

Integration by Proximity (Proxy): Myth or Reality?
Acculturation Experiences of Muslim Women in Winnipeg's Secular Universities

by

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Dedication

To my family,

Thank you Mama, Papa, Adnan, Fourat, Mido and Nousha

Abstract

This study explores how Muslim women of immigrant background experience acculturation and belonging in secular universities. This matters because Muslim women's experiences in Prairie universities remain less visible, while attention centers on larger provinces or public controversies about religious identity. In this context, the study asks how these women understand integration, move across acculturation positions, and negotiate intersecting religious, cultural, gendered, and educational identities. It also examines how they use community resources to navigate institutional challenges. The study is based on interviews with Muslim women at three Winnipeg universities, including the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and the Université de Saint-Boniface. The analysis uses Berry's acculturation framework with Yosso's community cultural wealth model and a diachronic approach. In this study, acculturation is not a fixed position, but a situated movement shaped by factors such as family, faith, community, institutional recognition, and political events. The findings indicate that integration through proximity is incomplete when it means only access to university spaces. At the same time, participants continue their studies, adjust to campus life, build relationships, and plan future careers. However, they also face stereotyping, selective visibility, pressure to explain themselves, and uncertainty about institutional support. In response, faith, family networks, Muslim student associations, friendships, and community ties help participants find care, practical guidance, resilience, and ways to resist and counter exclusion. This study concludes that integration should be understood as a process that recognizes multiple facets of identity and belonging, separation, or assimilation. It also generates recommendations, including reciprocal recognition, concrete accommodation, and university cultures that enable Muslim women to belong without surrendering core values.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Focus of this study: This study is not about asking *what if* but understanding *what is*. It delves into the lived realities of Muslim women, specifically those identified as 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants, as they navigate the complex process of integration within Canadian society. Contrary to expectations, integration for this group has sometimes resulted in null or negative outcomes, particularly in education, employment, and their broader social habitus.

This research seeks to understand the acculturation journeys of these women over time, to understand how they think about their identities as members of a visible religious minority while participating in secular universities where Islam often serves as a defining identity marker. To maintain a consistent analytical focus, the study is organized around a single overarching question: how do 1.5- and second-generation Muslim immigrant women navigate identity, belonging, and acculturation within secular university spaces? This central question is examined through three interrelated sub-questions that move from the descriptive to the explanatory: (a) What markers of Muslim identity do these women express and experience? (b) How do they mobilize forms of capital and navigational strategies to negotiate barriers in everyday university life? (c) In what ways do they construct counter-stories that resist dominant narratives and reposition their belonging?

These questions are addressed through three corresponding objectives that mirror the same descriptive-to-explanatory progression: (a) to identify the markers of Muslim identity as expressed by participants; (b) to examine how secular universities shape the identity construction and navigational strategies of Muslim women; and (c) to analyze how these women negotiate their relationships with their religious and cultural heritage within predominantly non-Muslim societal contexts. By aligning each guiding question with a corresponding objective, the study sustains a coherent analytical focus, integrating what these women experience with how they navigate identity, belonging, and acculturation throughout the thesis.

To address these objectives, this study employs John Berry's (1997) Acculturation Framework and Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model (CCW), incorporating a diachronic perspective to examine how identity and integration evolve across time.

Significance of the research: This research offers a window into the experiences of Muslim women attending secular educational institutions. It seeks to uncover how these women perceive and construct their Muslim identities within a diasporic context where secular schools often serve as intersections between parental expectations, cultural heritage, students' needs, and societal pressures, creating a unique space where identity is continuously negotiated. By offering a sociological analysis of their identities, this study aims to enhance communication with Muslim women, address their specific needs, and foster environments that support their academic, social, and cultural integration.

This study stands out for its novelty as the first comprehensive exploration of Muslim women's identity construction in Winnipeg within secular educational contexts. While much of the existing literature on Canadian Muslim women revolves around Quebec (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024) and the politics surrounding the hijab (Hoodfar, 2003; Zine, 2006), this research addresses how these women navigate their identities within our Manitoban universities. It amplifies their voices that are often marginalized in academic and public discourse (Abu-Laban, 2013).

Furthermore, in diverse societies such as Canada, the weakening of cultural and religious identities can lead to feelings of social isolation among minority groups (Policy Options, 2017; Cardus, 2022). In response, Muslim communities have increasingly prioritized safeguarding their cultural and religious values against the pressures of assimilation by dominant groups (Environics Institute, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2022). For young Muslim women, these dynamics can become especially pronounced in secular educational settings, where prevailing societal norms may clash with their religious values and family expectations (Canadian Geographic, 2021; Helly, 2004).

As such, the findings from this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of religion, gender, and immigrant identity in the Canadian context, a broader academic discussion on acculturation, integration, and resilience among minority youth in multicultural societies, and practical recommendations to better support Muslim youth, particularly women, in navigating secular educational and social spaces, fostering their inclusion and success.

By exploring these themes, this study contributes to broader scholarly conversations on identity construction, acculturation, and belonging within multicultural societies. It offers a nuanced account of how Muslim women actively negotiate their identities across institutional and community spaces, challenging simplified narratives of integration and assimilation. In doing so, it underscores the importance of continued research on Muslim youth in Canada, particularly in relation to changing institutional dynamics and the lived realities of minority communities.

Immigration and Hospitality; A Sociological Perspective: Immigration to date has been largely shaped and dominated by a neoliberal orthodoxy, even though it appears to be influenced by programs and regulations reflecting the political orientations/colours of different governments (Liberal v. Conservative). These adjustments have only affected the numbers, qualifications, or origins of immigrants (Kazemipur, 2020; Kofman, 2020; Mitchell, 2008; Root et al, 2014;).

Critiques of this orthodoxy highlight a troubling reality: once in Canada, immigrants are often valued solely for their economic contributions, viewed almost as commodities - like cattle- for economic growth rather than as human beings whose integration and well-being are critical to a cohesive society. This instrumental approach neglects the broader responsibility of fostering meaningful integration (Dobrowolsky & Jenson, 2024; IRCC, 2024; Root et al, 2014). Given Canada's increasing immigrant population, many of whom come from culturally diverse backgrounds, understanding and addressing the dynamics of integration is more crucial than ever.

As such, this study adopts a philosophy that emphasizes the host society's responsiveness to the needs of 'others', allowing them to shape the societal framework, ultimately contributing to creating an inclusive and cohesive society (Canada.ca, 2012; Rutenberg, 2011; UNHCR, 2024).

Hospitality, in this sense, becomes a cornerstone of successful integration, though it is often overlooked and rarely explicitly mentioned in public policy discourses. Understood as the creation of a welcoming and supportive environment, hospitality is thus indispensable to the integration process (Bauder, 2016; Wise, 2014). However, it has faced significant challenges, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent ongoing wars (Palestine, Israel, Ukraine), which has fuelled insular attitudes and anti-immigrant sentiments in some sectors (Chalifoux & Peschner, 2022).

For first generation immigration, hospitality has often been constrained by institutional barriers and societal skepticism (Lugosi & Ndiuini, 2022). However, second-generation immigrants, including 1.5 and 2.0 generations who are the focus of this study, may encounter a different form of hospitality - one that increasingly relies on social inclusion through education, employment, and peer networks (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024). It is to note that as public policies evolve, the nature and extent of hospitality extended to later generations are likely to change, leading to varied integration outcomes shaped by shifting political and social climates. This highlights the urgent need for policies and practices that prioritize both the human and social dimensions of integration, ensuring immigrants are valued as individuals rather than solely as contributors to economic growth.

Diversity in Focus; Muslim Women in Canada: The Muslim population in Canada has seen significant demographic and social growth, becoming one of the country's most prominent and diverse religious minorities. According to the 2021 Canadian Census, the number of Canadian Muslim surpassed one million members, making them the fourth-largest minority group (Statistic Canada, 2023). Notably, the largest proportion of this population, nearly 30%, consists of Canadian-born Muslims, reflecting a shift towards second-generation integration (Statistics Canada, 2021).

With that, Canadian Muslims stand out for their prominent levels of education and youthful demographic compared to other Canadian ethnic and religious groups (Statistics Canada, 2022). Indeed, strong commitment to education is valued within the Muslim community, seen not only as a pathway to success in a competitive global economy but also as a core Islamic principle rooted in faith (e.g: Surat Al-Qalam, from the Holy Qu'ran 1:52). As a result, Muslims are among the most educated faith groups in Canada, with a significantly higher proportion of them holding university degrees compared to the national average (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024). In fact, their number of doctorate holders alone is sufficient to staff the academic faculties of two Canadian universities (Hamdani & Jafri, 2004). Since 2011, over half of Muslim post-secondary graduates

obtained their credentials in Canada or other OECD countries with comparable educational systems, and two-thirds of these graduates hold doctoral degrees (Hamdani, 2015).

However, despite their social and familial capital, evidenced by high parental education levels and professional achievements, Muslims in Canada still face persistent challenges related to social and symbolic integration (Bankston, 2004; Kanouté et al, 2008). These struggles may be exacerbated by unfavorable societal perceptions, with surveys consistently documenting discrimination and stereotyping against the Muslims (Helly, 2004a; Ipsos Reid, 2005).

In fact, unemployment among Muslims remains notably high, nearly double the national average, and one of the highest among other visible minorities who share similar educational and cultural backgrounds. Reports from 2001, 2011 and as recently as 2024 reveal that even Canadian-born Muslims with locally earned degrees face higher unemployment rates than their peers (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024). This discrepancy cannot be fully explained by traditional factors such as regional economic conditions, declining industries, or insufficient qualifications, thus pointing to systemic barriers within the labor market.

This situation is particularly pronounced for Muslim women in Canada, who represent one of the most educated yet under utilized demographics. Reports such as Muslim Women: Beyond the Perceptions (CCMW, 2001-2019) and a recent CIRANO study (2023) underscore the persistent labor market challenges faced by Muslim women. While first-generation immigrants are often more vulnerable to unemployment and low-paying jobs, members of visible minorities, particularly second-generation individuals, continue to experience significant barriers to labor market integration (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024).

For instance, Muslim women in Canada are more likely than other women to hold advanced degrees, with nearly one in three having a university degree and twice as many holding master's or doctoral degrees, with all proportions being significantly higher than the national average for women. Yet, despite these qualifications, they experience higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than both Muslim men and other women in Canada who hold lower qualifications. Many are overrepresented in lower-paying occupations, such as clerical and sales roles, irrespective of their advanced educational backgrounds (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024; CCMW, 2019, 2024; Hamdani, 2004) This paradox of high education but limited economic opportunities highlights the unique challenges faced by Muslim women in Canada, raising questions about the effectiveness of integration for visible minorities. Contrary to expectations, second-generation immigrants, particularly these women belonging to a visible minority, do not consistently outperform their parents in terms of socioeconomic integration. The assumption that they will benefit from their parents' networks, Canadian education, and fluency in official languages is being challenged, as they continue to face systemic barriers (Boudarbat & Adom, 2024).

The underutilization of the skills and potential of Muslim women points to broader structural issues in Canada's labor market. In a context where Canada seeks to recruit more foreign workers

through immigration programs to address labor shortages (CIC News, 2025; ESDC, 2025; IRCC, 2025), it would seem logical to first tap into the full potential of highly educated individuals already in the country. The principle of '*integration by proxy*', where first-generation immigrants sacrifice to enable their children's successful integration, appears increasingly tenuous for visible minorities (Debbarman, 2021). Instead, structural barriers continue to impede the economic integration of young people from these communities, particularly Muslim women (Boudarbat, 2023).

As such, we question the structural inequalities that persist and seek to understand why integration efforts are falling short for Muslim women, in hope that addressing these challenges will uncover an understanding of the talents and contributions of these citizens, for them to be fully recognized and their capabilities utilized. In other words, creating a more inclusive and equitable society, a hospitable society.

To delve deeper into these dynamics, it is essential to consider factors beyond employment barriers and examine how societal stereotypes and cultural expectations intersect to shape the lived experiences of Muslim women (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022). In the context of secular universities, these challenges become particularly nuanced, as Muslim women navigate environments where dominant norms often contrast with their cultural and religious values (University of Toronto, 2023). Identity, in this setting, is not a static characteristic or a problem to resolve; it is a dynamic and evolving process, shaped by and shaping how these women integrate, acculturate, and construct meaning within these environments (PMC, 2021, 2024; Oxford Academic, 2020). This study therefore frames identity as both a lens and a means of understanding how Muslim women exercise resilience, agency, and meaning making within these spaces.

Research Questions: This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of Muslim immigrant women in Winnipeg's secular universities, focusing on their acculturation processes, intersecting identities, and perceptions of integration in higher education. Given the complex interplay of religion, gender, migration status, and educational participation, this research is guided by one overarching question and three sub-questions.

As such, our principal research question is 'What are the experiences and perceptions of Muslim women of their own acculturation in Winnipeg's secular universities, with special attention to intersecting identities?'. This central question aims to uncover how these women, as both immigrants and members of a religious minority, experience and interpret their process of acculturation in an educational system that operates within a secular framework. The study emphasizes intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) to examine how religious, cultural, and gendered identities interact in shaping their experiences.

To further explore specific dimensions of the principal research question, this study is guided by the following sub-questions:

- *How to Muslim women of immigrant origin make sense of and navigate their intersecting identities, with special attention to religious habitus, family dynamics, and educational participation?*

This question addresses the ways in which multiple identities, particularly those tied to faith, family roles and student life intersect in shaping Muslim women's experiences in secular universities. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus, the study examines how religious upbringing and cultural background influence their interactions, choices, and sense of self in academic spaces. It revisits and deepens the exploration of identity negotiation, focusing on how religion, family expectations, and academic aspirations intersect. It considers how cultural and religious values influence educational choices, social interactions, and career aspirations.

- What are Muslim women's (1.5 and 2nd generation) perceptions of the factors that hinder or support their integration or belonging in secular educational spaces?

By distinguishing between first-generation (immigrant), 1.5-generation (arrived as children), and second-generation (born to immigrant parents) women, this question explores how integration experiences differ across generations. It investigates structural and social factors, such as institutional policies, peer interactions, and faculty support that shape a sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

- To what extent do Muslim women use various forms of capital to navigate secular and multicultural educational environments as well as to challenge dominant narratives and produce anti-hegemonic responses?

These questions build on the Yosso's (2005) CCW Model to analyze how Muslim women utilize their resources, networks, and identities to assert agency, resist marginalization, and construct counter-narratives in secular academic spaces, particularly within Winnipeg universities. Thus, it connects to critical race theory and postcolonial feminism, considering how Muslim women challenge hegemonic discourses (Spivak, 1988) and assert their identities within multicultural but often Eurocentric educational institution (Khosrojerdi, 2015,) As such, this inquiry engages with navigational capital (Yosso, 2005), assessing how Muslim women employ their knowledge, resilience, and support networks to adapt, resist discrimination, and create inclusive spaces within academia.

With that, I believe these questions align with qualitative inquiry by emphasizing subjective experiences, identity formation, and agency (Creswell, 2013). This study integrates intersectionality, acculturation theory, and critical perspectives to capture the complexities of Muslim women experiences in secular educational spaces. By examining both barriers and strategies for empowerment, the research contributes to broader discussions on diversity, inclusion, and anti-hegemonic resistance in academia. (Please refer to the Interview Guide in the Appendix 1).

The structure of this study is as follows. Chapter II reviews the literature on identity, religion, and education, and situates the experiences of Muslim women within Western and Canadian secular educational contexts. Chapter III presents the theoretical framework, drawing primarily on Berry's (1997) acculturation model and Yosso's (2005) CCW framework, and details the methodology adopted for this qualitative case study. Chapter IV outlines the research design and analytical framework, including the data collection procedures, sample, and coding strategy. Chapter V presents the results of the eight semi-structured interviews, organized around the participants' acculturation trajectories and the forms of capital they mobilize. Finally, Chapter VI discusses these findings in dialogue with the literature, addresses the implications for secular universities, and identifies the study's limitations and avenues for future research, before Chapter VII offers a brief conclusion.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter synthesizes the scholarly literature that supports the theoretical and empirical foundations of this study. It proceeds in five interconnected movements. The first examines how identity has been theorized across essentialist and non-essentialist traditions. The second explores the specific dynamics of religious identity formation, migration, and intergenerational negotiation. The third situates Muslim identity within its doctrinal, sociological, and symbolic dimensions. It also uses Bourdieu's concept of religious habitus alongside more recent scholarship on diaspora Islam. The fourth examines the role of educational institutions as places of both social reproduction and active resistance for Muslim women in the West. The fifth and final movement brings these themes together. It then identifies the conceptual gaps that this study addresses, especially the underrepresentation of Muslim immigrant women's experiences in Prairie university contexts in Canada.

2.1 Theorizing Identity: From Essentialist to Non-Essentialist Frameworks

Since the 1960s, identity has become central to social analysis and public discourse. In addition, scholars in fields from psychology to sociology have used the term during a period shaped by globalization and migration. The term is used in different ways. For example, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) describe identity as *"a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category"* (p. 7). Likewise, Melucci (1995) defines collective identity as *"an interactive and shared definition"* (p. 44). Erikson (1968) presents identity as an important part of the self. More specifically, he connects personal identity to *"selfsameness and continuity"* (p. 50). By contrast, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) warn that identity can become the *"evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses"* (p. 8). Put simply, Erikson focuses on the inner self, Melucci focuses on shared group action, and Brubaker and Cooper focus on the limits of the term identity.

Essentialist approaches see identity as something people are born with and that stays the same over time, regardless of outside influences. Lipiansky (1998) describes personal identity as *"the organized set of feelings, representations, experiences, and future plans related to oneself"* (p. 173, translated from French). He also explains that personal identity is the subjective appropriation of social identity (pp. 173–174, translated from French). In plain language, social identity is how others classify a person, while personal identity is how that person sees and understands herself. Tajfel and Turner (1986) write that *"[a] positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups"* (p. 16). In short, people often compare their group with other groups so their own group can seem more positive or more valued. From a cultural perspective, Tremblay (1983) presents identity through three dimensions. Moreover, he highlights self-image, way of life, and worldview.

However, essentialist conceptions have been widely critiqued. Hall (1996) argues that identities are *"never singular but multiply constructed"* (p. 4). In other words, identity cannot be reduced to one fixed category such as race, gender, or religion. Gilroy (2000) warns about

hostility toward *"the half-different and the partially familiar"* (p. 106). This means that people who blur neat boundaries of race or culture may provoke anxiety because they do not fit so-called pure categories. Anthias (2001) argues that hybridity poses *"challenges to static and essentialist notions of ethnicity and identity"* (p. 619). Put differently, treating identities as fixed and monolithic can hide internal differences and unequal power relations.

In contrast, non-essentialist or constructivist theories conceptualize identity as fluid, dynamic, and socially constructed, evolving through interactions, relationships, and experiences across contexts. Brubaker (2001) notes that the prevailing constructivist approach often treats identities as *"construites, fluides, et multiples"* (p. 66, translated from French). This helps explain why identity is often described as changing across different social settings and shaped by power, culture, and individual agency. These approaches are not without critics. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argue that identity can become *"too elastic to be analytically useful"* (p. 2), while Bayart's (2010) critique is narrower and targets postcolonial studies that, in his view, remain trapped in culturalism and identity categories. Yet fluidity does not preclude continuity: religious commitments can still provide durable moral orientation and belonging even within socially constructed identities (Holliday, 2021; Ysseldyk et al., 2010).

2.2 Postcolonial Theory and the Justification for a Non-Essentialist Framework

Postcolonial theory enriches the constructivist framework because it addresses the politics of difference and the colonial genealogies of identity categories. Bhabha (2007) critiques traditional identity frameworks that impose singular, fixed categories tied to specific territories or historical narratives. Consequently, he turns to the concept of subject positions, which are unstable and continually negotiated. Bhabha (2007) also argues that the Third Space *"enables other positions to emerge"* (p. 54). Central to his framework is hybridity, which challenges essentialist ideas because identities take shape through interaction and movement across cultural and social boundaries. Bhabha's Third Space offers a productive lens for examining how Muslim women in Manitoba negotiate competing symbolic registers. Furthermore, he describes it as a space where cultural meanings have no "primordial unity or fixity" (p. 37), which helps explain why belonging remains open and negotiated.

This research adopts a non-essentialist framework because it best captures the dynamic, fluid, and socially constructed nature of identity as lived by Muslim immigrant women in Manitoba (Holliday, 2021; Huang, 2020). Huang (2020) describes identity development as an *"ongoing, nonlinear process, involving a constant exchange between them and their environments"* (p. 205), which reinforces this view. Muslim women in Manitoba navigate overlapping cultural influences, systemic barriers, and societal expectations within a multicultural society. Following Holliday (2021), this study recognizes that certain identity elements such as religious values provide continuity and grounding. As Ysseldyk et al. (2010) note, religion is anchored in "guiding beliefs and symbols" and offers a "sacred" worldview and "eternal" group membership (p. 60), even as identity continues to evolve through broader social forces and personal agency.

This nuanced position captures identity as both resilient and adaptive, essential for understanding the acculturation dynamics at work in Canadian secular universities.

Importantly, the multiplicity of identity does not imply arbitrariness. Calhoun (1995) observes that modern identity is always constructed amid a *"flow of contending cultural discourses"* (p. 196). Accordingly, Muslim immigrant women in Manitoba negotiate identity within overlapping cultural, religious, and social pressures rather than within one fixed framework.

2.3 Religious Identity Formation: Dual Processes, Migration, and Intergenerational Tensions

Religious identity, according to Dubar (2000), is shaped through two interconnected processes. First, diachronic construction refers to the way identity develops across an individual's life story, as inherited identity is negotiated alongside self-defined beliefs; meanwhile, Dubar (2000) suggests that identity is *"the story [individuals] tell about what they are"* (p. 111). By contrast, synchronic construction unfolds in real-time interactions with social groups, where identities are assigned through collective action and become a basis for recognition and belonging. In other words, diachronic construction explains identity across time, whereas synchronic construction explains identity in the present social moment.

Peek (2005), drawing on ethnographic research with Muslim university students in the United States, identifies three stages of religious identity development. First, religion appears as an "ascribed identity" (p. 223) inherited through family and community; next, it becomes a "chosen identity" (p. 226) as students reflect on and affirm their beliefs; finally, it emerges as a "declared identity" (p.230) when they articulate their Muslim identity more publicly in response to social pressure. Consequently, Peek shows that religious salience intensifies in response to societal pressures and crisis events such as post-9/11. In turn, this trajectory resonates strongly with the contemporary Canadian context, where Islamophobia continues to escalate; indeed, the Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia (2025) reports a *"94% increase in police-reported hate crimes against Muslims in the previous year."*

Vasquez (1990) shows that migration introduces significant disruptions to socialization by creating a "break" in socialization models that unsettles inherited cultural frameworks. Moreover, migration may produce "devalued identity perceptions" when traditions from the country of origin are marginalized or treated as inferior. Finally, it can lead to "conflicting identifications" as immigrants are pushed to reconcile competing social judgments and identity markers. Keaton (2006) introduces the concept of *bricolage identitaire*, or DIY identity work, to describe how youth piece together hybrid selves by blending heritage and host-culture elements, a process that may generate feelings of exclusion and fragmentation instead of straightforward empowerment. More specifically, Keaton (2006) notes that Muslim girls are often cast as the "quintessential other", which clarifies that *bricolage identitaire* is a negotiated process of assembling identity under competing social expectations.

Migration also intensifies generational tensions. Conflicts often crystallize around gender roles, career aspirations, and cultural affiliation. Children of immigrants frequently negotiate parental traditions alongside the norms of the host society (Huang, 2020; Keaton, 2006). These generational conflicts are not purely personal but embedded in systemic forces such as Islamophobia, assimilationist pressures, and economic exclusion. For example, the Canadian Guide to Understanding and Combating Islamophobia states that Islamophobia operates on *"three key levels (system-level, community-level and individual)"* and extends into schools and workplaces (Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, 2024). It further notes that visibly Muslim women are *"particularly vulnerable to hate"* and that barriers in hiring and promotion can intensify *"economic precarity"* (Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, 2024).

2.4 Identity Negotiation in Minority Contexts and the Role of Religion as an Anchor

In minority contexts, identity construction becomes distinctively complex. Community institutions emphasize markers such as religious practices, language, or traditional attire as focal points for post-9/11 refers to the period following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States, after which Muslims in North America often faced heightened suspicion, surveillance, and hostility.

Contemporary religious phenomena are also undergoing profound transformations driven by modernity, leading to what Laplantine (2003) describes as religion à la carte, where individuals tailor religious practices to personal preferences in pluralistic settings. In the specific case of Muslim immigrant women in Manitoba, these dynamics are especially pronounced, as they preserve familial and religious values while also negotiating the dominant norms of Canadian society (Keaton, 2006). Indeed, Ould Ahmed (2020) situates religious identity in Winnipeg at the *"crossroads of Canadian/Manitoban society and the Muslim community in Winnipeg"* (p. 88).

Religious identity is intertwined with ethnic, socio-cultural, and other dimensions of selfhood (Beyer, 2007; Triki-Yamani et al., 2008; Zine, 2008). Religion is often understood as a subcategory of culture, sometimes dominant or hegemonic within it (Lincoln, 2000). Religious identity provides individuals with a sense of legitimacy and continuity. Accordingly, Ruano-Borbalan and Halpern (2004) argue that it can connect people to a *"virtually eternal symbolic body"* (p. 7) rooted in centuries of tradition. In simple terms, this means that religion links a person to a community and a history that feels larger and longer-lasting than the individual self. Smith (1998) notes that religion establishes symbolic boundaries between adherents and non-adherents. Consequently, these boundaries contribute to collective identity and intersect with ethnic, racial, and cultural factors. Dorais (2004) further emphasizes that cultural and religious identity rests on two complementary principles, similarity and otherness. Likewise, religion functions not as a fixed cultural marker but as a dynamic attribute around which actors unite to create shared meanings. Castells (1999) and Dubar (2000) emphasize that identity negotiation occurs along a temporal axis that includes biographical and social dimensions. Furthermore, it

also unfolds along a relational axis shaped by similarity and otherness, and both axes are central to this study's analytical framework.

2.5 Muslim Identity, Islamic Practices, and Symbolic Power

Muslim identity functions as both an individual and a collective phenomenon. Moreover, it includes psychological, social, and cultural dimensions that give individuals meaningful reference points and help them engage with their environment as autonomous agents. Religion for Muslims is more than a belief system. Rather, it serves as a psychological anchor, a cultural framework, and a social marker. For Muslim women, visible religious markers such as the hijab serve as contested symbols that combine religious, cultural, and personal dimensions and reveal complex negotiations between individual autonomy, cultural heritage, and societal expectations (Hamdan, 2007; Zine, 2008). In Canadian contexts, such markers can make Muslim women targets of gendered Islamophobia, but they can also stand as powerful symbols of identity affirmation (Hamdan, 2007; Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, 2024, 2025; Zine, 2008;).

Islam is a comprehensive system of values and principles rooted in the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him [PBUH]). As Esposito (2002) notes, many Muslims describe Islam as a "*total way of life*" (p. 152). It is commonly described through five foundational pillars that structure faith and daily life, namely Shahada (Declaration of Faith), Salat (Prayer), Zakaah (Almsgiving), Siyam (Fasting during Ramadan), and Hajj (Pilgrimage) (Nasr, 2004; Esposito, 2011). The Shahada expresses the core testimony of faith in one God and in Muhammad as His Messenger. The other pillars give that faith visible form through prayer, charity, fasting during Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able. For Muslims living in Western minority contexts, these practices can also serve as sources of ethical guidance, community attachment, and continuity across migration (Ould Ahmed, 2020).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides an indispensable structural lens for this study. In his account, durable dispositions shape how individuals perceive, judge, and act in the social world (Bourdieu, 1977). This perspective helps explain how Muslim women in Manitoba inherit embodied religious dispositions while also renegotiating them within secular institutional spaces.

2.6 Islam in the West: Deterritorialization, Diasporic Pluralism, and Community Spaces

The migration of Muslims to Western countries has produced profound transformations in Islamic practice and community organization. Roy (2004) argues that Islam in minority settings becomes deterritorialized. In this context, forms of religiosity take shape less through a single national culture and more through transnational circulation, minority status, and individualized interpretation. For Muslim women in Winnipeg, this means that religious identity is negotiated across several sites. Consequently, family, mosque, peer networks, and the wider Canadian public sphere all shape that process.

Within these contexts, private and semi-public community spaces such as homes, mosques, Islamic centres, and student associations become crucial sites of transmission, belonging, and negotiation. Wenger (1998) helps conceptualize such spaces as communities sustained through shared practice and mutual recognition. As Wenger (1998) notes, these communities develop through “*shared ways of engaging in doing things together*” (p. 125). Ould Ahmed (2020) likewise observes that “*Those for whom the Muslim community is more meaningful are more involved and, therefore, internalize its communicated message*” (p. 52).

2.7 Schools as Sites of Social Reproduction and Identity Negotiation

Critical sociology has long described schooling as a site of social reproduction in which dominant norms are legitimized and unevenly distributed forms of capital are rewarded (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For Muslim women, educational institutions in Canada can offer important opportunities, but they can also become spaces where religious and cultural identities are negotiated and sometimes contested (Khosrojerdi, 2015; Zine, 2001). In secular universities, questions of dress, visibility, peer interaction, and campus participation can require ongoing negotiation between familial expectations, religious commitments, and academic aspirations (Khosrojerdi, 2015; Ould Ahmed, 2020).

Recent research also documents an escalation of gendered Islamophobia on Canadian campuses and in public discourse following October 7, 2023. As the Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia (2025) reports, “*We have again heard from countless individuals and institutional leaders who have faced harassment, hate speech, online abuse, vandalism, and violence*” (p. 6). Canadian reports also describe increased harassment, exclusion, and scrutiny directed at Muslim students, while community networks, student organizations, and peer solidarity can operate as counterweights to marginalization (Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, 2024, 2025). In this context, Muslim women also exercise agency by challenging stereotypes and educating non-Muslims about Islam and Islamic beliefs (Khosrojerdi, 2015).

2.8 Muslim Women’s Narratives of Belonging in Canada

Religion remains central to many Muslim women’s narratives of identity. Moreover, it offers moral guidance, a sense of community, and a language through which they interpret everyday experiences (Ould Ahmed, 2020; Zine, 2008). Because markers such as the hijab are publicly legible, Muslim women’s identities are often rendered unusually visible within debates over multiculturalism, secularism, and integration (Hamdan, 2007; Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, 2024).

Since the post-9/11 era, scholarship on Muslim women in Western contexts has moved from descriptive accounts to more nuanced analyses of discrimination, identity negotiation, and belonging in pluralistic institutions. Zine’s (2001, 2006) work in Canadian educational settings shows that Muslim students use religious identity as a form of resistance. As Zine (2001) writes, Muslim students were able “*to use their identities as a means of resistance to counteract their*

marginality within secular Eurocentric schools" (p. 401). Related studies in higher education reach a similar conclusion. Muslim women negotiate identity at the intersection of gender, religion, and institutional expectation, and they rely on family, community, and faith-based resources to sustain agency (Hamdan, 2007; Khosrojerdi, 2015; Latif et al., 2018).

2.9 Counter-Narratives, Representation, and Definitional Considerations

A recurring tension in the literature concerns representation and voice. Dominant public and policy discourses in Canada have frequently framed Muslim women as passive subjects of religious and cultural constraint, a framing that scholars have consistently challenged as reductive and orientalist (Hamdan, 2007; Zine, 2006). These counter-narratives matter because they shift attention from imposed representations to Muslim women's own accounts of belonging, choice, and agency within institutions that can simultaneously accommodate and exclude them (Khosrojerdi, 2015; Latif et al., 2018).

This study maintains a distinction between religion and culture because collapsing the two can obscure specifically religious beliefs, practices, and ethical commitments by recoding them as ethnicity or inherited custom. In an interview tied to his analysis of globalized Islam, Roy (2004) argues that *"Islam should be treated merely as a religion, and not as the expression of ethnic minority groups"*. This formulation is especially useful in diaspora contexts, where practices described from the outside as "cultural" may be understood by participants as religious obligations, values, or forms of belonging. Muslim identity is therefore treated here as open, multifaceted, and evolving, integrating psychological, social, and cultural dimensions without reducing religion to ethnic heritage or doctrinal compliance alone. This approach foregrounds the agency of Muslim women in Manitoba as active interpreters and architects of their own identities within specific institutional and societal contexts (Ould Ahmed, 2020; Roy, 2004; Zine, 2008).

2.10 Theoretical Synthesis: Acculturation, Cultural Wealth, and the Framework for this Study

This review has traced how identity, religion, and education intersect in shaping the experiences of Muslim women in Western and, more specifically, Canadian contexts. Muslim women's identities are not fixed but continuously negotiated through interactions with family, community, peers, and broader societal structures. In Canadian educational settings, especially secular universities, religious identity can become a visible axis of difference through which Muslim women face stereotyping, pressures to assimilate, and gendered Islamophobia (Hamdan, 2007; Khosrojerdi, 2015; Zine, 2008;). At the same time, faith, Muslim student networks, and wider community ties can support resilience and agency, while Ould Ahmed (2020) likewise shows that Muslim students in Winnipeg actively construct identity through religion, school, family, and community in a non-Muslim majority context.

Two theoretical frameworks are particularly useful for this study's empirical investigation. Berry's (1992, 1997) acculturation model identifies four strategies (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization). It maps them along two dimensions, the maintenance of

cultural heritage and the development of relationships with the larger society. Integration combines continuity with participation in the "larger society." Assimilation occurs when people no longer seek to "maintain" their original culture and instead seek interaction with others. Separation means "holding on" to the original culture while avoiding interaction with others. Marginalization appears when there is "little possibility" for cultural maintenance and little interest in relations with others, often under conditions of exclusion (Berry, 1992, 1997). This model captures the structural pressures Muslim women navigate in secular Canadian universities. However, its application must be qualified by attention to unequal power relations not always highlighted in Berry's original formulation.

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework offers a complementary lens. It identifies six forms of capital that students of colour mobilize within educational systems not designed for them, namely aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. Aspirational capital refers to keeping "*hopes and dreams*" for the future despite barriers. Navigational capital refers to "*skills of maneuvering*" through social institutions. Social capital includes "networks of people" and community resources that provide support. Linguistic capital includes skills developed through communication in "*more than one language*" or style. Familial capital carries "*community history, memory and cultural intuition*" through kin and extended family. Resistant capital includes knowledges and skills that "*challenge inequality*" (Yosso, 2005). In a recent study of racially minoritised postgraduate students in elite universities in England, Jackson-Cole and Chadderton (2025) identify a seventh form, perspective capital. They describe it as "*an understanding of how oppression and privilege operate, afforded by a position of liminality,*" and show that it helped participants legitimize their place in academia.

The literature nonetheless reveals persistent gaps. There is still limited attention to the specific experiences of Muslim women in Prairie universities such as those in Winnipeg. There is also a need for frameworks that capture both the structural barriers they face and the forms of capital they actively mobilize. These gaps justify the theoretical orientation of the following chapter, which combines Berry's acculturation model with Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework to examine how Muslim women navigate, resist, and reshape secular academic spaces in Manitoba.

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The conceptual framework for understanding the acculturation experiences of Muslim women is grounded in John Berry's (1997) Acculturation Framework as the primary theoretical lens and Yosso's (2005) CCW Model as a secondary analytical framework. These frameworks provide complementary perspectives on how identity and integration evolve over time, incorporating a diachronic lens to examine shifts in self-perception, belonging, and cultural adaptation. Berry's model offers a structural understanding of acculturation strategies, highlighting the ways

individuals negotiate cultural retention and integration within a secular academic environment. Meanwhile, Yosso's CCW Model reframes the discourse by centering the cultural and social assets that Muslim women draw upon, such as familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital, to assert agency and counter systemic barriers. This study applies Yosso's framework to explore counter-stories and navigational strategies, shedding light on how Muslim women actively challenge dominant narratives while maneuvering through institutional and social landscapes. Together, these theoretical perspectives create a robust foundation for analyzing how Muslim women navigate their dual identities, resist marginalization, and use cultural wealth to thrive in Canadian higher education.

It is important to note that integral to the conceptualization of Muslim women's acculturation and identity formation is an understanding of terms and generational distinctions that shape their lived experiences.

This study uses Chun's (2001) conceptualizations of two subpopulations that differ in their relationship to migration. He refers to those born outside the host country but immigrated at a young age as the '1.5 generation', while those born in the host country are referred to as the 'second-generation.' '1.5 generation refers to those [...] who came to this country when they were young, before adulthood. In a strict demographic sense, there could be no such category as 1.5 generation, because if a person was born outside [the host country] and immigrated, they are called the 'first-generation' regardless of the age of immigration. However, the term bears a significant meaning as a sociological concept. The 1.5 generation may possess characteristics of both first and second generations.' (Chun 2001, p.50) Defining Acculturation; From Theory to Application: Acculturation originated in anthropology and was further developed in sociology (Sam & Berry, 2006). Over the years, acculturation has emerged as a significant area of study, leading to a variety of definitions (Berry, 1980, 2006a, 2006b; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009). In fact, the considerable global movement of migrants has further intensified academic interest in this field. In recent decades, many migrant-receiving countries have increasingly prioritized understanding the experiences of subsequent generations after immigration, elevating this topic to a central focus of public discourse and scholarly research (Crul, Schneider, & Lelie, 2012; Kobayashi, 2008; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Since 2003, this has led to the publication of several major volumes on the topic, including *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research* (Chun, Organista, & Marín, 2003), *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (Sam & Berry, 2006), and *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation Across National Contexts* (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). However, there is a notable gap in the literature, with challenges surrounding the operational definitions of acculturation, the influence of contextual factors, and its relationships to psychosocial and health outcomes that still need to be addressed (Rudmin, 2003, 2009). Accordingly, Gibson (2001) broadly defines acculturation as the changes that occur as a result of interactions with culturally dissimilar groups. These changes can occur in any context of intercultural contact, such as in the process of

globalization (Arnett, 2002). Nevertheless, the current consensus in research is that acculturation is a complex and multifaceted process that is lengthy and stressful, yet central to understanding how individuals navigate cultural transitions, especially in multicultural societies (Sam & Berry, 2006).

3.1. Acculturation Theory and Berry's Framework

In light of this, acculturation's definition was proposed as the learning of a second cultures which takes places in an active and ongoing manner (Rudmin, 2009), and this definition was commonly used in research (Blodgett et al, 2014, Schinke et al, 2013, Skinke et al, 2017). However, this definition was critiqued as assimilationist and unidimensional, ignoring the complexity of the concept and robbing it of the depth of its meaning (Berry, 2009). Acculturation was then explained as the 'deterritorialization' or 'breakdown' of the immigrant's home cultural norms as they settle in a new host culture' (Weedon, 2011). However, this was also criticized as the host context takes on assimilationist perspectives where the immigrant is expected to adopt aspects of the host culture at the expense of their home culture, with failure to do so resulting in marginalization (Nadeau et al, 2016). Consequently, acculturation was described as a dual direction change process whereby an immigrant learns and adapts to the cultural traditions of a host culture that is different from the one in which they were raised in and the dominant culture changes by the influence of the immigrant (Nadeau et al, 2016, p.112).

The works of Berry (1997) have been essential in shaping how the process is broadly conceptualized, although his works have been criticized as limiting in the ways of understanding this process. In his work, Berry (1997) explains acculturation as a non-linear ongoing negotiation. This negotiation is ongoing between the immigrant and a 'new culture' during which the self must simultaneously decide whether to maintain aspects of their heritage culture.

Thus, acculturation also refers to the cultural change which occurs as a result from these interactions (Berry, 1997). The scholar makes a clear point to distinguish between acculturation from psychological acculturation and adaptation, the latter rather referring to the 'psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur because of individuals experiencing acculturation' (Berry, 1997, p.6). The concept of adaptation has been further discriminated by Sam and Berry (2010) and is now defined as the psychological wellbeing of an individual and how the individual copes in sociocultural contexts, making adaptation a result of acculturation.

On this basis, Berry (1997, p.24) outlined four primary acculturation strategies, each reflecting the individual's or group's approach to balancing their home culture with the host culture and some of their success rate into an acculturation framework. These strategies are as follows:

- Assimilation: when an individual does not choose to maintain their heritage cultural identity. This strategy is regarded as intermediately successful.

- Separation: when an individual values maintaining connection with their original cultural while seeking to avoid interactions with other cultural groups
- Integration: when an individual has interest in maintaining their original culture while engaging in daily interactions with other cultural groups. This strategy is regarded as the most successful.
- Marginalization: when an individual has little interest in their cultural maintenance and relations with other cultural groups - both of which can be a result of enforced cultural loss and exclusion or discrimination respectively.

As such, these four acculturation profiles can be visualized within a quadrant framework, where each axis represents a distinct sense of belonging: the x-axis captures one's sense of belonging to the host culture (in this case, Canada), while the y-axis reflects an individual's sense of belonging to their own ethnic group. This recognized model is commonly used in acculturation studies and thus serves as a foundational component of the theoretical framework for this research (Fig. 1.) Following this, it can be illustrated as follows:

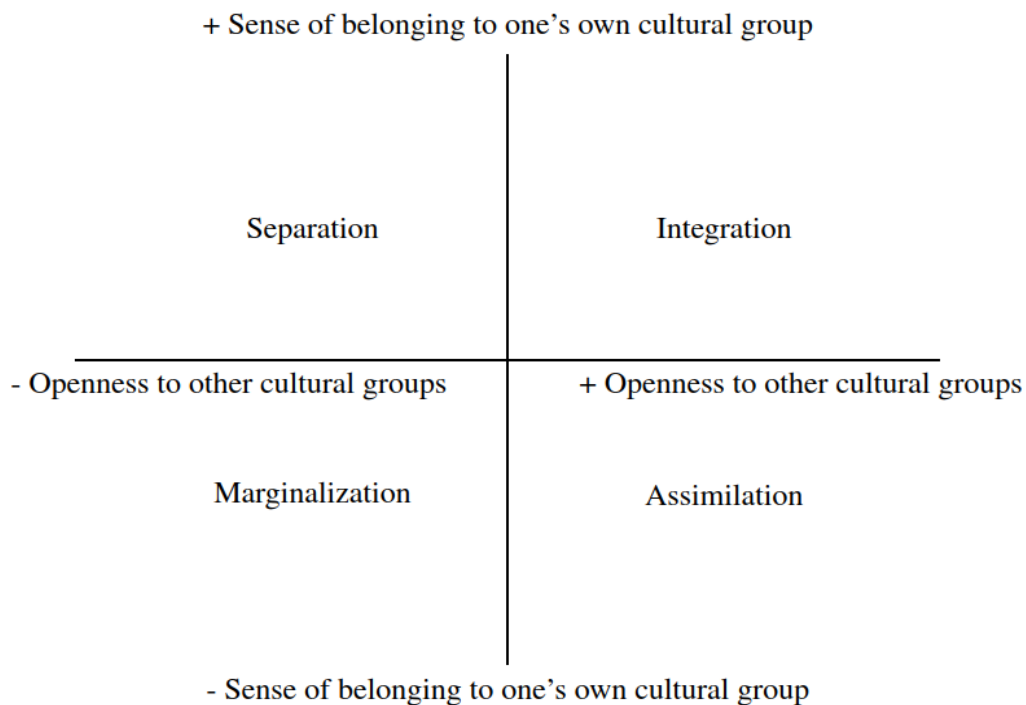


Figure 1: A quadrant model illustrating Berry's (1997) four acculturation profiles. The y-axis represents belonging to one's cultural group, while the x-axis denotes openness to other cultural groups, also referred to as engagement or sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the broader national context and prevailing societal atmosphere - whether welcoming or marginalizing- may significantly influence acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997). Thus, the strategies adopted by the larger society, whether it be multiculturalism (integration), a

melting pot (assimilation), segregation (separation) or exclusion (marginalization) may influence which strategy will be undertaken (Berry, 2006a, p.28) A representation of the four acculturation profiles within the context of the larger society is provided by the EcoCultural Model (Fig 2.2). This model encompasses the attitudes of the broader society discussed earlier. However, within the specific research paradigm and population of this study, the EcoCultural Model will not be utilized, considering Canada's policy of multiculturalism (integration).

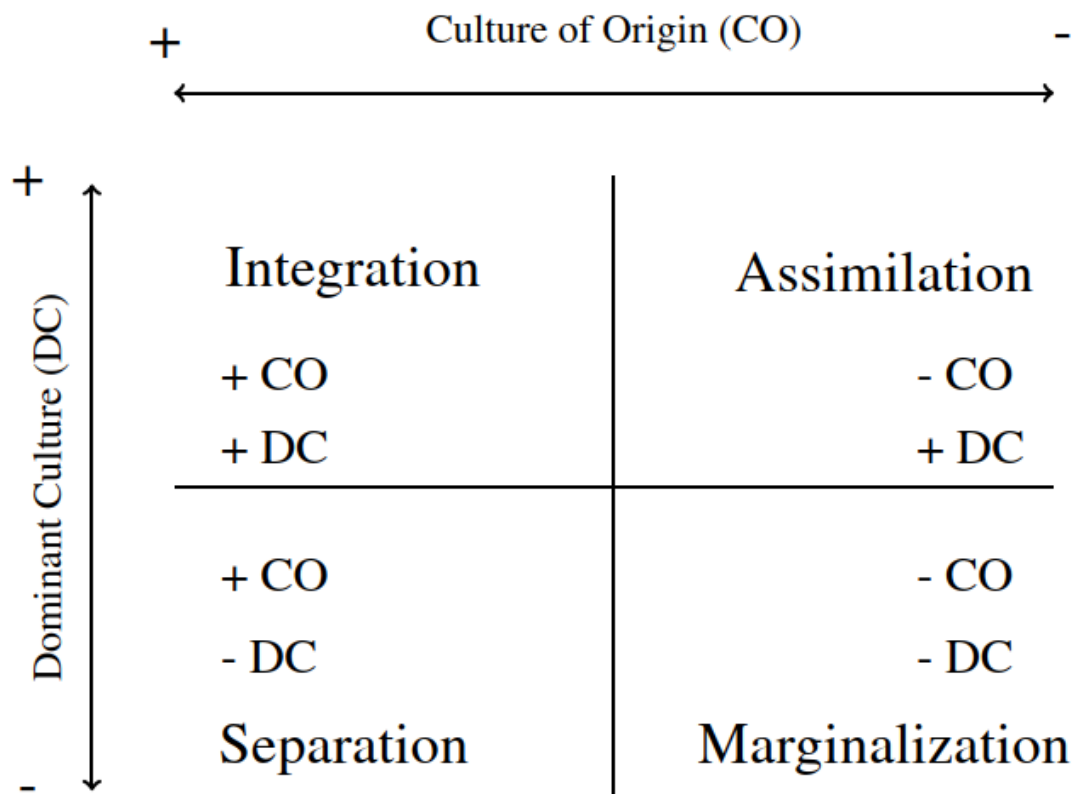


Figure 2. A two-dimensional representation of the EcoCultural Model, organizing the four acculturation profiles. *Integration* (++) reflects positive attitudes toward both the Culture of Origin (CO) and the Dominant Culture (DC). *Assimilation* (-+) indicates negative attitudes toward CO but positive attitudes toward DC. *Separation* (+-) signifies positive attitudes toward CO but negative attitudes toward DC. *Marginalization* (-) represents negative attitudes toward both CO and DC

Building on this, Berry (1997) notes that these strategies are chosen based on various factors. First to consider is the context and stress level encountered by the immigrant, which is grounded in the personal notion of whether one seeks to preserve home cultural identity or places a premium on contact with the host culture (Berry, 2006a). In fact, acculturative stress, a significant psychological strain experienced during this process, was defined by Berry (1997) as the difficulties and psychological challenges individuals face when attempting to adapt to a new culture while negotiating which aspects of their heritage to maintain, and which new aspects must

be accepted, adopted, rejected or adapted to survive. This stress is exacerbated by cultural distance, or the perceived dissimilarity between the immigrant's original culture and the host culture (Berry, 1997). The greater the cultural distance, the more intense the stress, as individuals struggle to balance conflicting cultural norms and expectations. This cultural distance can lead to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and even mental health issues (Goforth et al., 2014; Sirin et al., 2013).

Finally, The Segmented Assimilation Theory offers added insight, suggesting that immigrants follow different acculturative pathways depending on their social and economic conditions (Rumbaut & Ima, 1998). For example, those with greater social capital may experience more successful integration, while others may face downward assimilation into poverty and marginalization.

Accordingly, Ward (2008, p.107) explains that these strategies provide an orderly framework, but do not provide information about the processes which lead to a particular strategy, or whether these strategies were static. In fact, these strategies have often been measured as static outcomes or predictors of adaptation with the process aspects of the experience itself remaining neglected or unmeasured (Ward, 2008). This critique was supported by Poortinga (2010), who questioned the key conceptual frameworks and noted the limitations of the most prominent methodological approaches.

Furthermore, Chirkov (2009) noted that these four strategies (Berry, 1997) were oversimplified and binary. As mentioned, they do not exist in isolation and tend to be affected by the expectations of the individual, the ethnic community, and the society at large (Kunst & Sam, 2013). Using the previously standardized scale as the main form of studying acculturation is flawed (Chirkov, 2009a), and other methods must be used such as qualitative approaches (ethnography, participant observations, qualitative interviewing, and such). In fact, acculturation research was criticized for its lack of connection to immigrant groups and the minimal practical utility it has for immigrants as well as those who work with, and or with them (Chirkov, 2009b).

In response to the criticisms found of acculturation, other constructs have been developed and differentiated. These include but are not limited to bicultural acculturation, biculturation, bicultural integration, cultural integration, adaptation or cultural adaptation, cross-cultural adaptation, and transculturation. Bicultural acculturation is understood as either individual or group response/s to consistent contact with both heritage and mainstream cultures (La Framboise et al, 1993; Szapocnik et al, 1980, further developed by Tadmor and Tetlock, 2006). There are also constructs such as biculturalism, third space and hybridity which are concerned with identity negotiation and development. (Tahirkheli, 2023).

It is a given that all meanings lead to the significant interactions between persons that causes change in how the host or guest views and expresses culture or their way of life. Thus, acculturation's recent and acclaimed definition is as the adaptation of behavior, cognitive and affective aspects of one's cultural functioning due to consistent contact with differing cultural

contexts and groups (Driscoll & Wierzbicki, 2012). Subsequently, acculturation does not happen over a set period (Schinke et al, 2016a), is not just an individual experience but a social process that occurs at the intersection of various factors, including gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural distance (Schinke et Mc Gannon, 2014), is non-linear (Chirkov, 2009) and is continuous (Sam, 2006). It is important to note that acculturating individuals are not disregarding their country-of-origin values, but may instead engage in adjusting and adapting to those of the new host society (Thomas & Choi, 2006; Van Oudenhoven et al, 2006).

3.2. Diachronic Lens: Identity Across Generations

The diachronic perspective aligns with the framework for understanding identity as a process that unfolds over time, shaped by historical events, personal experiences, and intergenerational transmission (Dubar, 2000). Unlike static models that conceptualize identity as a fixed category, a diachronic approach highlights how identity is continuously reinterpreted, negotiated, and transformed through lived experiences and across generations (Hall, 1996; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). As such, this perspective is particularly relevant in migration studies, where acculturation, adaptation, and generational shifts play a critical role in shaping individual and collective identities (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).

The term diachronic originates from linguistic studies (Saussure, 1916) and refers to the evolution of phenomena over time. When applied to identity research, it underscores the importance of historical continuity and transformation. Dubar (2000) argues that identity is not merely inherited but is instead reconstructed over time through socialization, interactions, and personal trajectories. This means that identity is shaped by both historical constraints and evolving social realities, creating a continuous dialogue between past experiences and present negotiations.

A diachronic view of identity suggests that individuals do not simply adopt a single, coherent self-concept but rather construct multiple, shifting identities in response to changing circumstances. This aligns with constructivist theories of identity (Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1992), which emphasize that identity is formed through an ongoing process of self-definition and external recognition. In the context of migration, this means that identity is shaped by the home culture, host culture, and the lived experiences that mediate between them.

While the diachronic perspective provides a rich, process-oriented approach to identity, it has been critiqued for its potential determinism- if past experiences inevitably shape present and future identity trajectories (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Some scholars argue that focusing too heavily on historical continuity may obscure the role of agency and momentary identity shifts, particularly in rapidly changing social contexts (Hall, 1996).

Furthermore, some critics suggest that diachronic models tend to emphasize linearity, overlooking the discontinuous, fragmented, and multi-layered aspects of identity (Bhabha, 1994). Theories of hybridity and cultural bricolage challenge the idea that identity evolves in a structured,

cumulative way, instead highlighting moments of rupture, redefinition, and cultural recomposition (Clifford, 1994).

In acculturation research, the diachronic lens provides insight into how identity is shaped across time and generations. Berry's (1997) acculturation model identifies four strategies (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization), yet these strategies are often treated as static outcomes rather than evolving processes (Ward, 2008). A diachronic perspective challenges this view, arguing that acculturation is not a one-time event but a continuous negotiation across time and space (Chirkov, 2009).

Thus, the diachronic perspective is particularly relevant when analyzing the identity struggles of second-generation immigrants. Unlike their parents, who may have a strong connection to their country of origin, second-generation individuals often experience a dual sense of belonging, leading to what Portes and Rumbaut (2001) describe as 'segmented assimilation'. This means that identity trajectories among immigrant descendants are shaped by structural opportunities, community support, and experiences of discrimination.

3.3 Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth: Framework and Application

Tara J. Yosso's (2005) CCW Model is a strengths-based framework rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) that challenges conventional understandings of cultural capital. As such, she posits that traditional models, particularly those influenced by Bourdieu, often frame cultural capital in ways that privilege dominant, Eurocentric forms of knowledge while disregarding the valuable resources embedded within marginalized communities. Yosso argues that rather than lacking cultural capital, communities of color possess unique and valuable forms of capital that enable them to navigate and resist systemic barriers.

As such, she conceptualizes six interrelated forms of CCW, each representing a distinct way in which marginalized groups draw on collective knowledge, experiences, and social networks to achieve success. First, aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hope and ambition despite structural challenges. Similarly, linguistic capital encompasses multilingualism and the rich communication skills developed through storytelling and cultural expression. In addition, familial capital highlights the significance of kinship networks, including extended family and community relationships that provide both support and shared cultural knowledge. Likewise, social capital represents the networks of people and institutions that offer resources, guidance, and opportunities for success. Beyond these forms, navigational capital refers to the skills needed to maneuver through institutions and systems that were historically not designed for marginalized communities. Finally, resistant capital is the knowledge and strategies developed through experiences of challenging inequality and advocating for social change. (Yosso, 2005) Together, these six forms of capital illustrate how marginalized communities actively build, sustain, and use cultural wealth in ways that defy deficit-based narratives. In fact, the CCW Model has been a valuable framework for understanding the lived experiences of marginalized groups, including

Muslim women, particularly in education and community engagement. The CCW model, which highlights aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital, has been applied to analyze how Muslim women draw on these cultural assets to navigate systemic barriers and assert their identities. For instance, Çolak (2024) explores how Turkish Belgian Muslim women in higher education leverage familial and aspirational capital to overcome racialization and exclusion, using their community networks as sources of resilience and belonging (Çolak, 2024). Similarly, Mc Laren et al. (2024) apply CCW to South Australian Muslim women, examining how they cultivate social and navigational capital to strengthen family health and well-being within their communities (Mc Laren et al., 2024). Another study by Allen-Mc Combs (2022) focuses on Black Muslim first-generation college students, illustrating how their resistant and linguistic capital help them navigate predominantly white educational institutions while maintaining cultural and religious identity (Allen-Mc Combs, 2022). These studies collectively demonstrate how Muslim women actively use CCW to counter systemic exclusion and negotiate spaces where their identities as both Muslim and women are often contested. By shifting the discourse from deficit-based perspectives to one that recognizes their agency and resilience, Yosso's model provides a critical lens for understanding their integration and self-determination in diverse sociocultural contexts.

As such, the CCW Model will serve as an analytical framework to examine how 1.5- and 2nd-generation Muslim immigrant women in Winnipeg's secular universities navigate their acculturation journeys and negotiate their intersecting identities. Rather than adopting a deficit-based perspective that views integration challenges as barriers to success, this study leverages CCW to highlight the forms of capital these women mobilize in their daily lives. Through this qualitative inquiry, this research will identify the ways in which participants construct-narratives that resist dominant discourses on integration, positioning them not as passive subjects of acculturation but as active agents who strategically use cultural wealth. Applying CCW deepens the understanding of how Muslim women assert belonging within higher education. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on diversity, inclusion, and anti-hegemony resistance in academia while emphasizing the lived experiences and agency of Muslim women in secular, multicultural spaces.

3.4. Methodology and Ethics

This research stands out by adopting a diachronic perspective, examining the integration of Muslim immigrant women over a certain period-namely, since the turn of the 21st century. Until now, studies on immigrant integration have primarily focused on the immediate integration of immigrants, that is, in its synchronicity. By contrast, this approach allows the study to focus on the second generation of immigration, meaning the children of immigrants. The intergenerational dimension is not only important for understanding the integration of Muslim immigrants into the community but also serves as an indicator of their inclusion. The diachronic perspective also sheds

light on a specific issue concerning Muslim immigration to Manitoba: immigrant retention. For many Muslim immigrants, Manitoba has merely been a transit point-a springboard to settle elsewhere. Thus, how does this study relate the question of Muslim immigrant retention to that of their integration into the Manitoban community? Furthermore, only the diachronic perspective enables a comprehensive understanding of Muslim immigrants' integration, beyond material success, encompassing the entire establishment-integration moment, which cannot be reduced to one phase of the migratory journey. This thesis makes an important contribution to the body of knowledge on Muslim immigration to Manitoba, as well as the dynamics between Muslim immigrants, their descendants, and the host society. To date, studies on immigration in Manitoba have mostly examined immediate integration, in its synchronicity. Some have looked at economic and sociocultural factors such as social and human capital (Alper 2014), others at social cohesion (Piquemal 2022), the determinants of immigrant health (Ba 2015; de Moissac et al. 2022), or regional and rural immigration (Khayambashi 2024). These studies particularly show that barriers to integration are often linked to systemic factors, such as the (non-)recognition of foreign-acquired credentials, minority identity factors such as ethnicity, gender, and culture, as well as the attitudes of the host community.

this research project within this thesis also advances knowledge by incorporating, with necessary adjustments, concepts, questions, and theoretical notions from other contexts; not only other provinces but also other countries. One of the limitations of studies on Muslim immigrants in Manitoba is that they rarely draw from research on immigration conducted outside the Manitoban context.

Several studies have explored links between economic dynamics and immigration (Boudarbat 2014; Champagne et al. 2023); studies that use the concept of social and human capital to show how immigrants mobilize experiences from their country of origin in entrepreneurship within the host country (Oury Sow, 2021; Lofstrom 2017; Tchouwo 2024); studies on the relationship between public finances and immigrant integration (Chojnicki, Ragot, Sokhna 2018; Christl 2021; Martinsen 2017); or other studies connecting regional or rural community development and newcomers (Tanotra and Poojary 2024; Sall 2019). Conversely, some studies also highlight the existence of individual, family, and community strategies that support belonging, cohesion, and well-being-factors that can strengthen immigrants' contributions. More recently, a study examined the role of immigration services in the settlement and integration of newcomers (Zellama, Noël, Piquemal, and Rivard, 2022). Drawing on insights from these studies, **this** research renews the understanding of Muslim women's integration by analyzing it over time. Indeed, the integration of Muslim immigrant women into the Manitoban community must be analyzed as a dynamic phenomenon unfolding over time, with its own temporal logic.

To fully grasp this temporality, this research adopts a methodological framework based on qualitative analysis. It is important to highlight certain elements regarding the research process

that guides this project. This progression follows distinct stages, which are essential to outline in order to clarify the methodological approach of this research.

3.5. Research design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine the acculturation experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Muslim women attending secular universities in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A case study approach is particularly appropriate for research that seeks to explore complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between individual experience, institutional environment, and broader social dynamics are interconnected (Yin, 2018).

The case selected for this research consists of Muslim women who are enrolled in, or have attended, secular postsecondary institutions in Winnipeg. The study focuses specifically on the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and the Université de Saint-Boniface. These institutions represent important spaces of socialization, identity negotiation, and institutional integration, where participants navigate religious identity, visibility, belonging, and participation within multicultural yet secular academic environments.

A qualitative case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and context-sensitive understanding of participants' lived experiences. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, this approach prioritizes interpretive depth and the exploration of meaning, enabling the research to capture the nuances, tensions, and complexities that shape participants' acculturation trajectories. This methodological approach is particularly relevant for examining how Muslim women negotiate identity and belonging in institutional settings where broader questions of religion, diversity, multiculturalism, and social recognition intersect.

This study is also grounded in a constructivist and interpretive paradigm, which understands social reality as shaped through interaction, experience, and meaning-making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). From this perspective, participants are not treated as passive subjects of integration, but as active agents who continuously interpret, negotiate, and reposition themselves within their social and institutional environments. Accordingly, the objective of this research is not to measure acculturation as a fixed variable, but rather to understand how participants themselves experience and narrate processes of integration, belonging, visibility, and identity negotiation across time.

The case study design further supports the study's diachronic orientation by allowing attention to be placed on participants' evolving experiences and retrospective reflections throughout their educational trajectories. Through this approach, the research examines not only institutional participation itself, but also how relationships to community, identity, and belonging shift in response to changing personal, social, and political contexts.

3.6. Participants and recruitment

This study involved eight Muslim women belonging to the 1.5 and second generations of immigration who were enrolled in, or had previously attended, secular universities in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The research was conducted within three principal university settings: the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and the Université de Saint-Boniface. All participants self-identified as Muslim and had lived experiences navigating secular academic environments within the Canadian context.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed in order to recruit participants whose experiences aligned directly with the objectives of the study (Patton, 2002). The research specifically sought individuals who could provide insight into questions of acculturation, belonging, identity negotiation, and institutional experience as Muslim women within higher education. The focus on participants from the 1.5 and second generations was particularly important given the study's diachronic and intergenerational orientation, which aimed to examine integration beyond immediate settlement experiences.

Efforts were made to include participants from diverse cultural and national backgrounds in order to capture a range of experiences and perspectives. Although all participants shared a Muslim identity and experience within secular universities, their individual trajectories, family histories, and relationships to religion, community, and institutional spaces varied considerably.

Participants were recruited primarily through purposive and community-based strategies, including word of mouth, social networks, Muslim community spaces, and university environments. Community organizations and student networks also facilitated access to potential participants by circulating information about the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals who expressed interest were provided with detailed information regarding the objectives of the research, confidentiality procedures, and ethical considerations prior to providing informed consent.

Given the relatively small and interconnected nature of Muslim communities in Winnipeg, particular attention was paid to protecting participant anonymity. Pseudonyms were therefore used throughout the study, and identifying details were modified or omitted where necessary in order to preserve confidentiality while maintaining the integrity of participants' narratives.

3.8. Data Collection and Procedures

Data for this study were collected through eight individual semi-structured interviews conducted between February 13 and February 22, 2026, with Muslim women belonging to the 1.5 and 2.0 immigrant generations. Participants were required to meet three criteria: (1) self-identify as Muslim women; (2) belong to the 1.5 or 2.0 immigrant generation; and (3) be

currently enrolled in, or have recently attended, a public university in Winnipeg. Particular attention was paid to ensuring diversity across participants' profiles and experiences.

Data collection relied on a semi-structured interview format, selected for its capacity to provide both consistency across interviews and flexibility in exploring participants' lived experiences in greater depth. To support this process, an interview guide was developed based on themes identified in the literature review and the study's theoretical frameworks, including Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework (Berry, 1997; Yosso, 2005). The interview guide, which received ethics approval from the University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board, contained approximately 18 open-ended questions organized around four principal axes: (1) biographical background and migratory context; (2) identity negotiation and acculturation strategies; (3) forms of cultural capital mobilized; and (4) lived experiences within university spaces.

Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted in person by the researcher in locations chosen according to participant comfort and accessibility, including university campuses and other participant-selected settings. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed in full for analysis.

While the interview guide provided structure around key themes related to acculturation, belonging, identity negotiation, institutional experiences, and community engagement, participants were encouraged to elaborate freely on experiences they considered meaningful or significant. Rather than seeking fixed or universalized experiences, the interviews aimed to capture the complexity, fluidity, and evolving nature of participants' trajectories within institutional and social contexts.

Particular attention was also given to temporality throughout the interview process. Several questions invited participants to reflect retrospectively on how their experiences, perceptions, and sense of belonging evolved over time across their educational trajectories. This approach supported the study's diachronic orientation by allowing participants to discuss shifts, tensions, and transformations in identity negotiation, institutional relationships, and forms of belonging throughout different moments of their university experiences.

The interviews explored themes including religious identity, visibility, family dynamics, experiences within secular academic spaces, perceptions of inclusion and exclusion, community support, and strategies of navigation and adaptation. Following data collection, interviews were transcribed and prepared for thematic analysis. The transcription process also constituted an important stage of familiarization with the data, allowing for close engagement with participants' narratives, recurring themes, and evolving trajectories across the corpus.

3.8. Analytical Strategy

The analysis of the interview data followed an inductive and interpretive thematic approach informed primarily by Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis. This approach allowed themes, patterns, and recurring meanings to emerge directly from participants' narratives rather than being imposed through predetermined categories. The analytical process was therefore grounded in participants' lived experiences while remaining attentive to broader questions of acculturation, belonging, identity negotiation, and institutional experience.

Following transcription, the interview corpus was read multiple times in order to facilitate immersion in the data and identify recurring themes, tensions, and narrative patterns across participants' experiences. Initial coding focused on significant statements, recurring experiences, and forms of meaning-making present within the interviews. These codes were progressively grouped into broader thematic categories reflecting shared experiences and interpretive patterns across the corpus.

The analytical process relied on detailed manual coding and close reading of the interview transcripts. Particular attention was given to participants' language, reflections, and descriptions of institutional, social, and community experiences. This iterative reading process allowed themes to emerge organically while preserving the complexity and contextual nature of participants' narratives.

Once initial themes emerged inductively from the data, the analysis moved toward a theory-driven interpretive stage. At this stage, Berry's (1997) acculturation framework and Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model were used as complementary analytical lenses through which participants' experiences could be interpreted more deeply. Berry's framework supported the examination of participants' orientations toward heritage and host cultures, while Yosso's framework provided insight into the forms of capital and strategies participants mobilized in navigating institutional spaces.

Rather than treating Berry's acculturation orientations as fixed or static categories, the analysis adopted a diachronic perspective attentive to movement, fluctuation, and repositioning across participants' narratives. Through retrospective reflections embedded within the interviews, participants described changes in belonging, visibility, institutional relationships, and identity negotiation over time. This interpretive synthesis made it possible to identify broader trajectories and movements across acculturation orientations while remaining grounded in participants' lived experiences.

The analytical process therefore combined inductive thematic coding, theory-driven interpretation, and diachronic synthesis in order to produce a contextualized and dynamic understanding of Muslim women's acculturation experiences within secular higher education environments.

3.9. Ethics

This study received approval from the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board prior to the beginning of data collection (December 2025). All participants were informed of the objectives of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures implemented to ensure confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

Before each interview, participants received an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the interview process, the use of audio recording, and their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without consequence. Consent was obtained prior to participation and before the beginning of audio recording.

Given the sensitive nature of discussions surrounding religion, identity, discrimination, belonging, and political experiences, particular care was taken to create an interview environment grounded in respect, confidentiality, and participant comfort. Participants were informed that they could decline to answer any question or pause the interview at any moment.

To protect participant anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the study, and identifying details were modified or omitted where necessary. Audio recordings and interview transcripts were stored securely and accessed only for the purposes of this research.

The researcher also remained attentive to reflexivity throughout the research process, recognizing the importance of approaching participants' experiences with sensitivity while remaining conscious of the interpretive role involved in qualitative inquiry.

3.10. Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

This research is informed by my positionality as both a member of the broader Muslim community and a researcher examining questions of identity, acculturation, and belonging within Canadian educational spaces. Growing up in Canada while simultaneously participating in Islamic educational and community environments provided me with firsthand awareness of the intersections between secular institutional life, religious identity, and cultural negotiation. These experiences shaped my interest in understanding how Muslim women navigate belonging, visibility, and integration within secular universities.

My familiarity with Muslim community spaces and cultural references also facilitated rapport and trust during the interview process. In qualitative research, particularly when exploring sensitive topics related to religion, discrimination, and identity, shared cultural understanding can encourage participants to speak more openly about experiences that may otherwise remain difficult to articulate. This positionality therefore contributed to creating interview conditions grounded in familiarity, empathy, and mutual understanding.

At the same time, this study does not assume a homogeneous Muslim experience, nor does it position the researcher as fully representative of participants' realities. Muslim women's experiences are shaped by diverse trajectories, cultural backgrounds, levels of religiosity, family histories, and institutional encounters. Accordingly, reflexivity remained an important component of the research process in order to remain attentive to the differences, complexities, and tensions present within participants' narratives.

Throughout the research process, particular attention was given to maintaining critical distance while interpreting participants' experiences. Reflexivity involved continuous awareness of how personal experiences, assumptions, and social positioning could influence data interpretation, thematic emphasis, and analytical choices. Rather than eliminating subjectivity entirely, the interpretive approach adopted in this study recognizes reflexivity as an essential component of qualitative inquiry, allowing for greater transparency regarding the relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the knowledge produced.

This insider-outsider positioning ultimately contributed to a deeper engagement with participants' narratives while reinforcing the importance of approaching their experiences with nuance, attentiveness, and interpretive care.

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter is organized into three main parts. The first outlines the sociodemographic profile of the sample. The second presents the analytical strategy used to interpret the interview corpus, with particular attention to the coding process and to the two conceptual frameworks mobilized in the analysis: Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's CCW model (Berry, 1997; Yosso, 2005), and finally, the third presents the findings of this study.

4.1. Sociodemographic Profile of Participants

As illustrated in Table 1, participants differed in age, country of origin, generations, universities, and field of study.

Participant	Pseudonym	Generation	Family Origin	Age	University	Field of Study
P1	Amina	Not disclosed	American	30s	Université de Saint-Boniface	Nursing
P2	Maya	2	Palestine	27	University of Manitoba	Education
P3	Nora	2	Palestine / Jordan	25	University of Winnipeg	Psychology
P4	Janna	1.5	Not disclosed (born in Qatar)	Not disclosed	Université de Saint-Boniface	French Education
P5	Aisha	2	Palestinian / Jordanian	Early 20s	University of Winnipeg	History
P6	Sofya	1.5	Syria (born in Dubai)	Not disclosed	University of Manitoba	Criminology / Law
P7	Leyla	1.5	Middle East	Not disclosed	University of Manitoba	Architecture
P8	Nadya	2	Syrian / Iraqi	30s	University of Manitoba	Social Work / Indigenous Studies

Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of participants.

Table1 summarizes the sociodemographic profiles of the eight participants (N = 8). All participants were self-identifying Muslim women enrolled in secular universities in Winnipeg: four at the University of Manitoba, two at the University of Winnipeg, and two at Université de

Saint Boniface. The sample reflects diverse migration backgrounds, with family origins including American, Palestinian/Jordanian, Syrian/Iraqi, Qatar, Dubai, and other parts of the Middle East. Participants represented different generational positions (1.5 generation, second generation, and undisclosed), and they were enrolled in varied fields such as Nursing, Education, Psychology, History, Criminology/Law, Architecture, French Education, and Social Work/Indigenous Studies. Some demographic details, including generation and family origin, were not disclosed by all participants in order to protect confidentiality.

4.2. Analytical Framework

This section presents the analytical approach used to interpret the interview corpus and the conceptual frameworks mobilized in the analysis. The study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist perspective, which assumes that social actors produce meaning through their experiences and interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This epistemological orientation is particularly well suited to the present research, since acculturation is understood here as a subjective, situated, and evolving process that can best be apprehended through the meanings participants attribute to their own trajectories.

4.2.1. Coding Process

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach combining inductive coding with theory-driven interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2012). In a first step, the interview transcripts were reviewed to identify recurring patterns of meaning and to generate initial codes from participants' own words and experiences as opposed to from predetermined categories. This inductive strategy is consistent with the constructivist orientation of the study, since it privileges participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to their trajectories. It also makes it possible to trace diachronic variations in participants' accounts more directly, without prematurely subsuming the material under fixed categories. In a second step, these emerging themes were interpreted through Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's CCW framework. As such, this interpretative step made it possible to identify broader links, tensions, and nuances within the conceptual frameworks mobilized in the analysis. Theory was therefore used to deepen interpretation instead of to determine the codes in advance.

4.2.2. Berry's Acculturation Model as a Dynamic Positioning Tool

The first conceptual framework is the acculturation model proposed by Berry (1997). This model distinguishes four orientations: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. It situates participants along two axes: maintenance of the culture of origin and openness toward the host society. As shown in Figure 1, these axes are framed through two guiding questions relevant to this paper: one about openness to the larger society and one about maintenance of heritage culture.

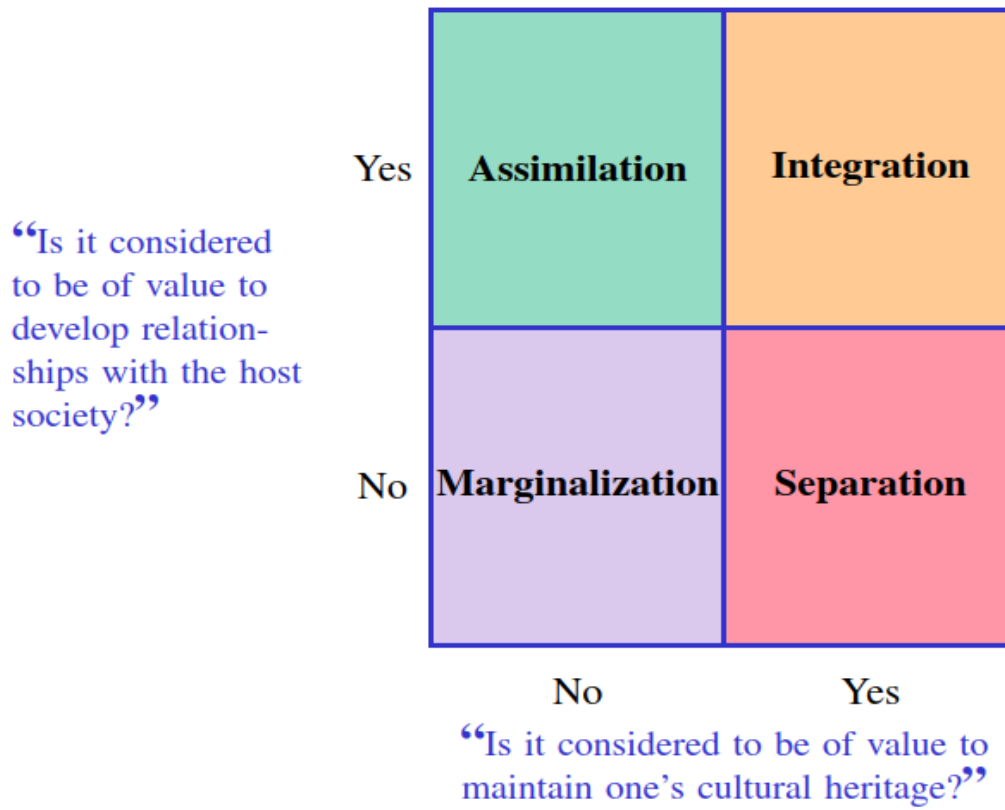


Figure 3: Berry's acculturation model. Source: Author adapted from Berry (1997).

Overall, Figure 3 offers a conceptual map for reading participants' narratives across Berry's four orientations. Accordingly, this study does not confine participants to a single quadrant. Considering the epistemology of co-construction of identity, participants may shift between several orientations depending on context, time, and relational dynamics. Berry's model is therefore used here as an indicative temporal marker. The diachronic movements of the participants will be made explicit through the use of arrows, pointed towards different quadrants. Those arrows will follow the tendencies revealed through inductive coding. Figure 3 provides the modelization of this dynamic model.

4.2.3. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Framework

The second framework is the CCW model proposed by Yosso (2005). This model is articulated in contrast to Bourdieusian perspectives that are more centered on deficit (Piquemal, Delaisse, Sall, Huot, & Zellema, 2024). Yosso (2005) instead emphasizes forms of capital that reflect community strengths. More specifically, as illustrated in Figure 2, the model highlights resources that participants mobilize to navigate institutional secular spaces.

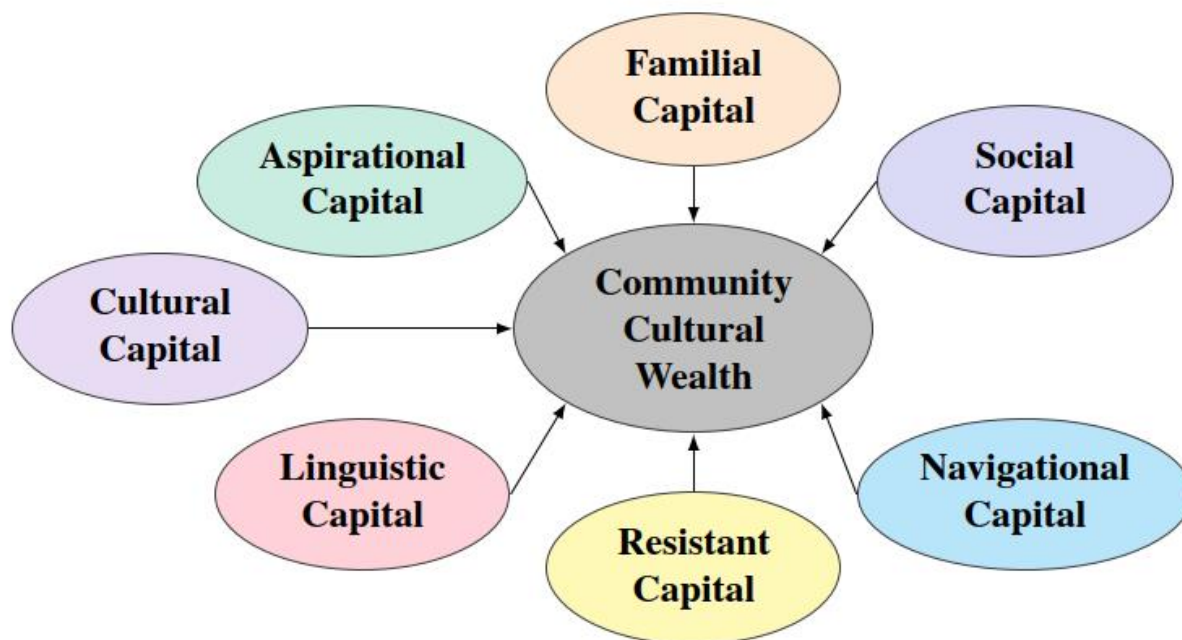


Figure 4: CCW model. Author. Author adapted from Yosso (2005).

In this analysis, *aspirational capital* captures how participants describe their university pathways in relation to their goals and hopes for the future. Consequently, tensions emerge when these aspirations encounter structural barriers to inclusion. Similarly, *linguistic capital* is used to examine practices of cultural translation and identity mediation. In practical terms, participants often need to explain their religious and cultural experiences to peers or professors; therefore, this additional explanatory work is treated as epistemic labor. Likewise, *familial capital* is mobilized to draw on cultural knowledge, values, histories, and support systems nurtured within family and extended kin networks. In this study, these resources sustain students' well-being, identity, and commitment to community, even when they come into tension with institutional norms. Furthermore, social capital is mobilized to analyze support networks such as Muslim student associations, ethnocultural communities, and mentoring relationships. Conversely, when these networks are weak or unavailable, participants report greater isolation and reduced access to guidance. In addition, navigational capital highlights how participants move strategically across university, family, and community contexts. Therefore, navigation is interpreted both as a survival practice and as an expression of agency within institutional settings where norms of recognition, accommodation, and legitimacy are unevenly distributed, so that minority students must often do additional work to justify their presence, practices, and needs (Ahmed, 2012). *Resistant capital* captures practices that challenge dominant representations and exclusionary norms. Finally, *cultural capital* is mobilized as an assets-based lens that foregrounds the language practices, cultural repertoires, and community knowledge that participants already possess. In doing so, it contests deficit framings and shows how participants draw on CCW to negotiate belonging, challenge dominant standards of legitimacy, and pursue success across institutional settings. Read

in conjunction, Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework provide the analytical architecture for the results chapter. Berry's model makes it possible to situate participants' positionings and movements across time, while Yosso's framework illuminates the resources, strategies, and forms of agency through which those movements are lived and negotiated. With these analytical tools now established, Chapter IV turns to the interview findings themselves and presents the main themes that emerged from the corpus.

4.3. Findings of the study

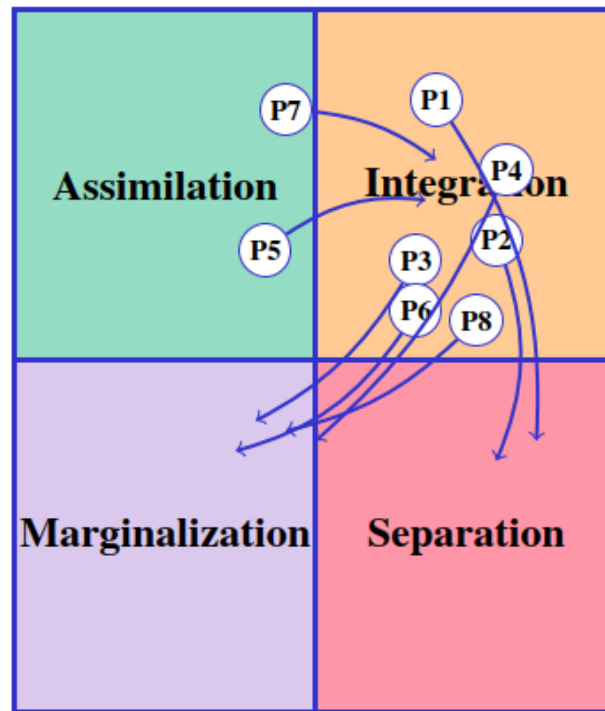
I present the results in relation to three themes. The first theme examines the relationship between acculturation orientations and lived spaces. It includes two sub-themes addressing the tension between affirmed belonging in community spaces and conditional belonging in institutional spaces. The second theme presents counter-narratives and forms of identity resistance identified during the analysis. It includes two sub-themes, namely representation counter-narratives, which aim to make visible what dominant discourse obscures, and definitional counter-narratives, which challenge imposed definitions of belonging and integration within public university spaces. The third and final theme focuses on the uses of capital and anti-hegemonic strategies developed by participants. It includes three sub-themes, covering the mobilization of social, navigational, aspirational, and familial capital as resources for perseverance; the strategic management of identity visibility through cosmopolitanism; and partial repositioning or emancipation in relation to institutional spaces. For clarity, the results chapter is organized as follows: Section 4.1 establishes participant positioning and movement within Berry's framework; Section 4.2 examines counter-narratives and identity resistance; Section 4.3 analyzes the mobilization of CCW capitals in practice; and Section 4.4 provides a visual synthesis of relative capital mobilization based on inductive coding patterns.

Now, I begin with Berry's model to map acculturation positionings and movements. This analytical presentation is in line with critiques directed at Berry's model (Berry, 1997; Chirkov, 2009; Ward, 2008), that participants' acculturation orientations do not present themselves as fixed or definitive positions.

4.4. Berry's Model: A Dynamic Application

Figure 5 presents my modelization of a dynamic application of Berry's model. To operationalize this analytical reading, each participant is positioned in a primary quadrant. Directional arrows indicate diachronic shifts observed in the interviews. When the interview material points to an unstable secondary positioning instead of a clear movement into one quadrant, the arrow can terminate on an axis to mark a boundary position. The labels P1 to P8 refer to the eight anonymized participants introduced earlier in Table 1; each circle marks a participant's primary positioning, while the arrowed line indicates movement, tension, or reorientation toward another acculturation orientation in the interview narratives. Figure 3 should be read as a schematic representation of participants' acculturation positionings across time. For instance, P1 moves from integration toward separation, whereas P5 moves between strategic assimilation and integration. Table 2 provides an interpretive rationale for these movements at the participant level.

“Is it considered to be of value to develop relationships with the host society?”



“Is it considered to be of value to maintain one’s cultural heritage?”

Figure 5: Dynamic positioning of participants in Berry's model (with directional movement). Source: Author, based on interview corpus.

These movements are summarized in the table below (Table 2).

Participant	Primary Position	Direction of Movement	Interpretive Rationale
P1 (Amina)	Integration	Integration → Separation	Participates institutionally while retreating to Muslim spaces when campus recognition is conditional.
P2 (Maya)	Integration	Integration → Separation	Post-October 2023 shift toward community-based belonging after institutional disillusionment.

P3 (Nora)	Integration	Integration → Marginalization	Strong engagement, with moments of anxiety and hyper-visibility as a hijabi student.
P4 (Janna)	Integration	Integration → Assimilation (episodic)	Generally integrated but occasionally pressured to modulate identity across settings.
P5 (Aisha)	Assimilation (strategic)	Assimilation → Integration	Blending in by choice while maintaining selective identity affirmation in chosen spaces.
P6 (Sofya)	Integration	Integration → Marginalization	Inclusion in many spaces but persistent anticipatory vigilance and identity translation labor.
P7 (Leyla)	Assimilation (strategic)	Assimilation → Integration	Uses selective visibility and passing privilege without identity abandonment.
P8 (Nadya)	Integration	Integration → Marginalization	Academic participation coexists with felt institutional misrecognition and recourse to community spaces.

Table 2: Participant-level positioning and movement directions in Berry's analytical grid.

The following subsection reorganizes participant trajectories by movement themes rather than by individual case. This structure makes it possible to identify common patterns first and then highlight the nuances that distinguish participants within each directional movement.

4.5. Thematic Discussion of Positions and Movements (Interview-Based)

Rather than treating each participant in isolation, this subsection groups findings according to the main directions of movement observed in Berry's analytical grid. The aim is to show how shared pressures, forms of belonging, and modes of negotiation recur across cases while still preserving participant-specific differences. Quadrant placement and movement remain tied to participant wording, not inferred without evidence.

a) **Integration → Separation:** This movement is most clearly illustrated by Amina (P1) and Maya (P2), though it unfolds through two distinct biographies. Amina, a convert who becomes deeply involved in Muslim student life across Winnipeg campuses, begins from a position of strong dual investment in university and community space. Maya, by contrast, begins from a more routine and academically centered openness to university life that later becomes politicized and strained. What brings these cases together is not identical experience, but a shared diachronic pattern: both remain engaged in higher education while progressively relocating secure belonging toward Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian community spaces when institutional recognition becomes emotionally costly, politically fragile, or morally insufficient.

Amina's trajectory is marked first by a difficult and non-linear relationship to post-secondary education. Before becoming fully established in her current program, she describes earlier interruptions and unsuccessful attempts to remain in university, which contribute to a broader sense of not yet having found her place institutionally. This difficult start is important, but it is not the reason she is initially placed in integration. On the contrary, once she reverted, her trajectory became strongly integration-oriented. Against that backdrop, her discovery of Muslim student space takes on particular significance. As a student at Université de Saint-Boniface, she became involved in campus committees and student activities there, while also travelling across the city to attend halaqas, UMMSA meetings (University of Manitoba Muslim Student Association, shortened to MSA), and volunteer activities at the University of Manitoba. In her account, this period coincided with an intense moment of religious commitment and enthusiasm, during which she actively sought out Muslim community wherever she could find it and became deeply invested in the sisterhood and support these spaces offered. This attachment was therefore not peripheral to her university experience; rather, it helped make continued participation in university life feel possible and meaningful while anchoring her in multiple campus-based forms of involvement across Winnipeg's Muslim student networks.

Her own wording reflects this early integration-oriented attachment:

I identify and find myself in the space of the MSA, because I identify with Islam, with Muslims, and the practices associated with that.

Over time, this participation appears to have deepened into sustained involvement and responsibility within the space, suggesting that the MSA functioned not simply as a support service but as a durable site of recognition, leadership, and belonging. At the same time, Amina continues to insist on her full legitimacy within the university itself:

I have a right to exist in those spaces... I did not shy away from this. It's very unique, I would say, just because, I mean, I guess [as a] French Canadian, American woman who's white but converted a few years ago, like it's very, you know... [People] have questions. And so I don't really shy away from those questions. I do understand that people may not understand due to propaganda or whatever else it is, right? [But] mostly, I'm fine. There's

like very, very seldom time where I'm just like, okay, I'm not very open to doing this, but again, that's almost never. I'm always open to doing a form of da'wah, if you will.

(In Islam, Da'wah is the act of inviting others to understand, embrace, or reflect upon the message of Islam.)

Yet this integrative orientation is repeatedly strained by friction around accommodation, especially with respect to prayer space, as well as by anticipatory judgment in classroom settings:

The prayer space is the biggest issue right now. There's definitely tremendous friction. It is a very frustrating process - you feel like you have to fight for something that should just be there. A suitful prayer space. And [I understand, historically], that's where Catholicism came into the province, [in] St. Boniface. And so they're very, very defensive, I want to say. And I could say this as a French Manitoban, okay? (...). You know, I have to pray with a giant crucifix in the same room. Because the idea for those who make policy there are that the Christian and the Jew and the Muslim need to pray side by side. But in doing that, you are ignoring the unique needs that come from each group. And therefore, people are excluded. We have a professor, I believe, who's also implicated with MIA (Manitoba Islamic Association). [The professor] fundraised for a masjid, in Saint Boniface, for like years. [The professor] has been trying to get this, and the community has just flat out [not] sold any property, like, no, you're not making a mosque here. And so there's just kind of this, like, discriminatory undertone in the community itself that also just kind of leaks into the university space.

When you ask, it feels like you're asking for too much, like your faith is an inconvenience rather than a reality that deserves space. [For example] they will not put such and such poster up because of X, Y, Z technicality or [put up] prayer timings on the television there. It needs to go through media and communications and it's very technical (and) they refuse. I don't want to say they refuse a lot, but it is a very frustrating process. For students, but also staff and administration themselves, just in dealing with them. I have seen their kind of, um, hesitancy, reluctance, I guess, or just this kind of idea that enacting change there is very hard and I don't want to say futile, but very difficult

People look at me before they even hear me... Before I open my mouth, they've already decided what kind of person I am.

In this light, her movement toward separation is not a rejection of education, nor a withdrawal from campus life altogether. Rather, it reflects the growing centrality of Muslim community space as the place where her religious self is more fully recognized, sustained, and valued:

I would say the community, like the Muslim community itself. I identify and find myself in the space of the MSA, because I identify with Islam, with Muslims, and the practices associated with that. Do I find myself in other spaces? Sometimes no. Just because it could be like, (...) maybe my appearance or the way I dress. It needs to be softened and that's just like, I don't subscribe to that, but it does kind of come up a little bit for me, right?

Sometimes I'll wear a mask instead of a veil because it softens it, for people who may make snap judgements. And that's just something to navigate in a secular country. So..

Amina's trajectory is therefore initially located in integration because she combines strong participation in university life with active investment in Muslim student space, peer relationships, and campus-based forms of responsibility. Her later movement is read as a shift toward separation because, despite remaining enrolled and engaged, the most durable and affirming site of belonging becomes the Muslim community rather than the institution itself. In other words, the movement is not from participation to absence, but from dual investment to a clearer re-centering of belonging outside the university as a primary moral and affective space.

Maya's trajectory follows a related but more explicitly diachronic pattern. She is initially located in integration not because she was deeply embedded in campus community life, but because she remained open to the university environment while continuing to participate in it in ordinary and sustained ways. At first, her relationship to the university appears relatively academic and routine: she describes herself as a student focused on coursework, classroom participation, and day-to-day continuity rather than on building a strong sense of collective belonging on campus. In this earlier phase, university functioned mainly as a space of study and progression, and she moved within diverse peer environments without anchoring herself strongly in any single community position. That relative openness to the institutional space, combined with continued participation and the absence of a prior withdrawal into exclusive community space, is what justifies the initial integration placement. She explains this earlier mode of participation in practical terms:

I was just really busy, so I didn't really care to build community at school or university. I hung out a lot in the arts lounge at the UM. I was around my community but not heavily involved. I was so busy because I worked outside of school. So I wasn't really involved in any association or speaking group, which I regret. I wasn't volunteering or, like, just participating to support my community. I didn't face any challenges overall. It was more so just get work done and go home. I didn't really build a community in university. And there weren't many Arab or Muslim students. I guess because I was getting married too. I was detached from all the different groups and then focused on my wedding, on graduating and getting my first degree. But I was more involved with my family. But even then, I wasn't seeing them as much. I didn't avoid [everything] necessarily. I just didn't have the time

[However] I really did enjoy my Middle Eastern classes, and that would... shape my thinking and understanding. There was a professor there at the University of Manitoba, where she went to Syria, Jordan, like the Middle East, and did her PhD there. And she came back and she started teaching Middle Eastern history. She literally opened my eyes on history and perspective, and I really... I wanted to do that as well. So she inspired me to get a minor in history. How she taught, the techniques that she used were amazing. She didn't feel like a professor. She felt like a teacher. It was more so, conversations [on] perspectives. It wasn't just her lecturing. And she had a lot of knowledge. So you could tell

that she wasn't using textbook work. She was using the research that she did overseas. And that pushed me to have more conversations with people. And I just found myself being more involved with people around me overall.

This earlier position is important because it suggests that her later reorientation was not present from the beginning. Rather, it emerged through a process of politicization and institutional discussions. As tensions intensified after October 7, she became more involved not only in Palestinian oriented support efforts but also in institutional conversations around safety, dialogue, and recognition. However, that involvement did not produce durable trust in the university as a space of belonging. Instead, the growing difficulty of remaining in classrooms where strongly opposed views were present, together with the burden of having to explain herself and her community, progressively pushed her toward spaces where her history, pain, and pride were already understood.

I'm more involved in the Arab and Palestinian community more than the university community. Because after October 7, I realized that the university was not a safe space for me in the way I thought. [They] put out a statement during that time saying that Hamas was the cause of the mass murderings, Hamas is the reason why Palestinians are at risk, or suffering. Which is also wrong and fake. And I told [the dean], if that's what [they] deemed,[then] I don't feel safe here as Palestinian.

When it came to what really mattered - my people, my pain - it fell on my back to explain myself to everybody. It felt like I had to. And I got tired.[...] This is not a textbook conversation. These are real human lives. And how can you talk about people and their nationality when you don't know the truth behind it? [People] look at it as a political issue. And it hurts my heart because this is not a political issue to me. This is a human rights issue. My people are dying. How can you say that in the classroom? And there's privilege, and there's power, on who has the right to speak, and so it really did exhaust me. And I actually just started crying too. And if I wasn't strong, I probably would have dropped out. And then, also,[a] professor said, if you take an ethical stance, it is critical. And so I had to question [them]. I said, well, if you're going to go on the side of human rights and saying genocide is wrong, like killing human beings is wrong, you're gonna say that as a political stance? I don't think so. So all these terms, all these textbook terms, it's a social construct, in my opinion. There's a lot of ignorance, so it's not gonna make me feel safe

Her conclusion makes the relocation of belonging explicit:

So now, I find my belonging elsewhere. Not because I've given up on education, but because I've found something more real. The community is where I integrate, not the institution. [Our] community comes together [by] not looking at the person's background [but by] looking at the human self. Detach the ethnicity, the religion, all these things. We're looking at a human and you're listening to their perspective.

In Maya's case, then, the later movement toward separation is best understood not as prior disengagement from campus, but as the outcome of a rupture that redefined where recognition, safety, and shared meaning could be found. The shift is read specifically as separation because belonging becomes more firmly re-centered in Arab and Palestinian community spaces, while the university remains a place she continues to attend and navigate but no longer experiences as the primary site of secure identification.

Synthesized, Amina and Maya show that movement from integration toward separation is better understood as a reorganization of belonging than as a retreat from education. Both participants continue to study, attend class, and navigate university demands, yet the institution no longer carries the same affective or moral weight as a site of recognition. For Amina, repeated accommodation struggles make community space the place where faith is affirmed without exhaustion. For Maya, the political rupture surrounding October 7 transforms the Arab and Palestinian community into the space where grief, dignity, and intelligibility are most reliably held. In both cases, separation names a protective re-centering of belonging, not a refusal of participation.

b) **Integration → Marginalization:** This movement is especially visible in Nora (P3), Sofya (P6), and Nadya (P8), whose trajectories begin from qualified participation supported by ordinary routines, diversity, and community ties. Nora is navigating a new academic start after changing majors when October 7 reshapes the emotional meaning of campus life; Sofya describes a generally participatory university experience anchored by Friday prayer, diversity, and the Syrian student club; and Nadya returns to Winnipeg with a strong sense of academic purpose and attachments across both campus and community settings. These cases are grouped together because each shows how participants can remain present, enrolled, and active while nonetheless moving episodically toward marginalization when visibility, anxiety, or weak institutional recognition undermine affective security. Across these three accounts, the baseline pattern is not exclusion from university life but qualified integration sustained through support networks. Nora was in the beginning of her new academic journey, after switching majors, when October 7th happened. Living through this had a significant impact on her socio-emotional well-being. Nevertheless, support groups and campus diversity served as anchors to her sense of safety and mitigated feelings of isolation:

There were a lot of support groups and student clubs at the U of W. So that was really, nice and wholesome.[I] felt safe and I felt included and I didn't feel like I had to be afraid to go. So that helped at the time. Like, completely. [And] those groups they're made by students [and] it was mixed [backgrounds]. It was a lot of professors [too] that held meetings, support groups. It was shocking to me. And a lot of students also showed up to those meetings as well

The University of Winnipeg, they're very diverse. A very diverse group of people. I never felt discriminated against, and there's a lot of people, [that] look like me, you know, physically, you could tell that. They're not a minority group, let's say. So it doesn't make me feel alone. It's to the point where it's so diverse you won't be singled out, which is nice. It's a nice feeling. Like everyone's technically one.

Sofya, likewise, describes campus inclusion at the University of Manitoba through ordinary participation. The presence of a Syrian student club, diversity, the Muslim Student Association, and Friday prayer on campus support her feelings of integration:

I haven't had any problems with being a hijabi in university. I've never experienced any similar looks or different attitudes because of my hijab. I like exploring the place I'm in, so when I am at the university, I like to see other buildings. I like to check all the study places and sit and see if I like it or not. And even though I went to St. Paul's, which is a very, very Christian building, I didn't feel like I wasn't welcomed. I didn't feel like there were people giving me looks or not wanting me there. I felt like [people are] just like me and [we're] all the exact same. I think people are more used to seeing us. So there isn't that much racism. I don't feel excluded or I don't feel the odd one out.

We have a Syrian student club which started last February, so not that long ago. I really like it because I got to meet more Syrian people who are like me, who share the same values and beliefs, who came from the same background. So they felt closer than other communities. And there's also the [MSA]. They always host events, they always try to make everyone feel a little bit less alone. We have Friday prayer every Friday on campus, and we have our own masjid that has a proper place for wuduh' and everything. So it seems like an actual proper place rather than just a room that they gave us. [And] the Muslim student association, we have Friday prayer every Friday on campus. [And even if] I have a brother [who goes to this university that] helps me navigate, [they] (the MSA) always show themselves and represent themselves and they're always tabling in different events to attract people and show people that we're here and they grow on campus.

(Wuduh' is the act of ablution or ritual purification in Islam).

Nadya grew up in Winnipeg and is happy to be back after recently exploring various other provinces and their cities across Canada. Now enrolled at the University of Manitoba, she is pursuing a career in social work. She spends her time on campus with the photography club and at Migizii Agamik (Indigenous Student Centre), drawn there by her bond with her Indigenous Studies professor. For Nadya, belonging is a concept that bridges her academic and personal worlds, extending from the university spaces into the heart of her community and the masjid:

I love indigenous studies. I have a really great professor. And... Yeah, she's amazing. [When discussions concerning different beliefs and approaches to certain situations came up], she was a little bit more understanding because she understood about assimilation.

And [if I brought up using different perspectives] she's like, "Oh, that makes sense. " She's like, "You know what? Apply the things that are fit for that culture and that religion. " Because sometimes, it's not black and white and it's not all about textbook. It's more of a relational thing. And that's very indigenously based, and I appreciate that a lot.

If you get into class, if you're able to talk to a few of your classmates, they, sometimes, kind of bring each other to clubs. And so we did end up joining a photography club that I really enjoy.

[I'm also] working at the masjid. I'm working there and I volunteer there as well. So it's like an attachment to the community, as well as the MSA at the university. So I did volunteering for them as well. There's times where life gets a little too busy, so you have to step back and focus a little bit on things, but you always go back to the masjid. Like your heart just longs for it and the community, it's really strong. I mean, they all kind of like support each other. So even if you're looking into education and stuff, you'll find someone at the masjid that's willing to help you through that. Especially in the fields that you're working in. You'll find someone. There's so many Muslim people who are already in the field. And they're willing to let their hand out and help you out. So it's... it helps you advance in things. Not just on a spiritual level, but also here in this world.

When viewed together, these statements indicate an initial orientation toward participation, plural belonging, and practical support rather than a simple experience of exclusion.

At the same time, all three accounts show that this inclusion remains unstable. In Nora's case, politicized visibility and hijab-based legibility intensify anxiety after October 7:

After the 7th of October... I'm not gonna lie, that was honestly really scary because I didn't know what to expect. And there were a lot of people that were getting threatened in that area (U of W). Thankfully, it never happened to me, but I did feel fear because I wear the hijab. So, I mean, when you look at me, you could tell I'm from a certain category. So it did make me feel anxious and that was honestly really scary because I didn't know what to expect.

Obviously, you have Israeli students that are at university. So it does cause tension. And I feel like when things like that happen, a lot of times, the professors don't know how to talk about a situation. Which is funny because I think they should be able to. Like, know how to talk about or discuss it, even if it's not, like, obviously not giving their opinion of the situation, but trying to make both parties feel welcome. They can do that, but they just... they don't. And then that just causes it to be overwhelming in the school. And that's between the students. They have students from both sides and they have to learn at least how to discuss in their proper way, to make them feel included and safe. That's what I think.

She also explain not feeling comfortable using public restroom:

I kind of don't get to spend a lot of time at the university. Obviously, I'm busy with the kids and stuff. But.. an incident happened last semester. We're all aware of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There was someone that, you know, physically looked like a male, but I don't know, I guess identified as female, and used the girl's washer. At the time, I wasn't using the washroom, but like, I saw them. I was there. And I just kind of was thinking imagine I had to or was in using that washroom and had to take my hijab off. You know what I mean? So that would be something I would feel uncomfortable about. They do [have a gender neutral washer], but for some reason, it's not many and I don't think people even use it, honestly. No one knows where they are or they are far away. So when I'm at the university, I try to avoid it all in general. If I had to fix my hijab, I just know I wouldn't be able to fix my hijab or use the washer. So I don't feel comfortable at the university and I always just go home.

Sofya's account similarly points to vigilance beneath ordinary participation:

I haven't had any problems with being a hijabi in the university, but it definitely keeps me alert all the time. Especially hearing stories before coming to study here (at the university). I've always heard stories about Muslim women being attacked, and them being hijabis, to the point that I saw it in my dream, like being attacked. So since I started [studying here], I'm always walking around alert. But I haven't had any bad experiences so far.

But I do think the media, from what we hear, in our minds, that experience is like, ten times worse. And then you're always scared. I know many girls, they're always anxious, they're always scared. Like this happened in this place, this happened in that place, and what if this happens to me. Especially with the Muslim hijabi that was discriminated against at the grocery market on campus, but that was two semesters ago.

I know that if I want someone higher up who understands me, I have my one professor. She's Arab, she's Muslim. I also have my brother and my Syrian club because I will find people around [with whom] I will not have those second thoughts. Like, not be scared and know they will understand me.

Nadya, meanwhile, names a more diffuse form of institutional dislocation and contrasts it with the recognition she finds in community space:

You kind of get lost in university. It's like, diversity or differences [are] more treated like a checkbox for the most part. That's the same with, like, the land acknowledgement. Sometimes, honestly, it feels like it's just things that they have to say to check off, so that they're not labelled as racial. But that's about it. For example, when our religious holidays come up like Eid or something, sometimes you have an exam on [that day] or something, and it's a very complicated process to try to get an exam deferred for those reasons. So sometimes that also makes me feel like it's not very inclusive.

I think so far during my whole university journey, I've only had one professor who was a hijabi. And she taught Arabic class, like Arabic. So it was, like, very specific. to that. I find that (representation) more at... the masjid or in the community.

I just find myself more at the masjid or the (Muslim) community. Academically related, sometimes it was personally related, and sometimes it was religiously and culturally related. Because sometimes, there's some values that you don't agree with. Or some thoughts or things that you don't agree with completely from the Western perspective. But sometimes they almost force you to assimilate, to be a part of (the group). And it's like, okay... but I'm okay and I'm happy and I shine on my own, in my culture and religion. I can understand you, and I appreciate you, and I respect you. But I don't have to be like you. Like, I can be my own person. With my own values and my own religion but sometimes it's like they kind of force it on me.

Sometimes, there's things in the program where they're, like, "Oh, follow this theory or follow this". I'm like, "Okay... " but this theory doesn't apply to everybody. Like you're looking at it from a Western perspective. It applies to the people that are here, that grew up here, but the people who maybe identify with a different culture or different religion, that doesn't apply to them. They have different things that they see as priority. I did my practicum recently. And, um, they were trying to get us to apply, the code of ethics into our thing. And I'm like, "Okay... but the code of ethics doesn't really follow or apply here" [considering] I was working in a Muslim organization. I just don't agree with everything that they're putting on there, and you're like, "Okay, maybe you need to take a step back and think". And sometimes I do find that I was a little bit too integrated into the Western culture where sometimes I... like we would need to talk about gender-based violence to the Muslim community. So I come at it from a very Western perspective and I come very harsh and I always had to remind myself "Okay, you gotta be careful of the language that you use" because culturally it could be misunderstood. So it's things like that where you can take a step back and think... The language is different. The idea of mental health is different. It's a very negative connotation in the culture. So, you gotta really be careful and pick your words carefully as to not offend anybody, right? So sometimes, in social work, it's like: "No, you gotta be very direct with it. ". You name it, you label it... but sometimes, that's not the case. Culturally, it's not the case. It doesn't fit with people's upbringing. Labelling is very Westernized. You've got to label everything. Diagnosis to this person, diagnosis to that person, but it's like, nope, you're breaking the family by doing that. So like, you got to step back and then you bring in the culture, you bring in the religion. So when I was doing gender-based violence, I brought in a lot of religious aspects to it. Like, in Islam, it teaches you to be kind to your wife, to be kind to your partner, that partners have specific rights that you have to fulfil. And you have specific rights that you need to make sure that are being fulfilled. So we talk about it in that perspective rather than just be like "This is what it is, this is what we're telling you to do and this is what you have to do. " That's why I just find myself more involved with my own community and the masjid. If

there were more mentors or professionals in that culture, kind of able to maybe mentor you, then it would be more appealing to [be more involved in the university]. And I think the university could truly benefit from that. But again, I do find all that at the masjid.

The common pattern, then, is not institutional exit but the accumulation of moments in which ordinary participation becomes effectively harder to sustain. The added participant detail makes clearer that marginalization here is episodic, relational, and uneven: Nora's politicized visibility, Sofya's vigilance beneath routine inclusion, and Nadya's diffuse institutional dislocation all point to forms of non-belonging that arise within continued academic presence rather than outside it. Grouping P3, P6, and P8 under this movement therefore clarifies that marginalization in this study is not a permanent destination. It is a recurrent condition produced when recognition remains fragile and must be repaired through vigilance, support networks, and community-based reassurance.

c) Integration→Marginalization/Separation boundary: Janna (P4) is best understood as moving from integration toward the boundary between marginalization and separation, and her case matters precisely because it resists a simple placement in one quadrant. Having grown up in Vancouver before moving into immersion schooling in Winnipeg, she presents herself as confident, socially capable, and able to enter diverse university communities without withdrawing from others. Her account therefore begins from a strong baseline of integration. What complicates that starting point is that experiences of exclusion arise both in institutional settings and among some Muslim peers, producing a trajectory in which non-belonging and community re-centering occur at the same time:

In university, I don't think that I noticed a lot of discrimination... [The university is] very diverse and more than half of the university are people of colour. So like, it's just really hard for people to discriminate when there's so many of us. Even in my religious class, I had a professor who has said that veiling is forced and that it's not a choice and that women get forced to wear the hijab, which is not true. There are parts of the world that do, but that's not religious. That's cultural. There's a difference between the both. And so I stood up for that and I said, "That's not true. Islam does not ask of us or forces us to do anything. It's all in our hands. ". And she disagreed with that, even though she was not a Muslim. And I felt empowered when I saw other people (Non-muslims) and Muslims in our class that stood up for that same point that I had. And it made me feel really good to see other people stand up and bring each other up instead of down.

I know how to integrate into a community, so I know I'm not the problem. I feel like I belong everywhere. Because I think I have a strong personality that makes me figure out how to be with others by just being myself. I think I have a strong personality because I've been through certain circumstances where I just said to myself that I will not always belong. I just need to feel confident in myself and be myself. I'm so confident in myself and what I believe in, that I won't let someone make me feel like I'm an outcast.

At the same time, she documents moments of exclusion that destabilize both institutional and peer belonging:

It's a little bit weird for me. [In highschool] I kind of experienced the opposite where people were scared of my religion, scared of me covering my hair. Maybe they were afraid of the unknown and they did not want to be my friend or want to get to know me. Maybe they were afraid instead of just asking a question. Whereas in university, it was kind of like I was mocked for being too religious, even though I was not. I never brought my religion into every single thing that I participated in because people have their own beliefs. I just wanted to go pray and that was the issue. People didn't like that. For them (other Muslims), they were like, " You're too religious for us. You like... you go pray, you do this, so we don't really want to associate with you. ".

I did experience some discrimination from specific profs where I felt like they helped students from their background and they discriminated against students from other backgrounds that are Muslim [or] black. For example, during my practicum, I, well, I,... I was not treated kindly by the teachers. I was also not treated kindly by the students and then I saw other practical students and everyone was normal. They (the others) were not people of colour, and they were being treated with open arms and kindness, [But the people of color]... People won't talk to them. In the staff room, they would never want us to sit with them and eat with them. They didn't care if we had nobody with us. They just... It was really segregated. The coloured people sat at a table, and the other people sat at a different table, and it was really heartbreaking to see because there were so little coloured people. It was one coloured person with 50 white people. It was really sad and in those little situations that you realize, "No, you have to ask to be here. You have to ask to talk to us. You have to ask, you have to be grateful that we even accepted you here. ". That really made me realize that, "Wow, there are still people out there that really don't like Muslims. ". I was not able to speak to the mentor (in the school), but I did speak to the co-professor, my mentor in the university. He made it seem like he understood, but I think it was just a way to sympathize with me. I don't think he actually understood what I was talking about. And I don't think he really cared that much. Because he doesn't feel that. He's a white man. Like he was nice to me, but he definitely didn't understand what I was going through, and he just couldn't. He sympathized, and maybe he just couldn't... he doesn't know what to do with it or about it. And just was it a listening ear, which I appreciate, but it didn't really do much for me. And so after my practicum, I sat with myself and I told myself I don't deserve to be treated this way. I'm a very kind person.

And I don't want to lose myself while I'm integrating. I should be able to be welcomed, right? And so... I decided to talk to the superiors of the person that's in charge of me. And after a couple meetings, they made the decision to change my practicum school. And I feel really grateful and I really hope that the experience and the practice in school coming up is

one that really changes my perspective and actually makes me feel included and appreciated.

These dynamics do not suggest a stable shift into assimilation. Rather, they indicate episodic exclusion that weakens her relation to institutional space without eroding her attachment to faith, dignity, or community. Her account of the mosque as a stabilizing space is important here:

The mosque for me is so important. It's the place of worship that keeps me steadfast. I got to know a couple other girls and we all kind of share the same religion, certain values, certain cultural practices. We have a mutual understanding. We respect one another. And I think that gave me a lot of empowerment and a lot of comfort. Knowing that there's people that are like me and that will always have my back. And it was beautiful to see that through my friends at university. I loved seeing that because it gave me empowerment because I didn't always see that growing up.

For that reason, Janna is placed on the boundary between marginalization and separation rather than inside either category alone. The added material shows why this boundary matters: practicum racism and peer judgment create moments in which she is pushed to the margins, but the mosque and trusted relationships reassemble recognition, dignity, and steadiness. Her case therefore demonstrates that movement in Berry's grid can be simultaneous rather than sequential. She is not passively displaced into marginalization; she actively resists exclusion while relying on community space to repair the belonging that institutional and peer settings fail to secure at times.

d) Strategic Assimilation↔Integration: This movement is most visible in the cases of Aisha (P5) and Leyla (P7), whose accounts foreground selective visibility as an active strategy rather than a simple sign of assimilation. Aisha, a second-generation participant whose family has long been established in Winnipeg, describes moving through university by calibrating when and how identity is made explicit. Leyla, a 1.5-generation participant who began university during Covid, articulates an even more deliberate form of protective invisibilization shaped by both racism and discomfort with some intra-community dynamics. These cases are brought together because both participants remain engaged in campus life, yet their participation is sustained through careful management of exposure, risk, and intelligibility.

Aisha grew up in Winnipeg all her life, and her family has been established here since the 1960s. When speaking about spaces of belonging, she explicitly links discomfort to anticipated judgment in identity-salient settings, yet she also describes active belonging and adaptation:

I would say, possibly, like, religious areas. I feel like I wouldn't belong in those such places, and they wouldn't accept my beliefs. In that sense, I consider myself Canadian more than my own culture, I guess. I grew into the Canadian culture, which made it much more easier for me to belong in such groups. I feel very belonged.

She further identifies stereotype risk:

I feel like I get stereotyped a lot when I talk about my beliefs. I guess it's that stereotype of Muslims and how they're like, stereotypes of being bad people, women having no rights and just being aggressive in a way.

Her strategy becomes clearest in the way she manages exposure:

We kind of... agree to disagree in every conversation that we have or debates about religion. Like, for me, I wasn't separated from the friends that I was raised with in middle school throughout high school too. And I kind of found my own group with Middle Eastern. I kind of just joined and felt a really good connection with them. [We share] culture, language, I feel like I could communicate better with people of my own than, we could say, other Canadians. I mean, I still could, but I feel like I have a greater connection with Middle Eastern than my Canadian friends. Actually, that's like the other questions. I feel like I connect a lot with people of my own when it comes to missing a place that we were once comfortable in, like Jordan.

[People] can't tell I'm Muslim or Middle Eastern because of my looks or my name. And honestly, I just stay in my own path. Respect other people's opinions. Sometimes, when professors find out, [we] have good conversations about the act of war in Palestine. And since I'm majoring in history, I would have good, interesting conversations about the history of Jordan and Petra.

This culminates in a formulation that captures strategic assimilation without identity abandonment:

I feel like I've kind of just blended in... like people don't really see me as different anymore. But that doesn't mean I've lost myself. It means I've chosen to protect certain things. I like saying I'm Palestinian. I don't want to hide it. Every chance I get, I will put it out there. Just not all the time, not everywhere.

Leyla (P7), on the other hand, is considered a 1.5 generation immigrant. As mentioned, she started her university journey during Covid. Her account displays a similar but more explicit logic of protective invisibilization, as well as intra-community limits:

I care very much about who sees me going to the masjid... People don't usually guess that I'm Arab, and I think that has kind of prevented me from getting into situations [of discrimination]. I one hundred percent believe that there is racism. One hundred percent believe that there is discrimination against Muslim people. And I have not experienced that necessarily unless I've been involved in conversations about where I grew up and where I came from and stuff like that. And I think I just, I like that privilege as bad as it sounds. I do like it because I do see other people being discriminated against because of where they come from and how they speak and the language barrier and stuff like that. And because I don't sense that, I care very much about keeping that and maintaining that. And again, that goes back to not going to the masjid because it's actually right next to my faculty. So, everyone in my faculty and everyone passing through the tunnels would pass through there

and see me and I don't want that. I think I'm just very privileged to be white looking. Honestly. Like, as simple as that. And not having the accent.

I have one of our very close friends. She works at the university, and I've talked to her about going to her office, 'cause she has a closed office and praying there, because I will not go in public. I think another factor that goes into it, because I've always wanted to go to the masjid but never do, is that I have not liked the Arab demographic much at the university.

At the same time, she also describes increased participation and openness in trusted settings:

I'm a person that does not like to be associated with so many people. I know a lot of people, I have a lot of acquaintances, but my small group of friends is my small group of friends. I became much more confident... when I became friends with these people... it's more comfortable and safe to share that you're suffering.

Her account also names institutional limits:

I would be lying if I said that I felt any discrimination against me. At least until people found out that I'm Arab. I enjoy going to events and I would go to [these events] because I know my boundaries. I know where and what to go to, what my boundaries are in that event, what I do and I don't do and stuff like that. And so showing up to these events also makes people accept you. And sometimes forget about your background because like, say, we do have a hijabi person in my classes right now. And so, for example, she wouldn't show up to these social events, and people wouldn't even invite her. And so lots of people would associate that with the fact that she's a hijabi, she's a Muslim, so she wouldn't show up to such an event so let's not invite. And so these certain ideas stay in the back of their head when they're interacting with her... if they even are, right? And so I think just the way that I live and do stuff and talk to people makes them forget where I'm from until it's brought up.

I don't think there's any club that I found very significant in my university journey. When I did join one, all I would notice is the amount of [bad mouthing] people do on one another, about the person, their character or their work. And I hate drama. I would distance myself from drama right away. And so joining one... No matter how much I cared about the cause, I told myself I would never join any of these clubs again because I know the amount of drama that goes into it and the amount of disorganization and the amount of [bad mouthing] and you're getting so much less than what you're going in for. And sometimes I don't even know if they understand whether the event or the thing that they're doing is actually benefitting the cause that they're working for.

You can for sure tell there are... racist instructors. You might not sense it in marking. You will sense it in their critics. You will sense it in the way that the conversation is going. If [they] find out where I'm from after asking me, they would mention how bad the water is

where I'm from and just negative stuff. Or, there was this one instructor who said we used to send our expertise from Canada and the US to places like India and Pakistan to teach them how to do things properly and look at us now. We get our pieces and our machines and stuff from China. It was so weird and he had a picture on the board of India and he said it's Pakistan.

In combination, the cases of P5 and P7 show that the boundary between assimilation and integration is neither fixed nor adequately captured by surface appearance alone. The new material makes clear that selective blending in is not equivalent to self-loss; it is a calibrated response to environments in which recognition remains conditional and visibility can invite stereotype, exclusion, or racialization. Aisha and Leyla continue to participate, build relationships, and claim aspects of identity they value, but they do so on terms that protect them from unnecessary exposure. In this sense, strategic assimilation is best read here as a survival practice nested within continued integration, not as a total move away from community or self.

Across all four movement themes, the analytical pattern is fundamentally diachronic. Participants do not occupy one permanent place in Berry's grid; instead, they move across orientations as political context, institutional encounters, life-course pressures, and support ecologies change over time (Berry, 1997; Dubar, 2000). For this reason, the analytical value of the model in this study lies less in fixed classification than in tracing trajectories, transition pressures, and context-dependent repositionings. What matters empirically is not assigning each participant to a permanent quadrant, but documenting when, why, and under which conditions movement occurs between integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.

4.6. Mobilization of capitals

While the preceding analysis examined participants' trajectories within Berry's acculturation model, the following section adopts a different analytical lens by turning to the forms of capital (Yosso, 2005) participants mobilize within university settings. Rather than tracing movement across acculturation orientations, the focus here is on how participants respond to these conditions in practice, particularly in relation to their sense of belonging and their capacity to navigate, resist, and reconfigure their experiences within secular institutional spaces. In doing so, this section directly addresses the supporting research questions related to belonging and the mobilization of capital.

4.6.1. Community Spaces as Sites of Affirmed Belonging

Throughout the interviews, participants consistently identified community spaces such as the mosque, Muslim Student Associations (MSA), and informal solidarity networks as the primary sites where an authentic form of integration becomes possible without the permanent cost of identity negotiation. These spaces constitute what Yosso (2005) calls social capital, meaning networks of people and community resources that, far from signaling a separatist withdrawal, actively support participation in institutional spaces. Nadya (P8), a social work student at the

University of Manitoba, provides a detailed account of how these networks operate not as symbolic belonging, but as materially embedded support structures that actively sustain her ability to remain engaged in university:

The Muslim sisterhood really pushed and made [my university experience] a positive one... I don't think I would've gotten through it the same way without them. Because sometimes when you're able to lean on them, [everything] gets a little bit difficult. They're able to help you, for example I had this fun sister who was so helpful. She was just like give me all your stuff and I'll structure everything for you for my timing and stuff. So I was able to manage things because I was working night shifts and some day shifts and taking university courses. So it was a little bit hard in that sense. Even studying now, I have so many sisters texting me or calling me and being like, do you need me to come watch the kids while you do this or study this or something, you know? It's very community-based. They're like, "Let me just watch the kids for a second while you get some sleep or you do your assignment. ". There's things like that. So it's really nice to have that. It's what lets me go back to the classroom the next day.

What emerges from this account is a form of social capital (Yosso, 2005) that operates through concrete acts of mutual aid, through time-sharing, childcare, academic support, that allow the participant to maintain a sense of belonging within institutional spaces.

Sofya (P6), a criminology student at the University of Manitoba (generation 1.5), describes the ongoing demand for self-translation and representation in institutional spaces, in contrast to community environments where shared understanding eliminates the need for explanation:

Being visibly Muslim, I think it's not very good. It's the responsibility [of representing] that I have to carry. Because here, there are people who are close minded. There are people who came to this university from small cities, who are all legal, all Christians, are all white. So they don't know about other cultures. So then it's my responsibility to represent Muslim women the right way. In all my classes and all the interactions I have, I have to think about the general group. I recognize the woman that I am and also represent other women. And I don't want to say I'm super religious, but then at the same time, I'm not super away from my religion. But I have to remind myself that God needs us for His purpose, and to represent Islam and to show ourselves and make the best image possible. And to meet other cultures, to be open to other cultures. And it's a great value, don't get me wrong. It's just that at the masjid, I don't have to explain myself there... people just get it. People are more forgiving or lenient or open because they understand you and know you, and know many people like you. In university, I'm always translating myself, my faith, my background, my accent sometimes. At the masjid, I arrived already whole.

Here, social capital takes on an identity-based form, where shared cultural and religious frameworks create conditions of immediate recognition that suspend the ongoing labour of self-representation required in institutional contexts.

Janna (P4), a French Education student at Université de Saint-Boniface, describes how returning to the mosque after a period of disconnection during her early university years radically reconfigured her relationship to the institutional space. This narrative illustrates the diachronic dimension of acculturation as theorized by Dubar (2000), given that positioning does not remain stable but evolves in connection with biographical transitions:

The mosque for me is so important. Coming back to it was one of the best decisions of my life. When I was going through a period where I felt like I was all over the place, disconnected, it was the place of worship that kept me steadfast. I have most of my friends from the mosque. They're people that I grew up with for the past 15 years. They've become like family to me. So I look forward to going to the mosque for programs, for events. It's just a great way to reconnect with other people that are similar to you because when you're at school or when you're at the store or wherever you are, sometimes you can feel a little bit different, maybe not as welcomed, but when you're in the mosque, at least from my experience, I felt like I've been welcomed and I also take that opportunity to welcome other people. Because I think it's a place of peace, life and love. The masjid gave me back what the university had taken from me. And from that point on, I could face whatever the institution threw at me.

What appears here is a form of social capital grounded in continuity, where long-standing relationships and familiar spaces provide the stability needed to regain footing and continuity within the university.

Across these accounts, social capital does not take a single form, but is expressed through distinct yet complementary dimensions. It operates materially, through concrete forms of support, and relationally, through spaces where recognition is immediate and does not require ongoing negotiation of the self. It can also take shape over time, through enduring ties that participants return to in moments of instability.

These accounts also show that social capital is not mobilized in isolation, but is closely intertwined with familial capital (Yosso, 2005). The boundaries between networks of support and family-like relationships often blur, particularly in community spaces where shared histories, values, and practices create forms of belonging that extend beyond institutional definitions of support.

4.6.2. Institutional Spaces as Sites of Conditional Inclusion

In contrast to community spaces, where social capital is readily available and supports a stable sense of belonging, university environments are experienced as conditionally inclusive. Participants describe being able to engage academically, while their sense of belonging remains dependent on context, interaction, and how they are perceived by others. In these contexts, access to support, recognition, and relational ease is not guaranteed, but must be negotiated.

Sofya (P6) describes this conditional inclusion as participation marked by a constant awareness of how she is perceived, even in the absence of explicit exclusion:

I feel comfortable, but at the same time, you're always kind of aware of how people might see you. Like, you're there, you're present, but there's always this layer underneath... this awareness that you might be read in a way that doesn't match who you are. Integration doesn't feel like rest. It feels like work.

What emerges here is not simply a lack of belonging, but the absence of relational ease typically associated with social capital, where participation becomes a form of ongoing labour rather than something that comes naturally.

For visibly Muslim participants, this conditionality often emerges prior to any interaction. Amina (P1), a Nursing student at the Université de Saint-Boniface, describes how visibility through the niqab shapes how she is perceived before she has the opportunity to speak, requiring her to anticipate and respond to misrecognition.

People look at me before they even hear me... it feels like they've already made up their mind. Before I open my mouth, they've already decided what kind of person I am, what I believe, maybe what I'm capable of. And then I have to undo all of that before I can actually just be a student in the room.

In this context, participation requires the anticipatory mobilization of multiple forms of capital. What is at stake here is not only misrecognition, but the need to actively undo it, transforming participation into a process that begins before any interaction takes place.

Nadya (P8) pushes this further by questioning the nature of inclusion itself, pointing to a gap between how diversity is presented and how it is actually experienced. This distinction aligns with what Ahmed (2012) describes as performative diversity, where institutional commitments to inclusion remain largely symbolic.

It feels more like checking off a box than actually understanding people's experiences. Again, it's like they almost force you to assimilate. It's not very inclusive. It's more like, we'll accept you if you do it this way and this way only or else it's never going to be good enough. I can understand you... but you won't understand me. You will listen, sometimes sure, but it doesn't matter sometimes in the grand scheme of things to have a listening ear... This is people's lives.. and they don't have to be like you. This theory doesn't apply to everybody.

What is being described here is a conditional form of inclusion, where difference is accepted only when it conforms to dominant expectations, limiting the possibility for genuine recognition.

Together, these accounts suggest that university spaces do not simply lack social capital, but make access to recognition and belonging conditional. While participants are able to remain present within these environments, this presence is sustained through effort, anticipation, and self-

adjustment rather than ease. In contrast to community spaces, where social capital provides immediate support and recognition, institutional environments require students to actively produce the conditions of their own inclusion. In doing so, they must continuously manage how they are perceived, navigate misrecognition, and negotiate the terms under which they are accepted.

4.7. Counter-Narratives and Identity Resistance

Participants do not remain passive in the face of these conditions, including misrecognition, pressure to assimilate, and the need to constantly manage how they are perceived. Drawing on Yosso's concept of resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), their accounts show how they contest dominant representations of Islam in academic spaces and assert identities that are often misrepresented or simplified in institutional contexts. These practices take two main forms.

4.7.1. Representation Counter-Narratives

Several participants develop counter-narratives that affirm their presence in university spaces without minimizing their identity. They use institutional settings themselves, including coursework, presentations, and classroom discussions, as sites of visibility and resistance.

Amina (P1), Maya (P2), and Sofya (P6) share a similar approach in how they respond to dominant representations within academic spaces. In all three cases, the primary form of capital mobilized is resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), understood here as the capacity to challenge imposed narratives and refuse forms of erasure. A notable element across these accounts is the role of language, as this resistance is enacted through linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005), with participants relying on speaking, storytelling, and academic work to assert their presence and perspective within the classroom. Amina (P1), a Nursing student at the Université de Saint-Boniface, makes her identity visible within her academic work:

I have a right to exist in those spaces. I did not shy away from this identity of mine. I will raise my hand and ask the questions because I want clarification on a point that the professor's teaching. I'm just dressed differently and I have different values. But it doesn't change my fundamental humanity. And I will make sure I put that extra kind - I'll throw Niqabis and Hijabis in my Power Point slides, I'll choose research topics on spiritual care - because if I don't make us visible, who will?

She brings her identity directly into the academic space and refuses to keep it at the margins. Her work makes that presence visible within the classroom itself. This reflects resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), expressed through how she speaks, questions, and structures her academic work. Maya (P2), an Education student at the University of Manitoba, centers her work on Palestinian narratives:

If I'm not gonna talk on my behalf, then someone else will... and will control the narrative. And it's not fair, because these are my people, this is my story. So I presented my project

on Palestinian identity alongside a Jewish student, not as a confrontation, but as a statement. We're both here. Both of our stories exist. And that matters.

She identifies the risk of having her story shaped by others and responds by taking that role herself. Her presence in the classroom becomes a way of defining how her experience is understood. This reflects resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), enacted through language as she speaks on her own terms. Sofya (P6), a Law student at the same institution, takes a similar approach through her coursework:

I wanted to show them that we're not just in war, but we're more than that. I presented on a Syrian poet, on the city of Damascus. I made a traditional Syrian dessert for the class. Because they have this image, tents and bungalows, uncivilized. And I thought, no. Let me show you something different. They literally built half of what we call civilization today. And I'm here, proving it.

She shifts the image circulating within the classroom by introducing alternative cultural references drawn from her own background. In doing so, the discussion moves away from narrow or stereotypical representations toward a more complex understanding of identity and experience. This reflects forms of resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), expressed through linguistic and cultural interventions that challenge dominant assumptions and reshape how participants are perceived within academic spaces. Importantly, these accounts demonstrate that forms of capital do not operate independently from one another. Resistant capital is often mobilized through other forms of capital, particularly linguistic and cultural capital, which allow participants to intervene, reinterpret discussions, and reposition themselves within institutional environments. Through these interventions, participants actively influence how they are understood within the classroom, opening space for shifts in meaning, perception, and recognition.

4.7.2. Definitional Counter-Narratives and Agency in Institutional Interactions

Beyond discursive counter-narratives, participants also resist through their everyday interactions within institutional spaces. They refuse to accept the positions assigned to them and act when those boundaries are imposed. Janna (P4), during her teaching practicum in a non-diverse school setting, encounters informal racial segregation in the staff room:

During my practicum, I was not treated kindly by the teachers or the students. I saw other practicum students being treated with openness and kindness, and they were not people of colour. In the staff room, it was really segregated. The coloured people sat at one table, and the others sat somewhere else. It was heartbreaking to see. [...] And so after my practicum, I sat with myself and told myself I don't deserve to be treated this way. I decided to talk to the people in charge. After a couple of meetings, they changed my practicum school.

She does not remain in the situation or attempt to adjust to it. Instead, she leaves it and seeks a different placement through institutional channels. This reflects resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) in her refusal to accept the conditions imposed on her, along with navigational capital in how she

moves through the system to change her situation. Maya (P2), in a similar register, addresses her program's administration directly:

I don't feel safe in this building because you guys don't do a good job. And I said it to the associate dean. I said it clearly. Because if you don't say it, nothing changes. And I refuse to just absorb it. And they did do something about it. We see it in the people that are invited to speak, in the clubs and their events, and in what people tell me about their classes.

She brings the issue directly to those in positions of authority and names it clearly. Her intervention leads to visible changes within the program, extending beyond personal experience into institutional impact. This reflects resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), along with navigational capital in how she engages the structures of the institution. In both cases, resistance moves beyond recognition of the problem and leads to action within the institution itself. Janna redirects her trajectory by changing her placement, while Maya contributes to changes in the institutional environment. These situations show how resistant and navigational forms of capital work together, producing outcomes that begin to alter existing conditions.

4.8. Social, Navigational, Aspirational, and Familial Capital: Persevering Through Barriers

Community spaces were previously identified as sites of affirmed belonging. The focus here shifts to how participants actively draw on these forms of support to remain engaged in their studies. For several participants, responding to conditional inclusion involves relying on community and family networks that provide the resources needed to continue. Through a combination of social, navigational, aspirational, and familial capital (Yosso, 2005), they mobilize forms of support that are not consistently available within institutional spaces. Amina (P1) describes how the MSA and broader Muslim community function as a concrete source of support:

I would honestly say the musalla at the University of Manitoba has been very, very... like an anchor.

The MSA the most. I've gotten very, very involved with the Muslim Association

Some aunties came to my house and just gave me so much food when I was sick. They are a family.

You don't find that in a classroom. And from that anchor, I can go anywhere.

She relies on these relationships in moments where institutional support is limited. The community she describes provides care, presence, and a sense of stability that allows her to continue. This reflects social capital (Yosso, 2005) as it is actively drawn upon in her day-to-day experience. Aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) appears in how participants maintain long-term goals even when their academic paths are not linear. Amina (P1) continues to pursue her goal of becoming a registered nurse while also engaging in law studies:

Now the plan is to become a registered nurse... while studying law on the side.

Despite dropping out twice, despite having to take my courses as an adult, despite people doubting me, the dream never went away.

Because my father said to me once: 'You could do this, the nurses are so nice. ' And I held onto that. I'm not a quitter. There's a self-rewarding feeling in enduring everything.

She holds onto this goal despite interruptions and uncertainty in her academic path. The reference to her father anchors this aspiration in a broader family narrative, where persistence is not only personal but carried through familial influence. Aspirational and familial capital (Yosso, 2005) intersect here in sustaining her engagement over time. Janna (P4) expresses a similar dynamic when she reflects on her father's migration trajectory:

Education is a core value in my family. It's never been an option for me not to go to university. My father came here to study engineering, and he built something from nothing. So when things get hard, and they do get hard, I think of that. And I keep going. Because I carry that with me. His story is part of what I do every day.

She draws on this family history as a way to keep going through difficult moments. Her persistence is tied to a sense of continuity that extends beyond her individual experience. Familial capital (Yosso, 2005) operates here as a source of direction and motivation. Nora (P3), a Psychology student at the University of Winnipeg, describes how community and faith function together as a resource when facing academic pressure:

There were a lot of support groups. It's just nice knowing that there is a group there. When I do get overwhelmed, sometimes I think I have to go pray. And you'll find someone at the masjid that's willing to help you through that. My community, my faith, they constantly remind me that I'm not alone. That is what lets me sit in a class the next morning.

She turns to these spaces in moments of difficulty. The support she describes becomes part of how she manages academic pressure and remains engaged in her studies. Social and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) intersect here, as community functions as both support and guidance. What appears here is the active use of these resources. Participants rely on relationships, family values, long-term goals, and everyday strategies to sustain their engagement and continue navigating institutional demands, even when those demands remain challenging.

4.8.1. Navigational Capital: Strategic Management of Identity Visibility

Some participants, notably Leyla (P7) and Aisha (P5), describe a more deliberate way of navigating university spaces, where the visibility of their identity is not constant but adjusted depending on the context. Rather than expressing their identity in the same way across all situations, they make decisions about when and where to make it visible. This reflects navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) as the capacity to move through institutional environments while maintaining control over how one is perceived. Leyla (P7) provides a detailed account of how this

process operates in her everyday experience. She is aware that she is not immediately perceived as Arab or Muslim and actively preserves this form of invisibility:

People don't usually guess that I'm Arab, and I think that has kind of prevented me from getting into situations [of discrimination]... I like that privilege as bad as it sounds. I care very much about keeping that and maintaining that... I think I'm just very privileged to be white looking. Honestly. Like, as simple as that. And not having the accent.

This positioning is not incidental. It is maintained as a protective strategy, grounded in an awareness of how quickly perception can shift once identity markers become visible. Navigational capital operates here through anticipation, as she adjusts her presence in relation to how she might be read by others. This awareness extends to her engagement with specific spaces:

I care very much about who sees me going to the masjid... I will not go in public. I've talked to a friend about praying in her office because it's private.

Here, religious practice is relocated and not abandoned. Is it important for her that her visibility is constrained to controlled environments, allowing her to maintain both participation and discretion. The management of space becomes part of the management of identity. The same pattern appears in her participation in social settings.

I enjoy going to events because I know my boundaries... the way that I live and talk to people makes them forget where I'm from until it's brought up.

This suggests that interactions are shaped by calibrated forms of engagement. Identity is neither fully disclosed nor entirely concealed, but held in reserve and made visible under specific conditions. Navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) thus takes the form of controlled disclosure. In other words, identity is managed over time rather than fixed.

Aisha (P5), a History student at the University of Winnipeg, describes a related form of navigation, though structured differently. Like Leyla (P7), her identity is not immediately legible within academic spaces:

[People] can't tell I'm Muslim or Middle Eastern because of my looks or my name. And honestly, I just stay in my own path. Respect other people's opinions...

As such, this initial invisibility allows her to move through the institution without immediate categorization. At the same time, it creates the conditions under which disclosure becomes a matter of choice rather than imposition. She further elaborates this positioning:

I feel like I've kind of just blended in... like people don't really see me as different anymore. But that doesn't mean I've lost myself. It means I've chosen to protect certain things. I like saying I'm Palestinian. I don't want to hide it. Every chance I get, I will put it out there. Just not all the time, not everywhere.

Identity is neither erased nor constantly asserted. It is expressed selectively, depending on the situation. This reflects navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) as a form of control over how and when identity becomes visible within institutional spaces. What emerges in these accounts is a careful management of visibility. Participants adjust their presence depending on the context, allowing them to remain within institutional spaces while maintaining control over how they are perceived. This positioning does not entail a loss of identity. Rather, it reflects a deliberate regulation of when and how identity is expressed. While forms of visibility management are common in social interaction, they appear here with greater intensity, shaped by the anticipation of stereotyping and differential treatment.

4.8.1. Repositioning and Emancipation in Relation to Institutional Spaces

The strategies identified in the previous sections extend here into a reconfiguration of participants' relationship to institutional spaces. When these spaces fail to provide adequate recognition or support, participants do not remain positioned within them in the same way. Instead, they redefine where and how belonging is established. This repositioning does not signal disengagement from education, but a shift in the terms under which participation takes place.

Following October 2023, Maya (P2) describes a shift in how she relates to the university and where she locates her sense of belonging. In her account, a specific moment reshapes her expectations of the institution, which can be understood through Dubar's (2000) diachronic perspective:

I'm more involved in the Arab and Palestinian community more than the university community. Because after October 7, I realized that the university was not a safe space for me in the way I thought. When it came to what really mattered - my people, my pain - it fell on my back to explain myself to everybody. And I got tired. So now, I find my belonging elsewhere. Not because I've given up on education, but because I've found something more real. The community is where I integrate, not the institution.

Here, belonging is no longer anchored in the university. Academic engagement continues, but the conditions under which belonging is sustained are reassessed. This shift reflects a redefinition of participation over time, where prior expectations of inclusion are re-evaluated in light of lived experience. Resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) is expressed through the refusal to maintain belonging under conditions that require constant self-explanation.

Leyla (P7) illustrates another form of repositioning through critical distancing not from the dominant society but from her own supposed community group, when that group imposes forms of identity representation she does not wish to carry:

I don't want to be associated with these people anymore. I would never consider joining the club. Not because I don't care about my identity - I do, deeply. But because I don't

like having ties that carry the burden of representation. I like being able to drop in whenever I feel like it, without having to perform who I am for a group. My small group of friends is my small group of friends.

Rather than attempting to adapt to these spaces, she limits her participation to contexts she considers more coherent with her expectations. This reflects a selective mode of engagement, where participation is not rejected entirely but redefined on her own terms. Resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) is expressed here through the refusal to engage with structures that impose forms of participation she does not wish to assume.

I infer then, that rather than remaining fixed within institutional spaces, belonging is redistributed across contexts. Maya anchors it in community, while Leyla restricts her participation in institutional structures that do not align with her expectations. In both cases, engagement continues, though on redefined terms that preserve their control over how belonging is experienced.

4.9. Synthesis of Findings

The analyses developed across these subsections move from identifying the conditions under which belonging is experienced to examining how participants respond to and navigate those conditions in practice. The discussion first established a contrast between community spaces, where belonging is affirmed through accessible forms of social capital, and institutional environments, where inclusion remains conditional and must be negotiated. It then showed how participants actively respond to these conditions through forms of resistant capital, challenging dominant representations and intervening within institutional spaces. Building on this, the analysis highlighted how multiple forms of capital are mobilized to sustain academic engagement over time, allowing participants to persist despite structural constraints. Attention was then given to more deliberate forms of navigation, particularly through the management of identity visibility, where participants adjust how and when they are perceived depending on context. Finally, the analysis demonstrated how these strategies extend into processes of repositioning, through which participants redefine the terms and locations of belonging itself. This progression reflects a shift from experiencing conditions of inclusion, to actively responding to them, and ultimately to reconfiguring the spaces in which belonging is made possible.

To synthesize the analyses from Sections 4.2 to 4.5, I developed a visual representation based on Figure 6 (Yosso's CCW model) and adapted it to the empirical patterns identified in this study. In this context, empirical patterns refer to recurrent tendencies observed across participants' narratives during inductive coding (e.g., frequency, intensity, and co-occurrence of capitals in lived experiences).

Thus, circle size represents the relative prominence of each capital across the full corpus, and the synthesis is grounded in an inductive analytical process. The figure places larger capitals in front for clarity, not to rank them, and shows that some capitals, especially linguistic and resistant capital, often worked together. Overall, social capital emerged as the most prominent, followed by navigational capital. Resistant capital also remained highly visible, while familial and linguistic capitals appeared at moderate levels. By contrast, aspirational capital was low-moderate, and cultural capital was the least mobilized in this dataset.

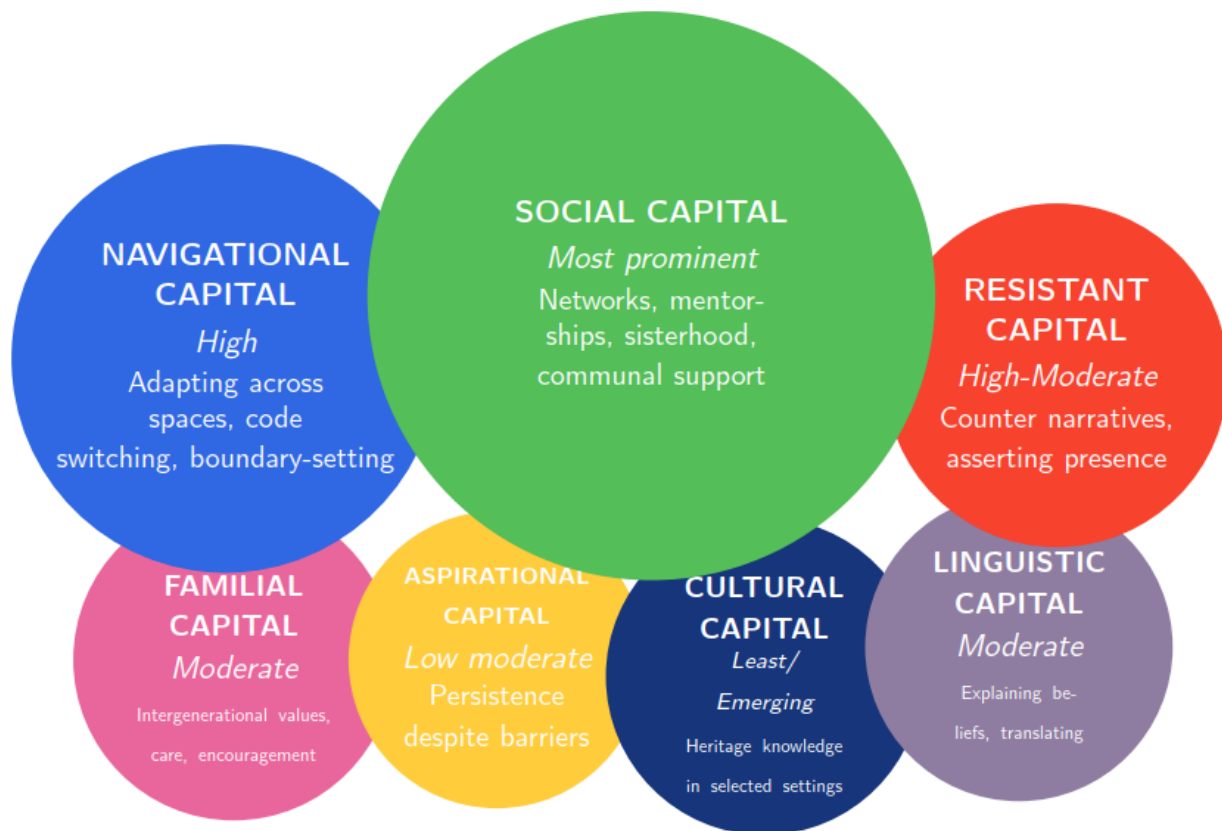


Figure 6: Relative mobilization of all seven CCW capitals in the interview corpus (inductive synthesis).
Circle size indicates relative prominence in participants' narratives.

Collectively, these patterns suggest that participants relied most on capitals that helped them remain supported, strategic, and visible in everyday institutional life. Social, navigational, and resistant capitals formed the core of this repertoire because they provided networks of care, practical adaptation across spaces, and the capacity to respond to exclusion through counter-narratives and presence. Familial and linguistic capitals also sustained this process through intergenerational values, encouragement, and the ongoing work of explaining beliefs and translating experience. Meanwhile, aspirational capital persisted mainly as endurance, while cultural capital appeared more selectively through heritage knowledge in particular contexts. In this sense, Figure 6 captures a layered pattern of mobilization shaped by support, adjustment, and self-assertion within secular universities.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the mobilization of capital is closely tied to participants' movement across acculturation positions. In this sense, the patterns identified here help explain how participants are able to sustain, adjust, or redefine their relationship to institutional spaces over time. The capitals mobilized do not operate in isolation, but form a dynamic repertoire through which participants navigate conditional inclusion, resist imposed representations, and reposition themselves in relation to institutional structures. Social, navigational, and resistant capitals formed the core of this repertoire because they provided networks of care, practical adaptation across spaces, and the capacity to respond to exclusion through counter-narratives and presence. Familial and linguistic capitals also sustained this process through intergenerational values, encouragement, and the ongoing work of explaining beliefs and translating experience. Meanwhile, aspirational capital persisted mainly as endurance, while cultural capital appeared more selectively through heritage knowledge in particular contexts. In this sense, Figure 6 captures a layered pattern of mobilization shaped by support, adjustment, and self-assertion within secular universities.

In doing so, participants not only navigate or respond to institutional conditions, but also reshape the terms through which belonging is defined and experienced within these environments.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings by organizing the analysis around three interconnected dimensions. It first examines how Muslim women of immigrant origin navigate their intersecting identities across institutional, social, and community contexts. It then considers how participants perceive the conditions that support or hinder integration and belonging within secular university environments. Finally, it analyzes how they mobilize different forms of capital to navigate these spaces, respond to institutional constraints, and produce anti-hegemonic forms of engagement. Taken together, these dimensions allow for a more precise understanding of integration as a lived process shaped by both structural conditions and individual agency. Framed in this way, the chapter also addresses the broader concern that motivates the study, namely the structural inequalities that continue to limit the full recognition of Muslim women and help explain why integration efforts so often fall short. A long-standing assumption in Canadian integration discourse has been that linguistic proficiency, schooling within the Canadian system, and locally developed social networks would, over time, ease access to the labour market for the children of immigrants. Yet recent evidence challenges this expectation. Boudarbat and Adom (2024), drawing on 2021 Census data, show that membership in a visible minority group is associated with a reduced likelihood of securing employment and of receiving fair compensation when employed, relative to other working-age Canadians. The persistence of these gaps points to structural factors specific to visible minorities that public policy must address. The present study suggests that comparable dynamics of conditional inclusion are already visible in university settings, well before labour-market entry.

Overall, the findings support the study's constructivist orientation by showing that Muslim identity in university settings is dynamic, relational, and context-dependent, while still anchored in enduring religious, familial, and communal reference points (Brubaker, 2001, Chirkov, 2009; Dubar, 2000). This study's qualitative approach foregrounds the dimensions of continuity and security to respond to constructivist approaches (Lipanksy, 1995; Shahjahan, 2019). Muslim identity is expressed in public space, it shapes interactions. Likewise, the university does not appear in participants' narratives as either simply inclusive or simply exclusionary. It emerges as an ambivalent space of conditional inclusion, where academic participation is possible, attainable, attained even, but a stable sense of belonging is not always ensured, or in other words 'performative diversity' (Ahmed, 2012).

In this context, community spaces such as the community prayer spaces, the student clubs, sisterhood networks, friendship circles, and other community infrastructures function as the very resources that make institutional participation sustainable.

For that reason, the contribution of this thesis lies not only in what it says about Muslim women in Winnipeg, but also in how it re-reads the relationship between Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's CCW model. The findings suggest that Berry's framework remains analytically useful when treated dynamically and diachronically instead of as a rigid classificatory grid, while Yosso's approach helps explain the concrete resources through which participants endure, negotiate, and respond to institutional pressures.

At the same time, the study identifies important nuances within Yosso's forms of capital, particularly resistant capital, and shows that these forms are rarely mobilized in isolation, but are instead combined and reconfigured in practice. On this basis, the thesis introduces transformation capital, which refers to how participants adapt themselves to institutional conditions in order to remain present, participate, and sustain their integration over time. The value of the study therefore lies not in proposing a separate model, but in developing a theoretical synthesis that extends Yosso's framework, clarifies the interplay among forms of capital,

5.1. Navigating Intersecting Identities

One of the guiding questions of this study asked how Muslim women of immigrant origin make sense of and navigate their intersecting identities, with particular attention to religious habitus, family dynamics, and educational participation.

In this study, Muslim women of immigrant origin do not experience identity as a fixed characteristic, but as something navigated across contexts that do not attach the same meanings to religion, gender, family, and education (Brubaker, 2004; Dubar, 2000; Hall, 1996). This navigation takes place in concrete university settings, where expectations shift depending on the space and the people involved. In that sense, the findings support the constructivist orientation developed in the literature review, since identity appears here as historically and relationally formed as opposed to fixed once and for all (Chirkov, 2009; Dubar, 2000; Ward, 2008). Educational participation is one of the key sites where these negotiations become especially visible.

In institutional spaces, religious and gender identity—especially for Muslim women who either have visible identity markers or engage in practices necessary to maintain their identity—are positioned differently (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Zine, 2006). While visibility may be accompanied by greater tensions, invisibility does not necessarily lead to easier integration. Stereotypes and Islamophobia can shape students' experiences and affect their sense of belonging (Zine, 2006). At the same time, their sense of identity remains anchored through support systems such as student organizations, community networks, prayer spaces, and spaces for open discourse. These findings align with research on social inclusion through education (Bauder, 2006; Boudarbat & Adom, 2024; Wise, 2014), and extend it by showing how these environments also function as anchors of continuity, allowing students to engage with university environments while maintaining a consistent sense of identity.

Attention to intersecting identities also highlights the role of family dynamics as a key support system for educational participation. Religious habitus is not static, but negotiated and continually adjusted in relation to interaction and visibility. This process of adjustment reflects the persistence of enduring values and reference points. Islam remains a deep moral and affective anchor in the way participants make sense of themselves and of their place within the university. Prayer, modesty, religious language, the mosque, family values, and communal memory all remain central reference points. What changes is not whether identity matters, but how participants express, defend, prioritize, or strategically manage it in different contexts. This adds nuances to Lipiansky (1995) and Shahjahan (2019), as religious and cultural anchors are enduring anchors, but these anchors may be more flexible. If identity is to be a dynamic, negotiated process (Brubaker, 2001; Hall, 1996; Holliday, 2001), then so are its anchors.

In relation to gendered and visible religious differences, the findings suggest that it is about navigating legibility. Being visibly Muslim may structure Canadian social encounters (Hoodfar, 2003; Zine, 2006), just as not being visibly Muslim shapes movements through certain spaces. Religious identity therefore encompasses managing how you are heard, questioned, evaluated, as well as decisions around disclosure, silence and self-preservation. Religious habitus is shaped not only by how individuals understand themselves, but also how they are read by others and by the institutional norms that organize those readings. This dynamic can be understood primarily synchronic, as it unfolds in real-time interactions, while remaining connected to broader diachronic identity trajectories (Dubar, 2000). Managing legibility is not only a reaction to external pressures, it is an active organization of meaning, belonging, and self-understanding across multiple spaces. This dynamic of legibility mirrors Khosrojerdi's (2015) account of how Muslim women must continually negotiate visibility within Eurocentric institutions.

Family dynamics, migration stories, paternal expectations, and communal memory function as resources of continuity that participants mobilize while navigating secular universities (Bouzar, 2006; Cesari, 2004). Intergenerational identity is not reducible to a tension between heritage and adaptation. It is active within contemporary forms of negotiation and agency. The habitus preserves continuity-through-changes (Bourdieu, 1990), and serves as a resource (Bankston, 2004; Kanouté et al., 2008). As such, assimilation narratives still common in Canadian integration discourses (Dobrowolsky & Jenson, 2024) appear insufficient, as they fail to account for the non-linear and context-dependent nature of identity navigation, as observed in this study.

This thesis demonstrates that Muslim women identity in this context is best understood not as a set of static markers, but as a situated practice of navigating intersecting identities across secular university spaces. Religion, gender, migration history, political events, institutional encounters, and community infrastructures shape this navigation at the same time. This perspective moves beyond essentialist assumptions without collapsing identity into pure fluidity. It also makes clear that participants do not merely react to external pressures; they actively organize meaning, belonging, and self-understanding across the multiple spaces they inhabit.

5.2. Perceived Barriers and Supports to Integration and Belonging in Secular Universities

A central question in this study concerns Muslim women's perceptions of the factors that hinder or support their integration and sense of belonging in secular educational spaces. The findings indicate that participants identify both supports and barriers, but they do not experience them evenly. Universities can provide access, opportunity, and academic participation, and in that sense they can support integration. At the same time, participants describe these same spaces as ambivalent institutional environments marked by conditional inclusion and uneven recognition. Participants are not outside the institution, but they are not fully included in it either. Similar forms of conditional or incomplete inclusion have been identified in studies examining diversity and institutional belonging, where presence within institutions does not necessarily translate into full recognition or incorporation (Ahmed, 2012). Their identity is asserted and supported within these spaces (Khosrojerdi, 2015), yet some barriers remain.

Several findings clarify what participants perceive as the main barriers to integration and belonging. A lack of recognition within institutions emerges repeatedly, whether in classrooms where students should pre-empt stereotypes before they can speak or in administrative settings where accommodation requires repeated justification. Moreover, this gap also surfaces in campus cultures that do not make Muslim students feel fully heard or safe. Participants also describe the burden of extra emotional and pedagogical labour. They must explain themselves, manage bias, and decide when being visible may lead to judgment instead of dialogue. In that sense, some institutional conditions make it harder for students to experience integration as secure belonging. As a result, they may withdraw, stay silent, limit their visibility, or re-center themselves in community spaces. These accounts correspond strongly with Ahmed's (2012) analysis of performative diversity, in which institutions can display inclusion discursively without transforming the deeper norms that structure belonging. Building on this, the present argument extends Ahmed (2012) by showing how such non-performative commitments operate alongside Yosso's (2005) and Khosrojerdi's (2015) accounts of how Eurocentric university norms generate only conditional belonging for racialized Muslim students. Helly (2004) and Boudarbat & Adom (2024) similarly document how stated inclusion in Canadian institutions often coexists with persistent symbolic exclusion. In this study, that gap between what institutions say about diversity and what participants actually experience is clearly visible.

The findings also clarify what participants perceive as support. Access to higher education, academic opportunity, and the possibility of institutional participation do matter. More specifically, participants describe support as respectful environments where they can speak, be heard, and encounter different views without being dismissed, judged, or ignored. They also identify support in everyday interactions. In particular, they value conversations marked by respect, openness to different opinions, and faculty or peer responses that do not reduce Muslim identity to stereotype. In addition, participants' own desire to be involved in university life remains

important. Their willingness to participate, contribute, and remain engaged helps sustain integration, even when institutions do not fully reciprocate that effort. These supports reinforce Yuval-Davis (2006) on belonging as relational and produced through everyday interactions, and Yosso's (2005) emphasis on aspirational and social capital that minority students mobilize to sustain participation. They also dovetail with Boudarbat & Adom (2024), who note that 1.5 and second-generation immigrants increasingly rely on peer networks and educational engagement for inclusion.

At the same time, the present study makes clear that academic participation and secure belonging are not equivalent. Students can remain highly engaged in university life while still experiencing themselves as misrecognized, over-explained, over-exposed, or conditionally tolerated. Integration, in other words, does not necessarily feel like rest. It often feels like work. This insight is especially important because it helps explain why participants can remain enrolled, ambitious, and institutionally present, while simultaneously relocating their deepest sense of recognition elsewhere. In Berry's terms, this also helps explain why difficult institutional experiences may push some students toward strategic assimilation, episodic marginalization, or partial separation, even when they continue to value participation in the university. This point also speaks to Cyrano (2024), who shows that Muslim women in Quebec are highly educated but remain marginalized in broader social contexts. The present study suggests that a similar tension is already visible within the university setting, where academic participation does not necessarily translate into secure belonging or full recognition. At the same time, because most participants are still in university or have only recently left it, it remains possible that some integration difficulties become even more visible after graduation. This is an important avenue for future research.

Another major contribution of the findings is the importance of political context in reconfiguring institutional belonging. The accounts linked to the period following October 7, 2023 indicate that identity negotiation in secular universities is not shaped only by interpersonal interaction or long-term cultural adjustment. It is also affected by geopolitical events that suddenly reorganize the meanings of safety, solidarity, and speech on campus. In Maya's trajectory especially, the university is transformed from a routine academic space into a site of emotional exhaustion and political distrust. This demonstrates that acculturation is not merely a cultural process internal to minority communities; it is also politically mediated, historically contingent, and vulnerable to sudden reconfiguration. This finding extends scholarship on how geopolitical events reshape Muslim integration in Canada (Chalifoux & Peschner, 2022; Helly, 2004a), and supports Cesari's (2004) and Zine's (2006) argument that Muslim identity in the West is continually reconfigured by transnational political shocks. It complicates accounts of integration that treat acculturation as a slow, internal process (Berry, 1997) by foregrounding its political and historical contingency.

This analysis therefore supports the argument that participants perceive secular universities as spaces that both support and hinder integration and belonging. They support integration when

students find respectful dialogue, feel heard, encounter less biased responses, and can participate without having to constantly defend their legitimacy. At the same time, they hinder belonging when visibility is penalized, accommodation is inconsistent, recognition remains conditional, and emotional labour is unevenly imposed (Ahmed, 2012, Yuval-Davis, 2011). The institution is one of the main arenas in which Muslim women learn when they can be visible, when they must explain themselves, and when their differences will be read as enriching versus burdensome. The present study adds value to the literature because it highlights this institutional ambivalence in the specific context of Winnipeg. Moreover, it outlines that the university is not merely the backdrop of identity construction, but one of its central sites of production and negotiation (Bauder, 2016; Wise, 2014) and also helps explain why integration efforts fall short. However, access may expand while the institutional conditions that make recognition and belonging credible often remain unchanged.

5.3. Negotiating Heritage Through Community Cultural Wealth

This section examines the extent to which Muslim women mobilize different forms of capital to navigate secular and multicultural educational environments, challenge dominant narratives, and produce anti-hegemonic responses. In this regard, Yosso's CCW framework (2005) is especially useful because it demonstrates that participants do not respond to institutional difficulty through passivity or simple withdrawal. Rather, they mobilize all the major forms of capital identified in the framework, albeit with different frequencies and emphases. Three forms emerge most clearly in the corpus: social, navigational, and resistant capital. At the same time, familial, aspirational, and linguistic capital also remain important. However, they appear more often as supporting resources that reinforce these three dominant forms rather than as primary strategies in their own right. The findings further suggest that these capitals rarely operate in isolation. More often, they are mobilized together.

One of the clearest findings is the centrality of social capital. In Yosso's framework (2005), social capital refers to networks of people and community resources that provide practical and emotional support. Across the interviews, community spaces such as the mosque, Muslim sisterhood networks, the MSA, support groups, and Palestinian or Arab community infrastructures emerge as the most frequently mobilized resources in the corpus. These spaces provide emotional support, material help, spiritual reassurance, trusted recognition, and an environment in which participants do not need to explain themselves all the time. Their importance is therefore not peripheral to the university experience; they are often what makes that experience livable. This finding also nuances the assumption that strong community attachment necessarily competes with integration. In the present study, community attachment often enables continued participation instead of undermining it.

Navigational capital is the second major form that appears repeatedly. For Yosso, navigational capital refers to the ability to move through institutions that were not designed for marginalized groups. In this study, that ability includes reading institutional risk, assessing when visibility is

safe, choosing which conflicts to confront, and deciding when discretion is strategically necessary. The cases of Aisha and Leyla are especially revealing here because they illustrate that selective self-presentation does not necessarily imply identity abandonment. Rather, these cases reflect a deliberate management of exposure. Participants regulate visibility because they understand that institutional settings reward some forms of legibility while penalizing others. This navigational work, however, is rarely separate from other capitals. It is often sustained by social capital, reinforced by familial expectations, and sharpened by resistant commitments.

Resistant capital is the third and perhaps most politically significant form in the findings. In Yosso's model, resistant capital refers to the knowledge and skills developed through oppositional behaviour that challenges inequality and dominant norms. This form of capital is highly visible in participants' anti-hegemonic responses. They use presentations, classroom projects, direct conversations with administrators, and pedagogical choices to challenge reductive narratives about Muslim communities, Palestinians, Syrians, veiled women, and religious practice. These counter-narratives are not incidental moments of self-expression. They are forms of epistemic labour through which participants contest institutional representations and claim the right to define themselves. In this respect, the findings indicate that Muslim women are not simply enduring institutional structures; they are also actively re-signifying them.

Viewed together, these three forms of capital often operate as an interdependent bundle rather than as separate resources. This is one of the central findings of the section. Social capital provides support and recognition, navigational capital helps participants assess context and move strategically, and resistant capital enables them to challenge exclusionary narratives and refuse imposed definitions. Because these capitals are so often mobilized together, the present study identifies what may be described as transformational capital. Transformation capital refers to the capacity to strategically recalibrate one's visibility, actions, and modes of engagement across institutional contexts while maintaining core values and commitments. It emerges from the combined mobilization of social, navigational, and resistant capital, and allows participants not only to navigate institutions, but to reshape how they participate within them. Existing forms of capital account for support, navigation, and resistance, but do not fully capture this capacity to adjust without disengaging or assimilating. Transformation capital helps explain how participants remain present in institutions while redefining the terms of that presence. In that sense, transformation capital emerges from the combined mobilization of social, navigational, and resistant capital, while also drawing strength from familial and aspirational capital. It is not a form of capital explicitly named in Yosso's original model or in the literature reviewed here; rather, it is an analytic contribution that emerges from the present findings.

Familial, aspirational, and linguistic capital nevertheless remain important, even if they are not the three most dominant forms in this section. Family migration stories, parental encouragement, inherited educational values, and the obligation to honour sacrifice all sustain perseverance.

Aspirational capital supports long-term educational hope, while linguistic capital supports explanation, translation, and the communication of difference across institutional settings. Negotiating heritage, therefore, is not a question of choosing between family and university, or between religion and modernity. Rather, it involves weaving together multiple forms of continuity and adaptation while living in spaces that do not recognize them equally.

In this sense, forms of capital are not only mobilized but reconfigured through practice, as participants adapt them to the specific demands of secular institutional environments

5.4. Community, Movement, and Recognition

Overall, the findings clarify the contribution of this thesis in relation to existing models. This thesis demonstrates that acculturation trajectories are not only shaped by contextual conditions, but by the ways participants mobilize different forms of capital to navigate, resist, and reconfigure those conditions over time. The findings suggest that the study is best understood as a combined and extended reading of Berry's acculturation model and Yosso's CCW framework, and not as a simple continuation of either one in isolation.

First, the thesis confirms that Berry's model remains useful, but only when it is treated as dynamic, relational, and non-static. The participants in this study do not occupy one permanent acculturation orientation, nor are they disengaged from the larger society. They study, participate in class, hold conversations, build networks, and remain involved in everyday university life. When some accounts move toward separation, assimilation, or marginalization, these shifts should not be read as the sole product of individual choice or failure. They are often responses to institutional attitudes, unequal recognition, political tensions, and contexts in which openness from the host environment is partial or uncertain. Separation is not always the sign of failed integration; sometimes it is a protective re-centering of belonging. Marginalization is not always a fixed end state; it may appear episodically when visibility becomes burdensome or recognition breaks down. Assimilation, too, may be strategic and partial rather than total. In this sense, the study supports critiques that warn against treating Berry's categories as closed boxes. It also suggests that the axes become more meaningful when they are read relationally, not as if responsibility for movement rested only with participants. This does not mean replacing Berry's model with a separate analysis of the host society as an independent object of study. Rather, it confirms the value of a diachronic perspective, since participants' trajectories can only be understood in relation to the environments in which they move and to the conditions of reception they encounter over time.

Second, the thesis demonstrates that Yosso's framework is indispensable for explaining what Berry's model cannot explain on its own. Berry helps identify orientations and directional movement; Yosso helps explain the resources, practices, and forms of agency through which participants endure, contest, or redirect those movements. For example, Berry can help describe a movement from integration toward separation, but Yosso helps explain why that movement does not amount to withdrawal. More specifically, social capital, navigational capital, resistant capital,

and familial capital continue to sustain academic presence even when belonging is increasingly re-centered in community spaces. Similarly, Berry can identify moments of marginalization, but Yosso clarifies how participants resist remaining fixed there.

The added value of the thesis lies precisely in this articulation. The study does not propose an entirely new model in the sense of replacing Berry or Yosso with an original typology. Nor does it simply apply both frameworks in parallel. Its contribution is more specific. It demonstrates that the two models highlight different dimensions of the same empirical process and become more powerful when read together through a diachronic lens. Berry identifies where participants are positioned and how they move. Yosso explains how those movements are made livable, strategic, and politically meaningful. At the same time, the study extends Yosso's framework because several forms of capital work hand in hand, and transformation capital emerges as a distinct capacity to adapt, recalibrate, and transform the self across institutional contexts without abandoning core commitments.

This combined use of the models also generates a more precise interpretation of community space. In much acculturation literature, strong community attachment can easily be read as evidence of separation from the host society. The present findings complicate that reading. Many participants are already deeply involved in the larger society. More specifically, they are enrolled in university, engaged in classes, present in everyday campus life, and active in conversations, group work, and community initiatives. When some movements appear closer to separation, assimilation, or marginalization, they should not be understood simply as something participants produce on their own. More often, they are responses to the attitudes, limits, and recognition conditions of the surrounding environment. In that sense, the question is not only whether participants are open to the host society, but also whether the host society is open to them. Community space often functions as the infrastructure that allows participants to remain in secular institutions despite institutional strain. The mosque, the MSA, the musalla, sisterhood circles, and Palestinian, Syrian, or other solidarity networks are therefore not outside acculturation; they are part of how acculturation is lived. This is an important conceptual refinement, because it clarifies that the relation between community and integration is not oppositional. Community can be the condition of continued participation.

The study also adds value by extending this combined framework to a relatively underexplored empirical setting. Existing scholarship on Muslim women in Canada has often concentrated on Quebec, on national debates around secularism, or on the politics of veiling, while Prairie contexts remain comparatively less developed in the literature. The present study contributes a geographically and institutionally specific account of how acculturation, identity, and cultural wealth interact in the Canadian Prairies through its focus on Muslim women in Winnipeg universities. The added value of the thesis is therefore both conceptual and empirical. More specifically, it is conceptual because it recombines existing frameworks in a dynamic way, and empirical because it grounds that synthesis in a context that remains insufficiently documented.

5.5. Implications for Secular Universities

If the findings are taken seriously, the implications for secular universities are significant. The first implication is that inclusion cannot be reduced to representation or diversity discourse alone. Students do not need only symbolic reassurance that they belong; they need concrete institutional conditions that make belonging credible. This includes reliable accommodation for prayer, clearer recognition of religious practice as part of ordinary student life, accessible and trusted reporting mechanisms for discrimination, and faculty cultures that do not leave visibly Muslim students carrying the burden of institutional pedagogy. When these conditions are absent, universities do not simply disappoint students; they reproduce structural inequalities and fail to recognize the talents, knowledge, and contributions Muslim women already bring to academic life. A more inclusive, equitable, and hospitable university requires more than access. It requires conditions under which participants can be fully recognized and their capacities genuinely valued.

The second implication concerns student support. Although universities may offer formal spaces for prayer, gathering, and student organizing, the findings suggest that community networks often make these spaces meaningful, trusted, and responsive in practice. Mosques, MSAs, sisterhood groups, and informal community circles frequently provide forms of care, mentoring, and recognition that complement institutional provision and, at times, exceed what universities themselves are able to sustain consistently. Instead of treating these spaces as marginal or external to student success, universities should recognize them as central infrastructures of persistence and wellbeing. This recognition does not mean co-opting them, but it does mean building institutional relationships that respect their role, listening more carefully to the students who rely on them, and avoiding policies that silently penalize students whose strongest support systems are community-based.

The third implication is pedagogical and political. The findings underscore that political events can drastically reshape the emotional climate of campus life for Muslim students. Universities therefore need better ways of responding when broader conflicts enter classroom and campus space. A secular institution cannot assume that neutrality means silence. When students feel that their pain, history, or vulnerability are unintelligible within institutional discourse, mistrust deepens quickly. The present study suggests that meaningful inclusion requires not only tolerance of difference, but structures of listening capable of responding when minority students experience campus life as politically unsafe.

Across the interviews, one striking pattern is the importance of conversation itself. Participants repeatedly describe respectful conversations with professors, classmates, and administrators as one of the main ways through which tension can be regulated and recognition can be restored. Moreover, such exchanges can help create a stronger sense of safety. This suggests that universities should not respond to major current events with detachment from the so-called outside world. Instead, they should equip and support instructors to facilitate informed, historically grounded, and

emotionally attentive discussions when students already experience the effects of those events on campus. In that sense, the university remains one of the few institutional spaces where difficult public issues can be engaged with intellectual rigor, professional guidance, and a commitment to collective responsibility rather than silence or polarization. This is especially important at a time when many students encounter world events through fragmented and algorithmically filtered information environments. Consequently, the pedagogical work of dialogue, nuance, and critical discussion becomes even more necessary.

5.6. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Like any qualitative case study, this thesis has limitations. The sample is small and purposive, which is appropriate for interpretive depth but does not allow for statistical generalization. The focus on Muslim women in Winnipeg universities also means that the findings are shaped by a specific regional, institutional, and political context. In addition, many of the interviews were conducted in the shadow of recent geopolitical tensions, which likely intensified some dimensions of political consciousness, institutional distrust, and community re-centering. These limitations do not weaken the study's interpretive value, but they do set clear boundaries around the scope of its claims.

Future research could extend this work in several directions. A longitudinal design would be especially valuable in order to observe whether the movements identified here remain stable, intensify, or recede over time. Comparative work across provinces would also help determine whether the Prairie context produces distinctive patterns relative to Quebec, Ontario, or other Canadian settings. Further studies might also examine the experiences of Muslim men, gender diverse Muslims, or university staff and faculty, in order to test how gender, role, and institutional position reshape the interplay of acculturation and CCW. Finally, more research is needed on digital spaces, transnational solidarities, and the relationship between campus life and online political belonging, especially for younger Muslim generations.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This thesis examined the acculturation experiences of Muslim women in Winnipeg's secular universities. More precisely, it asked how Muslim women of the 1.5 and second generations defined their identities, how universities affected those identities, and how these students related to religion and heritage within a largely non-Muslim context. To address these questions, the thesis relied on eight semi-structured interviews with Muslim women from the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and the Université de Saint-Boniface. It also drew on Berry's acculturation framework and Yosso's CCW model. A diachronic lens then made change, tension, and movement across time easier to trace. Thus, the thesis did not seek a static portrait. Rather, it sought a close account of identity under pressure, support, and change.

From the outset, the thesis challenged a simple assumption. Physical proximity to Canadian institutions does not guarantee recognition within them. Access does not equal trust. Participation does not equal ease. Formal inclusion does not equal full acceptance. This distinction shaped the whole argument. The women in this study pursued degrees, built friendships, took part in campus life, and kept ambitious goals. Yet many also met scrutiny, conditional accommodation, silence, bias, and doubt. Therefore, the thesis argued that integration cannot serve as a flat label for success. It must be read as a lived relation between self, institution, community, and time. Once that relation shifts, the place of integration shifts as well.

The literature review clarified why this distinction matters. Much work on Muslim women in Canada has centered on Quebec, public secularism, or the hijab. Less work has addressed Prairie campuses as lived social worlds. Less work has asked how Muslim women read universities from within daily routines, peer ties, and political strain. This thesis responded to that gap. It also returned to a broader sociological concern that framed the introduction, namely hospitality. Canadian institutions often celebrate diversity at the level of discourse. However, discourse alone cannot create trust. Hospitality requires recognition, reciprocity, and room for difference without penalty. In that sense, the thesis placed Muslim women's own accounts at the center and treated them as a source of theory, not only as a source of illustration.

The methodological path supported this aim. The study used a qualitative case-study design within a constructivist perspective. It privileged participants' words, interpretations, and trajectories. In turn, this design allowed the thesis to examine subtle shifts that a more rigid method could have missed. The interview corpus showed that participants did not occupy one fixed acculturation position. Rather, they moved across positions with context, relation, and moment. Some accounts pointed toward integration. Others suggested strategic assimilation, episodic marginalization, or protective separation. Therefore, Berry's model proved useful, but only once the thesis treated it as a dynamic map rather than as a closed box.

Chapter IV made this dynamic character visible. Community spaces often offered recognition, comfort, and moral clarity. There, participants could affirm Muslim identity without apology.

Family, mosque networks, sisterhood circles, and ethnic or national ties served as places of refuge, support, and self-respect. By contrast, university spaces often appeared as ambivalent sites. They offered opportunity, credentials, and contact. Yet they also imposed explanation, caution, and fatigue. In classrooms, offices, and campus encounters, participants often had to assess risk before speech. They had to decide when to speak, what to hide, and how much of themselves they could safely disclose. Thus, the university emerged as neither full refuge nor simple threat. It emerged as a contested social space.

This point leads to one of the main conclusions of the thesis. Academic presence did not automatically produce secure inclusion. Participants could attend class, excel, contribute, and remain active, yet still feel misread or conditionally accepted. Therefore, the thesis drew a clear line between participation and recognition. That line matters. It helps explain why a student may remain academically successful and still relocate her deepest trust to community life. It also helps explain why institutional access may coexist with silence, retreat, or selective visibility. In short, integration by proximity may look successful from outside, yet feel partial from within. This is one reason the thesis framed the university as both a site of access and a site of unequal recognition.

The results also showed that participants did not remain passive before such conditions. Chapter IV highlighted counter-narratives and forms of resistance through which participants challenged dominant descriptions of Muslim womanhood, citizenship, education, and modernity. Some participants corrected stereotypes directly. Others refused imposed definitions of who counted as integrated, open, or legitimate. Still others chose selective opacity and careful self-disclosure. These choices were not signs of weakness. Rather, they reflected judgment, self-respect, and agency. In this sense, the thesis showed that identity was not merely imposed from outside. It was also authored, defended, and revised from within. Therefore, Muslim women in this study appeared not as objects of acculturation, but as active subjects within it.

Yosso's CCW model helped clarify how this agency took form. Social capital emerged as the most prominent resource across the corpus. Networks of kin, peers, mentors, and Muslim community ties offered care, advice, validation, and practical help. Next, navigational capital proved crucial. Participants used it to read context, gauge risk, and choose the most effective response within secular institutions. Resistant capital also played a major role. It supported critique, refusal, and the defence of self-worth in moments of exclusion or distortion. Familial, aspirational, and linguistic capital remained essential as well. They sustained educational hope, moral continuity, explanatory work, and resilience across difficult moments. Therefore, the thesis did not treat capital as an abstract list. It treated capital as live support.

At the same time, the thesis showed that these capitals rarely acted in isolation. They often worked together. Social capital offered a base. Navigational capital guided response. Resistant capital protected dignity and truth. Familial and aspirational capital then reinforced endurance. Linguistic capital helped participants translate experience across unequal spaces. From this

repeated conjunction, the thesis proposed an analytic extension to Yosso's framework: transformation capital. This term names a distinct capacity. It refers to the ability to recalibrate presentation, action, and movement across institutional contexts without surrender of core values. This proposal is modest. It does not replace Yosso's model. However, it clarifies a pattern that the data revealed with force.

Chapter V then drew the broader implications of these results. First, the discussion confirmed that Berry's model remains useful when one reads it relationally. The issue is not only whether Muslim women open themselves to the host society. The issue is also whether the host society opens itself to them. Once this reciprocal dimension comes into view, the four orientations appear less like fixed boxes and more like positions within a variable field of recognition. Second, the discussion showed why Berry and Yosso work best together. Berry helps locate direction and change. Yosso clarifies the resources through which participants endure, respond, and persist. Read together, the two frameworks yield a richer account of acculturation than either one alone.

The thesis also contributed an empirical insight with wider value. Political context mattered greatly. Several interviews, and Maya's account in particular, showed how the period after October 7, 2023 altered trust, safety, and emotional relation to campus life. This point is important. It shows that acculturation does not unfold in a vacuum. It is tied to history, public discourse, and geopolitical shock. A campus that once felt ordinary may suddenly feel hostile. A space that once seemed open may suddenly demand defence or silence. Therefore, the study argued that secular universities cannot treat external conflict as if it stops at the campus gate. Political reality enters classrooms, peer relations, and institutional trust.

Another key contribution lies in the thesis's account of community. The study rejected a narrow opposition between community and integration. Community ties did not simply pull participants away from university life. In many cases, they made university life bearable. Mosques, MSAs, family networks, friendship circles, and ethnic associations offered the recognition that institutions often withheld. They also supplied moral repair after bias, doubt, or fatigue. Thus, the community did not stand outside acculturation. It formed one of its central conditions. This point matters because some interpretations of separation can flatten a return to community into failure. The present study rejected that view. In several cases, return to community appeared as a reasoned response to institutional strain and as a route to self-preservation.

For secular universities, the conclusion is direct. Diversity rhetoric is not enough. Students need material and relational conditions that make trust plausible. They need reliable prayer accommodation. They need fair and simple procedures. They need faculty cultures that do not assign them constant pedagogical labour. They need spaces in which Muslim identity does not trigger suspicion or reduction. They also need institutions that respect community-based support rather than view it as marginal. Moreover, they need room for honest dialogue when world events

affect campus life. Silence, in such moments, does not protect neutrality. More often, it deepens mistrust.

At a broader level, this thesis returned to the question that opened the study: myth or reality? The answer is complex. Integration exists. Participants studied, adapted, formed ties, and pursued ambitious futures within Canadian universities. Yet the promise of integration remained incomplete. Too often, access came without full recognition. Too often, participation required constant self-check, selective visibility, or extra labour. Too often, institutions praised diversity while they left core norms intact. For that reason, integration by proximity appeared less as a settled reality than as a conditional and uneven process. It can succeed. However, it requires far more than co-presence. It requires reciprocal recognition, institutional courage, and concrete support.

The limitations of the study remain clear. The sample is small. The focus is local. The political moment also marked the interview corpus in important ways. Yet these limits do not reduce the value of the thesis. On the contrary, they define its strength. The study offers depth rather than breadth. It provides a careful account of a specific site, a specific group, and a specific institutional climate. Future work can extend this analysis across provinces, across gender positions, or beyond the university years. It can also test whether the patterns that appeared here persist after graduation. For now, however, this thesis has established a strong foundation for that next step.

Acculturation, in this study, does not appear as a linear process of adaptation, but as a negotiated and context-dependent movement shaped by recognition, institutional conditions, and the strategic mobilization of capital. Muslim women do not simply move within predefined categories; they actively shape the terms under which their presence becomes possible.

In the end, this thesis has shown that Muslim women in Winnipeg universities do not move through secular space as passive recipients of policy or discourse. They interpret, judge, negotiate, resist, and create. They carry faith, family history, political memory, ambition, and care into every institutional encounter. Therefore, any serious account of acculturation must take their voices as theory, not as afterthought. If universities wish to call themselves inclusive, they must do more than admit Muslim women. They must hear them. They must trust them. They must revise the conditions under which difference becomes visible and under which recognition becomes credible. Only then can integration move beyond slogans and approach justice.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Interview Guide: Exploring Muslim Identity and Acculturation in Academic Spaces

Introduction

Explain the Purpose of the Interview

This study seeks to understand how Muslim students navigate their identities and acculturation processes within secular, multicultural, and often Eurocentric educational institutions.

This study draws on John Berry's (1997) Acculturation Framework to examine identity formation and integration experiences, alongside Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) Model, which highlights the forms of capital marginalized groups mobilize to navigate systemic barriers.

Participation is voluntary and confidential, and insights from this discussion will contribute to academic research on diversity, identity, and agency in higher education.

Background Information

- Can you share a bit about your background, field of study, and how you identify culturally and religiously?
- What motivated you to pursue higher education, and what are your current academic goals?

Acculturation and Identity Negotiation

(Guided by Berry's Acculturation Framework and Intersectionality)

Integration

- How do you balance maintaining your Muslim identity while engaging with the broader academic culture?
- Can you describe instances where you felt a sense of belonging in both your cultural/religious identity and the academic environment?

Assimilation

- Have you ever felt pressure to downplay or alter aspects of your Muslim identity to fit into the academic environment?
- If so, how did you respond to this pressure?

Separation

- Are there aspects of your Muslim identity that you prioritize over engagement with the academic culture?

- How do you maintain these boundaries while participating in university life?

Marginalization

- Have you ever felt excluded or alienated from both your Muslim community and the academic environment?
- How did you navigate this sense of marginalization?

Identity Formation and Cultural Capital

(Incorporating Yosso's CCW Model: Aspirational, Linguistic, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital)

Cultural and Religious Identity

- How do you define your Muslim identity in the context of your academic life?
- In what ways does your cultural and/or religious background shape your experiences as a student?

Intersectionality

- How do other aspects of your identity (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity) intersect with your Muslim identity in shaping your academic experiences?
- Have you encountered unique challenges or opportunities due to these intersections?

Agency, Resistance, and Identity Negotiation

- How do you assert your Muslim identity in academic spaces, particularly in environments where Islam may be a minority faith?
- Have you encountered stereotypes or misconceptions about Muslim identity in university settings? How do you challenge or navigate these?
- Are there specific support networks, strategies, or resources that help you navigate challenges related to your identity?

Experiences in Academic Spaces

Positive Experiences and Support Systems

- What aspects of your academic environment have been supportive or empowering for your Muslim identity?
- Are there initiatives, faculty members, or student organizations that have positively impacted your experience?

Challenges and Barriers

- Have you encountered bias, discrimination, or exclusion in your academic environment? If so, could you share your experiences?
- How do you perceive the representation of Muslim students in your institution's curricula, policies, or leadership?

Acculturation Strategies and Community Cultural Wealth

(Explicitly linking Yosso's CCW Model to research questions)

Navigating Cultural Differences (Navigational Capital)

- How do you manage cultural or religious differences between your Muslim identity and the dominant academic culture?
- Are there specific strategies you use to bridge these differences?

Social and Familial Support (Familial & Social Capital)

- What role does family and community play in your educational journey?
- Are there specific Muslim student organizations, mentors, or peers that have helped you navigate your university experience?

Overcoming Barriers (Resistant & Aspirational Capital)

- Have you ever challenged or resisted institutional norms or expectations that conflicted with your identity? If so, how?
- What aspirations and motivations drive you despite barriers you may face as a Muslim woman in higher education?

Closing Questions

Reflections and Advice

- What advice would you give other Muslim students navigating similar academic spaces?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or perspective?

Follow-Up and Future Contributions

- Would you be open to participating in follow-up discussions or sharing additional insights later in the study?

Appendix 2

Demographic questionnaire

We ask that you complete the following questionnaire for the purpose of helping us better understand the people who are participating in the study. Your participation is voluntary and all information provided will be kept confidential. If you do not feel comfortable answering some questions, leave them blank. For each question, please circle the most appropriate answer, or insert the answer in the space provided.

- What is your age range?
 - ☐ 18-24
 - ☐ 25-34
 - ☐ 35-44
 - ☐ 45-54
 - ☐ 55+

- What is your relationship status? [select all that apply]
 - ☐ Casually dating
 - ☐ Common law
 - ☐ Dating multiple people
 - ☐ Divorced
 - ☐ Engaged
 - ☐ Exclusively dating
 - ☐ Married
 - ☐ Single, never married
 - ☐ Separated
 - ☐ Widowed
 - ☐ My relationship status is not listed here
 - My relationship status is: _____
 - ☐ Prefer not to answer

- Do you have children? Yes No
 - If yes, how many? _____
 - Do your children live with you? Yes No

- What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Community college
- ☐ Technical diploma
- ☐ University baccalaureate
- ☐ Graduate degree (Masters or doctorate)
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

- Do you identify as a racialized person?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

My race/ethnicity is: _____ (open ended)

- Where were you born? (please indicate the country if you were born outside Canada and the city or province if you were born in Canada) _____

- If you were born outside Canada

- Under which category did you (and your parents) come to Canada?

- ☐ Skilled worker
- ☐ Express entry
- ☐ Family sponsorship
- ☐ Immigrant investors
- ☐ Work permit
- ☐ Provincial candidate
- ☐ Refugee
- ☐ Asylum seeker
- ☐ Other (specified): _____

- Did you immigrate to Canada:

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ With your family (at the same time)
- ☐ To join a family member already in Canada, who sponsored you

- What countries did you live in before moving to Canada?

- How long have you lived in Winnipeg? _____

- Have you lived in other Canadian cities before Winnipeg? If so, which ones:

Thank you for filling out this questionnaire. Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential. If you have questions regarding this questionnaire, or regarding this study, you can contact me: Ilef Zellama, by phone (204) 291-6085 or by email, zellamai@myumanitoba.ca or Dr. Piquemal at Nathalie.piquemal@umanitoba.ca ,or contact the University of Manitoba, Bannatyne Campus Research Ethics Board Office at (204) 789-3389.