The 9/11 terror attacks and the ensuing War on Terror have profoundly impacted Muslim communities across North America. *Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism through the Lived Experiences of Muslim Youth* is a timely exploration of the experiences of young Canadian Muslims and the challenges they have encountered since 9/11. Through framing anti-Muslim racism, or ‘Islamophobia’, from a critical race perspective, Naved Bakali theorizes how racist treatment of Muslims in public and political spheres has been mediated through the War on Terror. Furthermore, he examines the lived experiences of Muslim youth as they navigate issues relating to race, gender, identity, and politics in their schools and broader society. This book uncovers systemic bias and racism experienced by Muslim youth in a climate that is increasingly becoming hostile towards Muslims. Ultimately, the findings detailed in this work suggest that anti-Muslim racism in the post-9/11 era is inextricably linked to the effects of the War on Terror in the North American context. Moreover, Islamophobia is also impacted by localized practices, policies, and nationalist debates. This book is a unique contribution to the field of anti-racism education as it examines systemic and institutionalized racism towards Muslims in Canadian secondary schools in the context of the War on Terror.
Islamophobia
TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

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This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.
Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity – youth identity in particular – the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.
If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* seeks to produce – literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Islamophobia

Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism through the Lived Experiences of Muslim Youth

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INTRODUCTION
Islamophobia: Meta-Narratives and Localized Discourses of the Muslim ‘Other’ Post-9/11

A TYPICAL DAY FOR MUSLIMS IN CANADA?

Monday, November 16, 2015. It was an ordinary day in Toronto, Ontario; Canada’s largest city and one of the most culturally diverse cities in North America. A young mother is on her way to pick up her children from Grenoble public school. As the streets are filled with a beautiful mélange of leaves with beaming hues of red, orange and yellow, she decides to walk to the school, while enjoying the cool Canadian Fall weather. However, today, despite its mundane routines would be different for this mother. On this day she was brutally attacked by two young men. The youth viciously assaulted her, delivering blows to her abdomen and face. The ordeal ended when they took her cellphone and whatever money she had. On the surface, it would seem that this unfortunate incident was simply a robbery by a couple of street thugs looking for some loot from an easy target, however that was not the case. This mother was a young Muslim woman, who wore a hijab and she was targeted by these youth because of her appearance. As she was being assaulted, the young men were yelling racial slurs at her, calling her a ‘terrorist’ and telling her to ‘go back home’. The attack culminated with the pulling of the woman’s hijab signifying the impetus of their hatred and violence towards the young mother. This incident was one of a number of hate crimes, including a mosque being set ablaze, instances of verbal and physical assault, and vandalism, across Canada in the wake of the Paris attacks on November 13, 2015, where Muslim terrorists orchestrated three suicide attacks killing 130 and injuring 368 people.

Another similar incident took place in London, Ontario, on June 21, 2016. A young Muslim woman was at a supermarket with her four-month-old son when she was verbally harassed, punched multiple times, spat on, and had her hijab and hair pulled by another woman whose only apparent motive for targeting her was that she was Muslim. Incidentally, the perpetrator was wearing a bright red t-shirt that had the word ‘Canada’ sprawled across the chest, emblazoned with the iconic Canadian maple leaf below. Two days prior to this incident, a Quebec City mosque had a pig’s head wrapped up in a decorative bouquet left on its doorstep accompanied with a note saying ‘Bon appétit’. These incidents came shortly after a mass shooting at an Orlando gay nightclub in the US at the hands of Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old mentally unstable gay Muslim man. Mateen allegedly pledged fealty to the terrorist organization the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) over the phone while engaging in his gruesome massacre killing 49 people and wounding 53 others. These instances of racial violence and abuse, as well as others like them across Canada, the United
INTRODUCTION

States, and Europe are a somber glimpse into the lived experiences of a number of Muslim minorities in Western nations in the context of the War on Terror.

The September 11, 2001 attack (9/11) in which Muslim terrorists targeted the New York City World Trade Centre and the ensuing War on Terror have fundamentally affected the lives of Muslims, not only in Muslim-majority countries, but also in European and North American nations. Anti-Muslim racism and discrimination has seen a consistent growth in Canada throughout the period following 9/11. In recent polls conducted across Canada, which asked Canadians if they had a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, it was found that Canadians have a greater dislike towards Islam than the other faiths. 54 per cent of Canadians had a negative opinion of Islam, while 69 per cent of Quebecers had unfavourable perceptions of the faith (Angus Reid, 2013). Hate crimes against Canadian Muslims more than doubled from 2012 to 2014 going from 45 to 99 (Paperny, 2016). In Quebec, various mosques have been vandalized (CBC, 2009, 2013; CJC, 2008; CTV, 2006), and legislation such as Bill 94 and Bill 60 have been passed or proposed restricting Muslim women’s dress in Quebec. Many of the biases and discriminatory practices towards Muslims in Western nations both prior to 9/11 and its aftermath have been referred to as a phenomenon called Islamophobia.

MUSLIMS AND THE ‘TERRORIST’ DIALECTIC

Much of the anti-Muslim sentiment in the post-9/11 context has revolved around the notion of Muslims being violent and threatening to Western nations. Words such as ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ in political and media discourses have increasingly become subjective terms to disproportionately highlight violence committed by Arabs or Muslims over violence committed by other religious and ethnic groups. For example, on February 18, 2010 Joseph Stack, a software consultant, purposely flew a light aircraft into a government building in Austin Texas. Stack engaged in this hostile and violent act due to grievances he had with the US government, which he articulated in a suicide-manifesto. Stack was responsible for the death and injury of over a dozen people, yet despite the similarity to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, news agencies made concerted efforts not to label this act as terrorism (Greenwald, 2010). In stark contrast to the media coverage of this event, Muslims who planned similar attacks such as Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (a.k.a. the Underwear Bomber), Faisal Shahzad (a.k.a. the Times Square Bomber), the alleged Canadian terror cell labeled “the Toronto 18”, and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the man responsible for the 2014 Parliament Hill shootings in Ottawa, were all featured prominently in news media as terrorists. These examples highlight how in the context of the War on Terror, terrorism is increasingly being defined by the cultural and religious affiliations of the people committing the acts and not necessarily by the acts themselves. In other words, the labeling of an individual as ‘Muslim’ determines if such acts fall under the
introduction

As Karim Karim (2002) observes, ‘Islam’ has become a term “that is manipulated according to the needs of the particular source discussing it. Among other things it has come variously to refer to a religion, a culture, a civilization, a community, a religious revival, a militant cult, an ideology…” (pp. 108–109). Therefore, in the post-9/11 context, ‘Islam’ in public discourse has become synonymous with an ‘Otherness’ affiliated with terror and violence. This has become increasingly pronounced in the Canadian context with the growing number of ‘radicalized’ Canadian Muslim youth going overseas to join ISIS. For example, when questioned by a reporter concerning the anti-terror legislation, Bill C-51, on January 30, 2015, Prime Minister Stephen Harper clearly associated the monitoring of terrorist activities with mosques. When asked how this legislation would differentiate between radicalized individuals and teenagers just messing around in a basement, Mr. Harper responded that terrorism is a serious offence “no matter what the age of the person is, or whether they’re in a basement, or whether they’re in a mosque or somewhere else” (reported by Mastracci, 2015).

In another incident, the Canadian Justice Minister, Peter McKay, claimed that an attempted Valentine’s Day shooting spree in February 2015 was clearly not a terrorist activity, because the attempted plotters did not have any “cultural affiliations”. Mr. McKay did not specify ‘Muslim’ cultures. However, he made specific reference to groups like ISIS when discussing how such an action could have been classified as an act of terrorism (Auld & Tutton, 2015).

It is clear from the above discussion that anti-Muslim bias and racism in the context of the War on Terror is ideologically driven, as terms such as ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ are defined and propagated through unequal power relations and are seemingly exclusively affiliated with Islam and ‘Muslimness’. Stephen Sheehi (2011) further elaborates on this point, as he describes anti-Muslim racism, or Islamophobia as an ideological formation. For Sheehi, an ideological formation is created by a culture that employs a fixed set of tropes, analyses, and beliefs, which inform governmental policy, political and media discourses, and social beliefs and practices. This is not to say that Islamophobia originates from a fixed group of media outlets, government bodies, or political organizations. Rather, these actors are collectively involved in the dissemination and normalization of anti-Muslim bias in Western contexts. It is my belief, as will be demonstrated throughout this book, that anti-Muslim racism as an ideological formation has been fundamental in shaping and influencing the experiences of Muslims in Canada and in other Western nations in their daily interactions as well as their participation in institutional structures such as schools. Viewing anti-Muslim racism as an ideological formation helps to locate Islamophobia within a broader global context, as well as its construction, dissemination, and practice at localized levels. In other words, Islamophobia occurs within the context of a global meta-narrative and is also specific within localized discourses and practices. Therefore, this book will examine how Islamophobia manifests through a global meta-narrative relating to global conflicts, the War on Terror, dichotomizing cultural groupings such as the Orient and Occident, and
INTRODUCTION

the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis. However, this book will also demonstrate how Islamophobia is constructed and utilized at localized national and provincial levels.

EXAMINING MUSLIM EXPERIENCES IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

In this book I set out to learn about Muslim youth experiences in Canadian schools in the context of the War on Terror. I specifically looked at the experiences of young Muslim women and men who currently attend or had attended secondary schools in the Canadian province of Quebec since 9/11. Additionally, I interviewed Muslim and non-Muslim teachers for their anecdotal comments about Islamophobia in Canadian secondary schools. In conducting interviews with participants, I employed a critical ethnographic approach, which can be understood as a “research methodology through which social, cultural, political, and economic issues can be interpreted and represented to illustrate the processes of oppression and engage people in addressing them” (Cook, 2008, p. 148). Therefore, this methodological approach can be particularly useful when examining oppressed or racialized groups. Critical ethnography involves interviewing subjects and creating a record of observation, collecting field notes, observing participants in social sites, as well as analyzing the social structures with which participants interact with and which impact or influence the social surroundings of participants.

My objectives in doing this study were three fold. First, I wanted to explore whether or not these youths felt they experienced discrimination in their secondary schools in the post-9/11 context and if so, what factors may have facilitated this. Second, I wanted to determine if there was a discernable connexion between the types of representations of Muslims in popular cultural media and how Muslims felt they were perceived in their secondary schools. It was paramount for me to understand if there was a relationship between Muslim representations in the media and the experiences of Muslims in schools and if so, were Muslim students cognizant of how that relationship was defined. My final objective was to provide Muslim students with the opportunity and a platform to reflect upon and express biases and prejudices they may have experienced as Muslims in Canadian schools in the post-9/11 era. It was my hope that this could be an empowering experience for these young people who have rarely had an opportunity to be heard in relation to their experiences with race and racism in their schools.

This was a qualitative study. Much of my analysis and understanding of the issues presented in this work were constructed from a critical race perspective. To collect data on the experiences of my participants I engaged in audiotaped interviews and group discussions. In some instances, this involved engaging in multiple interviews for clarification purposes. Interviews took place over a span of twelve months from May 2013 to May 2014. Interviews were semi-structured, posing open-ended questions relating to how Muslims were perceived in society; if perceptions of Muslims were shaped by media representations; and if they had encountered racism against Muslims within educational contexts. As I am a Muslim teacher, my research
required me to engage in a self-reflexive process, which can be described as the researcher’s engagement of continuous self-examination and exploration of how their personal biases influenced their research and findings.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

I have divided the book into two parts. I refer to Part One as ‘understanding Islamophobia’, which is composed of Chapters One to Four. Part Two, comprised of chapters Five and Six, discusses ‘experiencing Islamophobia’. Given the argument that I advance, that Islamophobia is an ideological formation which can be delineated into global meta-narratives and localized narratives, Part One of the book elucidates the global and localized narratives and practices of Islamophobia, while Part Two of the book examines how both forms exist within the experiences of Canadian Muslim youth. Chapter One will introduce and historicize the phenomenon of Islamophobia by examining Muslim-Western relations throughout the crusades, colonialism, and the War on Terror. This historical analysis will demonstrate how the Muslim ‘Other’ has been perceived at various junctures in Muslim-Western relations, thus illustrating some of the complexities and the evolutionary nature of anti-Muslim prejudice. Furthermore, Chapter One will compare and contrast manifestations of Islamophobia in North America and Europe to better understand how Islamophobia differs in varying contexts, as well as how some of the similarities contribute towards a larger meta-narrative of anti-Muslim bias. The chapter will conclude by briefly discussing the theoretical tradition of critical race theory to clarify how I have positioned myself in my analysis of anti-Muslim racism.

Chapter Two will discuss how Islamophobia is enacted through the social relations of race, gender, and class. The central focus of the chapter will examine how the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror have impacted Muslim communities in North America and have influenced and informed perceptions of Muslims. This chapter will demonstrate how in the post-9/11 context, Islamophobia is mediated and manufactured by the War on Terror through these social relations. The emergence of Islamophobia through the social construction of race entails espousing negatively evaluated meanings of a group by virtue of assumed biological qualities. In other words, the conception of Muslims as an inferior ‘race’, who fundamentally differ from the ‘Westerner’. Examining Islamophobia through a gender lens involves attending to the construction of Muslim women as abused and oppressed at the hands of dangerous Muslim men. The narratives of victimhood of Muslim women have been coopted by liberals, conservatives, as well as feminists for justifying empire and Western intervention in Muslim majority nations. Islamophobia through class relations entails addressing the vulnerability of Muslim underclasses and targeted laws which have affected Muslim immigrant working-classes in the context of the War on Terror. Examining Islamophobia through these social relations will help contextualize participants’ comments and experiences discussed in chapters Five and Six.
Chapter Three will look specifically at Quebec society, as my study examines Islamophobia through the experiences Canadian students residing and going to school in the province of Quebec. Here, I will briefly examine Quebec’s history including the cultural shift in the 1960s which redefined Quebecois identity, referred to as the ‘Quiet Revolution’. As I will show, these changes brought about a reinvigoration of linguistic and nationalist sentiments, which resulted in a turbulent relationship with the ‘Other’, the brunt of which, I will argue, has been borne by Muslims in the post-9/11 context. Ultimately, chapter Three will demonstrate how Islamophobia in Quebec, though impacted and influenced by the meta-narrative of Islamophobia in the North American context, also emerges as a result of historical, political, and social influences specific to Quebec and Canadian society. In other words, Islamophobia in Quebec is a textured and multifaceted phenomenon interacting with a number of local and global influences.

Chapter Four will examine popular cultural mediums, which have influenced knowledge production of Muslims in the North American context. This will include analysis of selected films, news media coverage of terror attacks committed by both Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada and the US, as well as Muslim portrayals in television programs. The purpose of this chapter is to further develop and understand the global and localized narratives of anti-Muslim racism and how popular cultural media are central to reinforcing them. The dominant media framing of Muslim women discussed in this chapter relate to victimhood. Stories about Muslim women as victims reproduce the notion of Muslim woman as imperilled and in need of saving. The dominant frame of Muslim men in the media relate to dangerous and violent figures singularly depicted as the archetypal ‘Muslim terrorist’. This chapter will argue that negative representations of Muslims in the media legitimize certain actions and inactions as well as authorize particular ways of seeing the world, which reinforce dominant understandings of Muslims.

Chapters Five and Six will examine the lived experiences of Canadian Muslim youth in their secondary schools. These chapters will analyze the participants’ comments and how they relate to discussions of Islamophobia in previous chapters. Chapter Five discusses Muslim female student participants’ experiences and Chapter Six examines the experiences of Muslim male students, as well as teacher participants’ experiences. I combined the categories of Muslim male students and teacher participants in Chapter Six because my analysis of these two categories was shorter in length than the Muslim female student category. Chapters Five and Six will draw from the experiences of current, former, female and male Muslim students, as well as Muslim and non-Muslim teacher participants to help paint a portrait of the lived realities of Muslims in Canadian secondary schools and their experiences with race and racism.

The book will conclude with a discussion of the similarities and differences between the different categories of participants, as well as analyze the causes of Islamophobia experienced by participants. This Chapter will also briefly highlight
some of the struggles for social justice undertaken by Canadian educators towards social justice and anti-racism education as a way forward.

NOTES

1  Bill 94 passed in 2010 and required individuals who wore face coverings to remove them if they wanted to work for the Quebec government or receive governmental services. Bill 60 was a proposed Bill for state secularism and religious neutrality which would have restricted government employees, or people working for government funded institutions from wearing religious attire. Both Bills were primarily directed towards and affected Muslim women, as well as members of other religious communities.

2  This legislation broadens the mandate of Canadian security agencies and enhances their powers. Critics of the Act argue that the legislation gives Canadian security agencies too much power, as some aspects of it contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights.
PART 1
UNDERSTANDING ISLAMOPHOBIA

History and Context
CHAPTER 1

HISTORICIZING AND THEORIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA
AND ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

What is Islamophobia? Where did it originate from? Do we even know what the term means and refers to? Any type of informed discussion about Islamophobia needs to examine the historical processes, events, and personalities fundamental to its formation. Failure to do so can result in reductionist shortcomings, which view Islamophobia solely as a product of the present day political climate and the War on Terror. Islamophobia runs much deeper than that. As I will demonstrate throughout Chapters One and Two, Islamophobia since 9/11 has been mediated by the War on Terror, however anti-Muslim racism in Western contexts has an enduring legacy, resulting from historical power relations and imbalances, which have positioned Muslims as a diametrically opposed ‘Other’.

The first half of this chapter will engage in a discussion to clarify the phenomenon of Islamophobia. In providing a functional definition for such a complex term, this chapter will first engage in a historical analysis of anti-Muslim racism as well as discuss how it emerges in various Western contexts. Thereafter, this chapter will trace the history of the usage of the term ‘Islamophobia’ and provide a comprehensive definition that will be used throughout the rest of the book. The second half of the chapter will provide a theoretical grounding of my analysis of Islamophobia which is informed by a critical race theory perspective. This entails discussing the basic principles of this body of scholarship, why I have adopted this perspective, and some of the contributions of critical race theory in the field of education.

HISTORICIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is a relatively new term which draws its etymological roots from Europe in the early 20th century. However, fear and mistrust towards Muslims and being perceived as a diametrically opposed ‘Other’ have deeper roots in Europe. As Paul Weller (2001) has observed, “Islamophobia is undeniably rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and warfare” (p. 8). Western perceptions of Muslims and Islam began to form as early as the 7th century, when the Islamic faith began to make inroads into the Byzantine Empire. As Muslim armies conquered vast territories and key cultural sites including Egypt, Damascus, and the venerated holy city of Jerusalem, Islam was perceived as a threat, particularly by the
CHAPTER 1

Church in Western Europe. Europe, in large part due to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, saw Islam as a three-pronged challenge to its stronghold and wellbeing. First, Islam was both a religious and social ideology, one perceived to be able to challenge Europe’s relative stability. Second, it was a proselytic religion, one that had the ability to challenge the ascendency of the Roman Church as well as the expansion of Christianity and third...not only might it be argued theologically that it had superseded Christianity, but through conversion and any social foothold gained within Europe’s borders, so it might have had the potential to confine Christianity to the spiritual, theological and social wildernesses. (Allen, 2010, p. 26)

Muslim armies managed to make advances within some Western European territories, including the Iberian Peninsula and parts of Southern France. However, for the most part Islam was known to Europe in the absence of a physical presence. Eventually, by the turn of the 11th century, perceptions of this threatening ‘Other’ would be used as a tool to gain political authority and ascendency by the Catholic Church through the Crusades. Defense of Christendom and Jerusalem through the Crusades provided the papal authority with an opportunity to gain recognition as the legitimate temporal ruler of the Christian faith with the ambition of reuniting the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) Churches. The Crusades, a call to arms by Pope Urban II that led to the fall of Jerusalem from Muslim hands in 1099, was propagated as a militaristic pilgrimage to reconquer and liberate the holy lands of Jerusalem from the perceived heathens of Islam. Christians who returned to Europe from the Crusades told tales of idolatrous pagans possessing extravagant wealth and luxuries living sensual and lecherous lifestyles. These stories of the near East fueled misconceptions in European societies and fomented a narrative which justified a civilizing project in light of shifting power dynamics between Europe and the Orient. Attempts to civilize the ‘Other’ ensued through colonial expansion over the course of the next few centuries. Thus began another chapter in Europe’s interaction with the Orient—colonialism.

Postcolonial theorists have examined the impacts of colonialism on both the colonized and colonizers, who have benefited from the violence and promotion of racist ideology resulting from colonization. One of the foundational works, which has examined the colonization of Muslim majority nations, the ideologies which provided moral justifications for it, and its continuity in constructing Muslims as ‘Other’ was Edward Said’s (1979) Orientalism. This work was a critique of Orientalist scholarship, and has informed many of the current day critiques of anti-Muslim racism. According to Said, Orientalism is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (p. 2). Said noted the presence of Orientalist thought in the works of European scholars, artists and academics throughout the 19th and
20th centuries. Through analyzing canonical European literary works from this era, Said observed the existence of misrepresentations, over-simplifications and binaries which constructed the West as being diametrically opposed to the East. Said argued that Orientalists viewed the East or the “Orient” as being overly sensual, primitive, and violently opposed to the West. According to Said, these views of the Orient perpetuated a constant ensemble of images and stereotypes that completely ignored the diversity across the Orient.

Said contended that Orientalism was a tool that was used by Western academics, scholars, and artists to assert dominance over the East. As he stated,

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (p. 3)

The ideas of control and domination discussed by Said in Orientalism originated from the history that European nations have had in dominating Arab and Muslim-majority nations throughout the period of imperialism in the 16th and 17th centuries. In another one of his works, Culture and Imperialism (1993), Said discussed how the practices of imperialism persisted throughout the post-colonial era. Said noted, “In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism…lingers where it has always been in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (p. 9). This mindset of superiority is believed by Said to have laid the foundations for Orientalist thought throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and which in turn constructed the “Orient” as inferior and subordinate to Europe.

Said’s work, though predating a number of other studies examining anti-Muslim racism continues to be foundational. As Kumar (2012) notes, a number of lingering Orientalist myths continue to endure in dominant Western discourse about Islam. These include the notion that Islam is a monolithic religion that perpetuates gender-based discrimination, that Muslims are incapable of reason and rationality or democracy and self-rule, and that Islam is an inherently violent religion. Building from the insights of this scholarship, which argues the homogenization of Muslim cultures, I contend that Orientalism has influenced our present day understanding of Islamophobia. However; Islamophobia is distinct from Orientalism and the two should not be conflated or understood to be the same.

Though colonialism was not exclusive to Muslim-majority lands, due to Europe’s historical interactions with Muslims it took on a unique form of expression. As Akbar Ahmed (1999) notes, colonial powers perceived Islam as “a civilization doomed to barbarism and backwardness forever” (p. 60). Thus, the colonization of Muslim-majority lands was construed as being an act of magnanimity as they were civilizing the antithetical ‘Other’. It is clear that anti-Muslim perceptions have been
deeply rooted in the European context. However, the question arises whether there are similarities in how anti-Muslim bias and racism manifests in North American societies.

ISLAMOPHOBIC TRENDS IN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

When examining negative views and perceptions of Muslims and Islam, a number of similarities emerge within the North American and European contexts. The reason for briefly examining how Islamophobia manifests similarly in varying Western nations is to demonstrate that anti-Muslim racism falls within a meta-narrative, in which there are general trends that transcend local contexts. Many of these commonalities, though rooted in white supremacy, have manifested in specific and textured ways in the context of the global War on Terror. The most glaring of these similarities occurs in the way Muslims have been represented in the media, more specifically the narratives that are produced in news media. Muslims have been repeatedly presented as violent, misogynistic, and inclined towards terrorism. One such example would include the recent controversy in the case of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. The magazine produced a number of trope laden and satirical depictions of Prophet Muhammad in 2012, similar to cartoons produced by the Danish newspaper Jyllands Posten in 2005. Prior to their publication it was obvious that such images would infuriate a substantial number of Muslims worldwide. The images were printed by the media outlets, which argued that the discontent of a segment of society should not trump the principles of freedom of expression. Yet, in 2003 Jyllands Posten rejected the printing of similar cartoons depicting Jesus, as the editor at the time believed it may cause offence and provoke public outcry. Similarly, in the North American context, Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg (2008) have documented a series of caricatures insulting and negatively depicting Muslims and central figures in Islam as early as the Suez Crisis in the 1950s to the present War on Terror. Other examples of tensions exacerbated through the media in both Europe and North America include the negative focus on the construction of Islamic buildings and structures. In 2009 Switzerland held a referendum to ban the construction of minarets on mosques. Media coverage of this issue included inflammatory rhetoric arguing that minarets were a symbol of Muslim dominance in Switzerland, despite the fact that there were only four minarets in the country at the time of the referendum. Similar points of contention arose in the US during the opposition to the construction of Park 51, a Muslim community centre located approximately two blocks north of the former site of the New York City World Trade Centre. Media reports about the proposed centre remained relatively tamed at its inception. However, by the summer of 2010 a barrage of news analysts and conservative pundits aggressively condemned the construction of the centre, labelling it the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’.

Another similarity can be seen in the types of fears and tensions towards local Muslim populations that have arisen in the context of the War on Terror. Both North
American and European nations have fostered increased anxieties towards its Muslim inhabitants and Islam in light of terrorist attacks and terror plots in these regions. In North America there has been the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing al-Qaeda inspired attempted terror plots of the Times Square Bomber, the Underwear Bomber, and the Fort Hood Shooting. More recently there have been a number of ISIS inspired ‘lone wolf’ attacks in Canada and the US committed by extremist Muslims. In Canada there was a shooting on Parliament Hill and a targeted hit-and-run attack in Ottawa and St-Jean-sur-Richelieu respectively in 2014. Additionally, in the US, there was a mass shooting in San Bernardino in 2015 and Orlando in 2016 by Muslim perpetrators. Given the absurd amount of mass shootings in the US, media coverage disproportionately focused attention on these two attacks because they highlighted the threat that Islamic extremism poses to the US. However, the overwhelming number of homegrown terrorist attacks in the US since 9/11 have been committed by non-Muslim white right-wing extremists (Plucinska, 2015). Similarly, Europe has experienced the July 7, 2005, suicide bombings which targeted civilians taking public transportation in central London, as well as a series of attacks in France by ISIS operatives in 2015 and 2016. Media coverage of the ‘ISIS inspired’ attacks in North America and Europe fixated on how the perpetrators of these acts were in some way affiliated with or inspired by Muslim terrorist groups abroad. With the exception of the attacks in France, none of these men trained with or were given direct orders from terrorist organizations. Conversely, a number of the assailants had histories with mental illness, violence, and drug abuse. These along with other sociological influences may have provided a more complete picture to explain why these men engaged in such actions.

Class-based discrimination has also targeted European and North American Muslims. Cesari (2011) observes that Muslims in European societies are mostly immigrants and are socioeconomically marginalized, as the immigrant unemployment rates are twice that of natives. This has brought about many instances of class-based discrimination for European Muslims. Similarly, Junaid Rana (2011) has documented how the War on Terror has brought about the policing of immigrant Muslims in North American societies, which have selectively applied laws against working-class Muslim immigrants. Another similarity between anti-Muslim racism in North American societies and European contexts is that anti-Muslim sentiment often arises from apprehensions towards cultural erosion. As Nathan Lean (2012) mentions, “[a]nti-Muslim sentiment [is] not just a feeling among certain segments of the population. It [is] state-sponsored praxis that aim[s]…to reinstate the heyday of white Christian Europe” (p. 171). Preservationist discourses of white Christian Europe have fueled fears of the impending Islamization of Europe. Islamization is an ideology which asserts that Muslim populations are threatening to numerically and culturally submerge all of Europe. Despite the lack of substantive evidence of a ‘Muslim demographic boom’, this ideology has gained popularity in the public sphere and has been widely expressed by politicians, popular authors and media pundits. Similar fears of cultural erosion permeate a number of North American
contexts, particularly in several Canadian provinces as noted by Bilge (2013), Haque (2012), and Thobani (2007). As will be seen in Chapter Three, much of the anti-Muslim racism and the existence of Islamophobia in the Canadian province of Quebec revolves around fears of Muslims fomenting the cultural erosion of the French white Quebecois majority.

Anti-Muslim bias and racism has also been intensified in North American and European nations as a result of right-wing politicians and political figures. In 2011, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated in an interview with CBC News that the greatest threat to Canada’s national security is “Islamicism”. It is unclear exactly what this term means, as it is not an actual word, however, the implied sentiment was that violence inspired by Muslim extremists occupied the primary focus of the national security apparatus. A number of Republican politicians in the US have also used Islamophobia as a political tool to gain prominence as defenders of American freedom and values. In 2011, Presidential Nominee, Herman Cain, described how Muslims were a fifth column in the US making “creeping” attempts to ease Sharia law into the US legal system (Green, 2015). Donald Trump, the Republican Nominee for the 2016 US Presidential election, has openly used anti-Muslim rhetoric as a rallying cry for his campaign, proposing an open ban on all Muslims from immigrating to the US if elected. Europe has also seen a rise in radical right politics. Todd Green (2015) notes that extreme right-wing parties constitute the second or third largest parties in the parliaments of Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark, and has the largest representation in the Swiss parliament. The most outspoken of these European Islamophobe politicians is Geert Wilders, the founder and leader of the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands. Wilders’s anti-Muslim vitriol was most prominent in a short film that he produced called *Fitna* (2008), which explicitly linked texts from the Quran with violence and terrorism. Wilders was eventually charged with hate speech under Dutch law in 2009 for the film, however he was acquitted. The media frenzy surrounding the trial served to bolster his reputation as a staunch defender of European values and culture in face of the Islamization tidal wave confronting Europe. Having analyzed some of the historical causes and ideologies which have fostered and promoted anti-Muslim sentiments, and briefly viewing similarities in anti-Muslim racism in Europe and North America, I will now define how ‘Islamophobia’ as a concept and phenomenon will be understood throughout the rest of this inquiry.

DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA

To better understand the phenomenon of Islamophobia and thus be able to use an operational definition for it in this book, let us first look at the term’s origins. The earliest found usage of the term ‘Islamophobia’ can be traced back to France in 1925 by authors Etienne Dinet and Slima Ben Ibrahim where they wrote ‘accès de délire Islamophobe’ (‘Islamophobic delirium’), referring to Western perceptions of Muslims. In another instance Caroline Fourest and Fiammetta Venner (2003) claimed