freedom and democracy, multiculturalism, the fact that Canada is a peaceful country, the idea that Canada is a caring and friendly country, and the fact that Canada is a safe place to live. (Adams, 2007: 95)

Sites of tension emerged around social issues, such as alcohol, sex outside marriage, dress, homosexuality, name calling, and issues of practice, such as being able to pray the five times daily prayers at school/work, and most significantly on how they think other Canadians regard them. As with other themes in this study, the political engagement grouping of our interviewees was not related to where they fell on issues to do with compatibility of Muslim values – the not politically engaged were as likely to say “compatible” as were the politically engaged or sometimes politically engaged. Adams (2007) found that “...seven in ten Canadian Muslims believe that their fellow Muslims are interested in integrating into the “Canadian way of life”...” (93) Most of our interviewees had found a *modus vivendi* for compatibility.

I feel like I’ve struck a good balance and I actually feel like the two [Muslim and Canadian values] go together quite well if – if you know what you’re

doing, if – if you know both quite well and you make an effort to – to integrate. (PNL 8. PE)

I think that it's possible [to be a devout Muslim and a Canadian citizen] ...like when I was a full time student last year I was -- I was still keeping up with everything with being Muslim and I was still going and doing other stuff that I wanted to do as well. So, I fit things around my schedule to make it work. (KB 9. SPE)

Many made the distinction between deeper commitments to moral values versus superficial differences in customs, such as, drinking.

How far are Muslim values compatible with the more general social values found in Canadian society today?

General social Canadian values?...For the most part very compatible...[exceptions are] I think very superficial things... like, Muslims are not supposed to drink and I know that...there are a lot of Muslims choose not to drink....And I know in Canada it's a very socially acceptable thing to do.... but I mean, I think that's a very superficial part of Islam and I think that's superficial part of Canadian society, so I don't think it's a very big deal at all. (PNL 2. SPE)

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. (PNL 6. NPE)

The general Canadian society – Canadian society believes those kind of things like do unto others as you would have them do unto you, hold open the door for a person, help old people, step aside for the ambulance you know, all those kind of good things. Those are like day-to-day life is very compatible with Islam. (PNL 9. SPE)

Depends, I guess it depends what you're talking about, like, some values are similar but some are like, really different...[for example] Well, Muslims I guess you can say they value modesty, like, that's something they really value whereas I don't know, like generally in society, it's more about being like -- well, they don't really think about that you could say [an example of compatibility is] fairness. Pretty general value, like, everyone -- like, justice. You know, Muslims and society kind of both value that but then, like, it's a similar value but then their approaches are different. (KB 7. NPE)

5.5.4 World politics vs local/national politics

Considering that all of our interviewees are either the children of at least one immigrant parent, or immigrants themselves, it is not surprising that they all expressed an interest in world politics. Even those who said they are not interested in politics said they followed major world events. Many of them spoke about their mother or father as following politics back home closely (and some of them said their parent(s) follows Canadian politics more closely than they themselves do). Quite a few mentioned following US news more than Canadian news. However, surprisingly, many of them were not interested in the politics of their parents' home country:

They are very confusing, so -- I think it's very important as well, but it's very messed up in Egypt. So, I don't really understand the politics there at all. (PNL 3. NPE. Main source of news: World News Homepage)

It's my parents' country. I do – I've never actually been there even. So I – it's not – it's not tremendously important to me. It's only important to me to the extent that I have Muslim brothers and sisters who are there, who are suffering poverty or suffering from fear of the government or suffering because of corruption. And if given the opportunity, I would love to try to help them in some way, but other than that it's--- (PNL 9. SPE. Main sources of news: Facebook friends. Colbert Report. The Daily Show)

You know, honestly, not that important....I mean it concerns me but I -- I just -- I don't know that much about it, I'm not very connected to it, so it's hard to be that concerned. (KB 4. NPE. Main sources of news: Toronto star. BBC/CBC)

They're not important, no. The only important, like, I take is Canadian politics, so this is my -- the country that I'm in. (KB 8. SPE. Main sources of news: Globe and Mail and the New York Times)

So, many were interested and connected on a global level to world issues, but not necessarily to their ethnic origins – this is a very important research finding, and consistent with Mandaville's work on the transnational identity of many Western Muslims. (Mandaville, 2001) Muslim immigrants face a public discourse that is generally exclusionary, treating them as "outsiders", as "others". (Razack, 2008; Bullock and Jafri, 2000) This, consequently, gives rise to racial slurs like "go back home," which is often hurled at Muslims. Yet, they themselves do not feel a sense of connection to their parent's home.

5.5.5 Religion and citizenship

In terms of the key research question of this report – young Muslims and their perceptions of political participation in Canada – it is significant to note when interviewees mention compatibility issues, usually around 'superficial' factors like alcohol or sex/modest dress. Nearly all of them said it was possible to be a devout

Muslim and an active citizen in Canada. A few reservations were raised that will be explored below however all groups adhered to the same ideology.

They are very compatible. A good Muslim is supposed to be involved in their society... I'm sure they are like some conservative Muslims who won't agree with a lot of Canada's policies on freedom of, I don't know, religion... practice, beliefs ...but like we have to accept that as part of the society, so. (PNL 3. SPE)

...you can be very devoted and so like very involved in the society and as Canadian as possible regardless of like the social life maybe because you're a devout Muslim. But other than that you can fit into the community perfectly. (PNL 10. SPE)

I feel like there isn't any contradiction, when, like, I can practice, this is one of the things about Canadian, like democracy, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms where we have the freedom of religion, so I can practice my religion, at the same time I can do all of these other things on the side and I can still be a part of society, it doesn't mean that if I'm just, like, I'm just a Muslim, I'm going to go and sit in the mosque and not like leave and not do anything, but at the same time I can integrate so that I can go to university I can -- I can become politically involved, I can do different sort of things for the community, give back and be Muslim at the same time because like actually a religion teaches like that that we should be good to our neighbours, to give charity and help up those around you so ---(KB 10. PE.)

KB 10's response is interesting, as she wears a face veil. The proposed Bill 94 in Quebec would ban a woman like her from accessing government services. However, from her perspective, she did not consider her face veil to be a barrier to her active citizenship.

No I don't think so, 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. (KB 10. PE)

Some drew 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...(PNL 7. NPE)

Well, Muslim values are -- there is differences [sic] but again, Muslim values are related to the Quran and Islam and stuff. So, they are more on deeds and limitations and, you know, practising the right way and Canadian values, it's not a religion itself, so there's not like much of a value system in Canadian

values because anyone can be a Canadian, so the religion is separate from your nationality. (KB 3. NPE)

Many of those not engaged in politics, or who were sometimes engaged, nevertheless expressed a wish to “give back” to Canada through volunteerism. Their motivations had two sources: first, they felt 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.

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...I am very blessed just to be here and to have the opportunity – the opportunities in front of me that I can pursue, whether or not I choose to pursue them. So I feel like I have a duty to give back, a duty to raise awareness about what I’ve been through, what, you know, the plight of the Palestinian people, what else is going around – going on around the world that people don’t know about here.

And – and just to be productive, you know, to fulfill what I want – what I need to or what I want to as a human being. (PNL 8. PE)

I am very active. I am very active. I try and volunteer as much as I can. And whenever my Dad comes, my Mom will try to give back because after you understand where you are from, when you see Canada you – you have to – there’s something in you morally that you have to give back.

So we are --- as a member truly accepted, I mean, as a Canadian. And then on top of that, I mean, we try and volunteer at the library. We try – my dad does the Wheels, Food for Wheels. (PNL 10. SPE)

Again, we find that these young Muslims are able to transcend, at least verbally, if not in reality (which will depend on the reaction of the larger Canadian society) anti-Muslim narratives and experiences, and focus on the good. Once more we identify their willingness to engage. A few sites of tension emerged for some interviewees at the possibility of complete compatibility between devoutness and active citizenship. PNL 9’s reservations, as outlined above, came from his fragile sense of Muslim belonging to Canada, that Canada would not accept a fully devout Muslim as being part of political society.

...if you’re a Muslim who wants to be involved politically and who wants to have a beard, if you’re a Muslim who wants---...A beard, yeah. 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. If you want to be a Muslim-Canadian who, you know, who’s like – who wants to give to a lot of charities, I mean you’re not going to fare well. (PNL 9. SPE)

A few reservations were based on the cynical sense, held by many people in society, not just these Muslim youth, (Chareka and Sears, 2006) that politicians were only out to serve themselves and that back room deal-making compromised a commitment to loyalty and justice.

This idea was alluded to by KB 5.

...if you are going into politics just to get votes like MPs that come in and they go, you know what I am saying, they come into mosque and they are there once a week or -- not even once a week, they are there like whatever once a month to come and get votes, what's the use? You are contradicting everything that your -- the Book goes for, right.

He went further, and added that it was possible to be a devout Muslim and an active citizen if by going into politics you were to help the Muslim community. Conversely, if by entering politics you were not helping the Muslim community, then you should not pursue that endeavour. This was interesting, given his earlier arguments that Islam and democracy were not compatible. He raised 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. (KB 5. NPE)

Being an army cadet, and considering an army career, this issue had real salience for KB 9.

I think that contradiction 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 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. (KB 9. SPE)

He thought he would 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 soldier, without compromising that Muslim soldier's citizenship status and belonging in a liberal-democratic society.

The only other interviewee who expressed reservations with being a devout Muslim and a fully engaged Canadian citizen did so out of a belief that in order to be in Canadian politics you might have to give up certain Muslim values.

...you can try your best, do as much as you can to stay steadfast towards your Muslim principles but at the end of the day there are certain things that cannot be combined with or put into Canadian politics within itself...[for example] I think, let's say in the morning when you go to a school and they

make you stand up for the Canadian anthem, a lot of people have an issue with that, like, as a Muslim you would have an issue with that because that's, I guess, a ritual or outside of the Muslim faith. (KB 8. SPE)

Her second example of a conflict between being a devout Muslim and an active citizen was wearing *hijab*. Wearing *hijab* emerged as a site of tension for several of the interviewees, though significantly, and interestingly, not KB 10, who wears the face veil. KB 8 had gone through a difficult process for several years during high school, eventually removing her *hijab* (three years before the interview).

I think that probably happened throughout high school that I was so influenced by what was around me. I wouldn't say that I wanted to look like the girls but I felt like I was different and I couldn't handle that amount of difference and I do feel more comfortable now that I don't wear *hijab*, I mean I shouldn't. And Inshallah, I'm hoping for a time where I can do it more comfortably but at the moment I think that if I am to build my personality and people are to understand me, I don't want them to see me through my *hijab*. Even though Islam is exactly how I base my principles or my actions, I would think that before they even talk to me or they see my actions, they are seeing my *hijab* first, so they expect something out of that and since I don't give them as they're expecting, I'm sort of letting them down...I am assuming that I am letting them down because I don't act a certain way. They expect someone more demure, more like tame kind of thing, right, but I would say I am more outgoing without my *hijab* on because I don't expect them. I feel like they're not expecting me to be shy, I don't think. (KB 8. SPE)

She agreed with the Muslim Canadian Congress' stance on banning *niqab*, as the *niqab* being a piece of dress that is incompatible with Canadian values. While finding a ban too extreme, she "wouldn't be offended if it passed." (KB 8. SPE)

KB 2 had a similar struggle with wearing *hijab*, based on a sense that it prompted others to put her in a box.

I think it's the subtle -- it's the subtle reactions that people give you that bother me most, when it's not so direct. And people think they are treating you equally, or they think they are -- they are not biased, or judgmental, but you feel it. And the most thing that bothered me was going into like tutorials, or something and in university. And having discussion, questions and topics. And people assuming that they know what your answer is, before you are going to open your mouth. That to me is like -- and it's -- I still struggle with that... And if you don't give people the opportunity to express themselves, then they are going to suppress that, and I think that's actually the root and the core of a lot of our problems in society. It's people suppressing how they really feel, and not allowing people to come to the table and really talk about how they feel. (KB 2. PE)

She removed the *hijab* for six months but has decided now to embrace *hijab* and put it back on:

I have been making a conscious -- 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... (KB 2. PE)

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

Many of the interviewees who were either “politically engaged” or “sometimes politically engaged” articulated reasons derived from liberal-democratic theory and the concept of citizenship. A few connected political and civic engagement with their faith. In either case, their religious convictions underpinned a strong sense of moral duty.

But -- yeah. I think I feel strongly about my Canadian citizenship because I am so involved in Canadian society and being able to say, you know, I am doing such and such for whatever organizations from Canada, right? So I think that really helps to perpetuate that idea of citizenship.(PNL 2. SPE)

I want to have some mutually beneficial profession, or like every moment of my life should be spent, you know, putting benefit to me and my family and towards society. And I think that’s basically – that’s basically how I view it. And if I can participate in the political process in any way to make things better, to make, I guess, society more moral to prevent you know depravity in any way, I do that. (PNL 9. SPE)

Yeah, I think it’s very important [for Canadian Muslims to be encouraged to become more involved in the political process in Canada].... And I feel like it’s kind of it’s like your duty to that because in the end like every vote counts, sort of thing, so it’s your responsibility to make sure that the party that is lesser of the two evils gets elected. And then from voting you can do a different thing, so I mean there’s a lot of ways to get way like politically active, so. [KB 10. PE. *Niqabi*]

Significantly, the most highly politically engaged is also the only interviewee who explains her involvement in formal politics from a directly religious perspective:

I think it’s not just encouraged [Canadian Muslims being involved in the political process], like, it’s a must, you know, and -- and as much as, you know, in our masjids as much as we -- we talk about Hadith and Sunnah and preach about the Prophet and the -- and, you know, the beautiful versus in the Quran, I think just as much we need to be emphasizing how important it is for us to be contributors in our society. I think a lot of the times we focus on many of the victories of the Prophet (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam* [*May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*]) from the battles that he conquered to the way he ruled his -- his people. But I don’t think there’s enough emphasis on his interaction with non-Muslims and his interaction in situations when he wasn’t, you know, the ruler of the land and he had to compromise and he had to engage with people who had different opinions

and...I mean, just emphasizing these aspects of his life and because it's supposed to be a balanced life that applies to everyone in -- in all times and so, I know there are some Muslim groups in Canada who are anti-integration and who don't want to be involved in -- in this society. I mean, sometimes I wonder why they're even here to begin with, like, if that's really how you perceive -- how you believe you should be then -- then you have no place here, right? It's just -- it's simple as that, so. I mean, I think it's about learning from -- from the Prophet (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*) as well and trying to implement situations that are relatable to us today and his example. (KB 2. PE)

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 and respecting the society and their -- and their laws and -- and things like that. So, you know, people can't just expect to enjoy rights and not sort of contribute or get back at the same time....you sort of need to become a part to change. And I'm sure there's a better quote for that but yeah, you sort of need to -- to join the system in order to change the system or better yet, you can say you have to know the rules to break the rules, something like that. So, I think if you don't work on your faith and you don't, you know, practice as a Muslim, it's very easy to lose yourself and politics itself is a very tricky game and it gets very messy and anyone can lose themselves whether you're religious or not and you forget your purpose and you forget why you're doing things. It's very important to remind yourself what your goal is and I think -- so, back to my initial point, which is the long-term, short-term goals, I think short term, like, we need to think about what we want to do as a community. So, if that just be something like we just want to integrate, I think that's a good short-term goal. And then long-term goal is we want, you know, we want to fill some seats in parliament and we want to have a say in policies and we want to have a say in what laws are being passed and especially the ones concerning us. And there was a quote, I'm not sure if I mentioned to you but there was a quote by a Congressman Keith Ellison, who said, "If you're not around the table, you'll be on the menu." And I just thought that was brilliant because it's very true and I asked myself how many veiled women are actually in the discussions about the banning of the veil? (KB 2. PE)

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 (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009; Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, 2010). But KB 2 and KB 10, 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, (2005) it appears that increased religiosity and active membership in traditional conservative Muslim groups translates into high political and/or civic engagement. MAC, in particular, has stressed active citizenship as part of one's religious duty. 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.

5.5.7 Perceptions of Islam by non-Muslim Canadians

The young Muslims we have interviewed consider themselves Canadian, appreciate Canadian multiculturalism, do not see significant differences between deep moral values of their faith and Canadian values, and are eager to be active, contributing citizens, at least in the informal sector, if not the formal political sector. This is their sense from their own perspective of “being Canadian.” However, when asked about the perception of non-Muslim Canadians on similar questions of being Muslims and being Canadian, our interviewees feel that, some tolerant and educated Canadians notwithstanding, in general, and mostly due to the media, Canadian non-Muslims do not understand Islam.

Depends. Based on my experience, the individuals that I interacted with tend to have, if not a good understanding, at least the openness to hear what a Muslim has to say about their faith, and they are open to the new ideas and they are willing to accept that new knowledge. That being said, I know that there are a lot of individuals that I don't interact with either because a lot of the time our interests don't align or just we tend to be doing different things that may or may not have that same sort of knowledge, if that makes sense. (PNL 2. SPE)

That's a hard one because there are some who are really educated about it but then there's some who aren't -- who just watch the TV and media and just see, oh Muslims are linked to terrorism and stuff like that. (KB 9. SPE)

This sense of being misunderstood was captured by some interviewees in explaining why Canadian Muslims forming their own political party might not be a good idea. Actually, many said it was better to integrate politically and join non-Muslim political parties, both for the sake of integration itself, or for the winnability of a bigger as opposed to a smaller organisation. Others thought it would be good to have both. But several worried how others would perceive such a party.

Canada is still a very, very white country, I mean like not in Toronto or any major metropolitan areas, but it is and it's hard to vote for people that are different. And I think that any people that looked different or can be distinguished as not the same as everybody else have more difficulty in trying to get people to vote for them. (KB 4. NPE)

Probably [better to join non-Muslim] 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. (KB 7. NPE)

I think people would join if there was but, like, the party actually becoming popular, that'll be -- and because I know there'll be a lot of people who'd be like, you know, oh the Muslims are taking over...a lot of times people are very like, there's a lot of people who are accepting, but there's some people who are very like -- their attacks are very, you know, "These people are all extremists" and they just paint us all with the same brush and they say that, you know, "They're trickling in slowly" and "They're going to slowly take over the country," "I would like the shariah," and I think people have problems with that. (KB 10. PE)

This is most significant, because it signals an understanding on the part of many of our interviewees that, as a collective, Muslims are not entirely welcome in Canada. This could have a negative impact on one's identity, sense of commitment, belonging, attachment to a country, and desire to "give back" and be engaged politically. Their intuitive sense is borne out by the Environics survey, which 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." (Adams, 2007: 94). 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. (Hamdani, 2006: 20)

And yet, as previously mentioned, it turns out that the 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 anti-Muslim racism. 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 a largesse 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. A smaller example of such largesse comes through the interviews from the young men, many of whom mentioned being teased about being a "terrorist," being called "Osama", for instance. However, they seemed to take it in stride and reported, without being able to give an example, they would tease back about that persons' heritage. Nevertheless, such teasing draws on racist discourses about Muslims. Not only is it a poison to inter-personal communications, it is a constant verbal reminder of being excluded. It would be more beneficial for these young Canadians to not grow up having to learn how to cope with such teasing. Furthermore, all society ought to work toward eliminating such teasing inherited (even if unconsciously) from racist heritages.

Overall, there is a passionate commitment to the broader political community and the promise of engagement at multiple levels. To the extent that these overtures are

reciprocated and the conditions created to welcome Canadian Muslim youth with respect, care, and warmth into the fabric of the Canadian political society, the gifts of citizenship that these young Muslims exhibit promise to contribute richly to the binding together of a unified civic political nationality of great strength.

5.6 MISSING DISCOURSE

Mainstream media narratives on Muslim youths stress their alienation from Canada, and their vulnerability to anti-Western ideological Muslim discourse (representative samples, see Aulakh, 2011; Bell, 2010; Teotonio, 2010; Zafar, 2008) Our research has uncovered a number of significant and important findings, which will be summarised below. However, it is important to note the absence of certain kinds of answers that might have been expected in light of certain stereotypical and negative portrayals of Muslim youth. This in-depth pilot study of twenty youths is an important and illuminating indicator, which can be followed up with further research. There is an absence of any kind of radical or extremist Muslim discourse among our interviewees.

In certain regards, the findings should not be surprising. 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.” (Bartlett, Birdwell, and King, 2010, p. 7) 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 (Beutel, 2011, p.2), 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. KB 8 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.” (KB 8. PE) PNL 7 introduces the political concept of “holistic indigenusness” to underscore a very similar contention. She regards the lack of integration owing to a complex of factors as inhibitors of greater engagement. She says: “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.” (PNL 7. NPE) To become holistically engaged, there needs to be a range of processes that reduce the propensity for the Muslim to be “othered.”

Overall, there were no mentions of Islamic scholars and the debate over democracy, of an anti-Western discourse, of a separationist mentality. The interviewees exhibited neither defeatist retreatism into their own communities nor fundamentalist essentialism set in the face of mainstream political society. (Kinnvall

and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011) This is consistent with Karim Karim's (2009) study of the breakdown of traditional authority amongst Muslims in western societies. Youth do not solely look to a single religious leader for guidance on how to live as a Muslim in Canada. Only KB 5 expressed an opinion that Islam and democracy are not compatible, but as discussed before, he also expressed traditional secular reasons for not being involved in politics, such as, its elite nature. He expressed interest in getting involved if he could make a positive difference for at-risk youths (Muslim or not), and for the Muslim community at large. Not a single interviewee condoned the use of violence to attain a political goal, with a few exceptions being made for wars of liberation. Deep piety, such as wearing a face veil, was not connected to disengagement from Canadian society, in fact, mostly the opposite. Some of the least vigilant in their daily prayers were also the least interested in politics.

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 immense import. 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 PNL 9, which impacted 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. (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011) Open and inclusive systems are better buttresses than closed and exclusionary systems against radicalisation leading to violence. (Hafez, 2003).

5.7 KEY FINDINGS

- Like Canadian youth in general, most interviewees are not interested or involved in politics, with a few very active in formal and/or informal politics;
- If attentive to politics, interviewees are interested in general issues like Senate or electoral reform;
- Interviewees are highly involved in volunteering for the charitable sector;
- Interviewees are relatively satisfied with Canadian democracy;
- Interviewees are relatively satisfied with Canadian policing;
- The faith of our interviewees in the justice system has been shaken by the arrest of the Toronto18 and the Omar Khadr cases;
- Interviewees exhibited some fragility in their sense of belonging to Canada;

- Interviewees exhibit little connection to their parents' country;
- Religion is an important part of the interviewees' identities;
- Religious values are a source of civic and political activism among our interviewees;
- Canadian values are very close to Islamic values in the estimation of our interviewees, with some exceptions around social practices, such as, alcohol, sex, and dress;
- Interviewees generally consider non-Muslim Canadians to be ignorant about Islam, especially those who rely on the media to understand Islam;
- Interviewees offer a sober assessment of their ability to impact the political process, with recognition of the relative strength of numbers;
- Radicalisation discourse and extremism is absent among the interviewees;
- Interviewees exhibit a generalised willingness to engage in the broader political society and political processes.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Do not problematise religious identity.

Government and community leaders, the media, and citizens should recognize that Canadian Muslim youth find solace in their faith. This enables them to meet the challenges of living in Canadian society. Narratives that treat Muslim values as in conflict to Canadian values exclude Muslim youth from actualising their desire to belong and contribute to Canadian society;

2. Encourage more media stories of positive Muslim youth activism.

By understanding the positive contributions Muslim youth make to improving Canadian society, the media and community leaders can alleviate some of the public concern about Muslims as “outsiders”;

3. Capitalise on Muslim youth’s willingness to engage with outreach programmes designed to involve them in the political process.

- (i) Educational and charitable organizations should engage in outreach and education to teach about the Canadian political system;
- (ii) Political parties, bureaucrats, interest groups, and others should build upon previous successes in conducting focus groups, consultative sessions, town hall meetings, and other fora, to listen to Muslim youth and learn their perspectives on the pressing policy issues of the day;
- (iii) Contact and dialogue between Muslim youth and others should be encouraged through direct opportunities for engagement in internships, constituency work, advocacy work, political and leadership campaigns, running for office, and broad community activism;

4. Train police forces, the judiciary, bureaucrats and elected officials in the basics of Islam, and the complex situations of Muslims as a minority in Canada, wishing to retain their identity and contribute positively.

Redirect some of the resources currently being devoted to counter radicalisation programmes and religious profiling initiatives. Instead, resources should be focused on countering exclusionary practices among political and judicial authorities that thwart young Muslims’ desire to participate and belong;

5. Continue to support Canadian multiculturalism, anti-racism, and job opportunities for Muslims.

Employment is obviously an important part of social inclusion, as it allows people to be contributors rather than dependent on Canadian society. But employment without anti-racism does not overcome alienation and marginalisation. Recognition of core Muslim values as compatible to Canadian values, as well as the support of Muslim youth for Canadian multiculturalism, will diminish exclusionary rhetoric

and capitalise on the youth's goodwill for contributing to Canadian society. Government and community leaders, notably those involved in community relations, anti-racism initiatives, and economic development, should take a leadership role here;

6. Fund more research about Muslim youths and their experiences in Canada that takes an empathetic, respectful, and community –centred approach.

Muslim communities are the first place in which Muslim youth are socialised into Canadian society. Research that understands these experiences, and develops policy emanating from indigenous experiences, will necessarily be better than that generated by outsiders. Government and charitable agencies should take the opportunity to fund research on dialogue, engagement, and community wellbeing;

7. Affirm and foster political engagement

Government and community leadership, the media, and citizens should acknowledge, affirm, celebrate, and foster the widespread attachment of young Muslims toward Canada and their willingness to engage in the political community. The establishment of an atmosphere of affirmation and engagement will set in place a virtuous cycle of encounter, opportunity, joint agency, and political achievement among young Muslims as well as between them and the wider political community.

APPENDIX ONE

PROMPTS FOR INTERVIEWEES

1. Thinking about your origins, can you tell me where did your parents come from and how they and you came to be in Canada?
2. How in general do you regard your role as a member of Canadian society?
3. How in general do you regard yourself as a political person?
4. How important is your religion to a sense of being who you are?
5. How much importance do you place on Islamic rituals such as the five times daily prayer and fasting during Ramadan? How active are you – if at all – in your mosque or mosques?
6. How well do you believe Canadian non-Muslims understand the basics of Islam?
7. To what extent are you involved in charitable and/or voluntary work in the community? How do you contribute?
8. Some people have less interest in politics than others. How about you? How closely would you say that you follow politics?
9. Who is currently Prime Minister of Canada?
10. Who is currently federal Minister of Finance in Canada?
11. Which party is the Official Opposition in Ottawa?
12. How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Canada?
13. Do you believe that your political involvement can have an impact on what the government does in Ottawa or Queen's Park?
14. How much faith do you have in the Canadian justice system?
15. How often would you say that you keep up with what's going on in politics and public affairs?
16. Please state what are your most trusted sources for getting political information? You can name both persons and types of media.

17. Which – if any - of the federal political parties comes closest to representing your views?
18. When it comes to social issues, would you generally describe yourself as conservative, progressive, or somewhere in the middle?
19. When it comes to economic issues, would you generally describe yourself as conservative, progressive, or somewhere in the middle?
20. What does citizenship mean to you?
21. Do you believe that Muslims enjoy full and equal rights of citizenship in Canada?
22. Should Canadian Muslims be encouraged to become more involved in the political process?
23. Under what circumstances do you think it would be justified to use force, compulsion or violence against fellow citizens to achieve a political goal?
 - 23b. What do you think of the Toronto 18?
24. How would you characterize any contact you have had with the police in Canada?
25. Is it possible to be both a devout Muslim and a fully engaged Canadian citizen or are there any contradictions between these two positions?
26. How far are Muslim values compatible with more general social values found in Canada today?
27. How far are political circumstances, people, and events in your or your parent's country of origin important to you?
28. When it comes to political involvement do you believe that Muslims in Canada should participate in their own organizations wherever possible or should they join non-Muslim Canadians in broader political organizations?
29. When it comes to charitable involvement do you believe that Muslims in Canada should participate in their own organizations wherever possible or should they join non-Muslim Canadians in broader charitable organizations?
30. In the last 24 months, which of the following political activities have you taken part in?
 - *Voting*
 - *Holding public office or a formal position in a political party or interest group*

- *Being a candidate for office*
- *Being a member of a political party or interest group*
- *Attending a political meeting or a public meeting*
- *Giving or helping to raise money for a candidate, party, or political cause*
- *Contributing time to a political campaign*
- *Contacting a public official or political leader*
- *Attending a demonstration or a protest rally*
- *Participating in a political discussion on line*
- *Joining a Facebook political or protest group*
- *Signing a petition on paper or on line*
- *Wearing a button or putting a sticker on a personal item*
- *Writing a letter to an editor or writing an opinion piece for a newspaper or a blog*
- *Initiating a political discussion in person*
- *Attempting to talk another person into voting a certain way*

APPENDIX TWO

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	Occ/Field
KB1	M	21	Indian	5	N	Y	N	College	Teacher
KB2	F	23	Syrian	23		Y		BA	<i>Political Science</i>
KB3	F	21	Pakistani/Canadian	16	N	Y	N	Uni 3	<i>Business</i>
KB4	M	19	Quebec/Sudani	19	Y	Y	Y	Uni 1	<i>Computer Engineer</i>
KB5	M	21	Indian	18	N	Y	N		<i>Student</i>
KB6	M	15	Algerian	15	N	Y	N	Gr.10	
KB7	F	17	Syria/British	14	Y	Y	N	Gr.12	<i>Psychology</i>
KB8	F	20	Indian	20	Y	Y	N	Uni 1	<i>Political Science</i>
KB9	M	17	Guyana/Egypt	17	Y	Y	N	Gr.12	Part-time Lifeguard
KB10	F	19	Pakistani	8	N	Y	Y	Uni	<i>Poli Sci/History</i>
PNL1	M	20	Iraqi	7	Y	Y	N	Uni	
PNL2	M	20	South Asian	20	N	Y	N	Uni	<i>Business</i>
PNL3	F	20	Egyptian/Canadian	16	Y	N	Y	Uni	<i>Biomedical</i>
PNL4	M	18	South Asian	11	N	Y	N	Gr.12	<i>Engineering</i>
PNL5	F	20	Lebanese/Canadian	20	Y	Y	N	Gr.12	<i>Family Studies</i>
PNL6	F	21	Pakistani	11	N	Y	N	Gr.12	<i>Finance</i>
PNL7	F	23	Palestinian	17	N	Y	N	BA	Settlement Worker
PNL8	F	24	Palestinian	8.5	N	Y	N	BA	Settlement Worker
PNL9	M	22	Pakistani	22	Y	Y	N	HBA	<i>Business</i>
PNL10	M	21	Middle East	9.5	N	Y	N	Uni 3	<i>Finance</i>

Key: M/F = Male or Female; YIC = Years in Canada; IS = Attended Islamic School; PS = Attended Public School; HS= Home Schooled; **Level** = 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.

ID	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
KB1	Manufacture	Quality Control
KB2	PR Officer	Naturopath
KB3	Security	Dietary aid
KB4	Security Guard	Teacher
KB5	Retired	Retired
KB6	Engineer	Teacher
KB7	Entrepreneur	Translator
KB8	Retired	Daycare
KB9	IT Consult	Nurse
KB10		Homemaker
PNL1		
PNL2	Unemployed	Unemployed
PNL3		Graphic Artist
PNL4	Banker	Homemaker
PNL5	Custodian	Teacher
PNL6	Transport Canada	Homemaker
PNL7	Graphic Design	ECE
PNL8	Engineer	Doctor
PNL9	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur
PNL10	Entrepreneur	Sales Associate

ID	V	HP	MPP	PM	RM	CT	PO	PR	PD	FA	SP	WB	WL	IP	AT
KB1															
KB2	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x
KB3	x									x					
KB4	x			x				x		x	x				
KB5										x				x	
KB6															
KB7											x				
KB8	x			x	x	x		x			x			x	x
KB9															
KB10	x						x		x	x	x			x	
PNL1	x														
PNL2	x			x			x	x	x		x		x	x	
PNL3								x		x	x				
PNL4											x	x		x	x
PNL5									x	x			x	x	x
PNL6										x	x		x	x	x
PNL7													x		
PNL8	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
PNL9	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
PNL10				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

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