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## **Beyond Sectarian Boundaries: Dimensions of Muslim Canadian Religiosity and the Prediction of Sociocultural Attitudes**

Reeshma Haji, Jorida Cila, and Richard N. Lalonde

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# Beyond Sectarian Boundaries: Dimensions of Muslim Canadian Religiosity and the Prediction of Sociocultural Attitudes

Reeshma Haji  
Laurentian University

Jorida Cila  
Ryerson University

Richard N. Lalonde  
York University

An online study was used to evaluate the predictive validity of culturally relevant dimensions of religiosity in Muslim young adults. Students at a Canadian university who self-identified as Muslim ( $N = 189$ ) completed measures of dimensions of religiosity: religious identity, religious practice, and religious knowledge. These dimensions were used to predict sociocultural attitudes including views on interfaith and interdenominational intimate relationships, support for veiling, and child naming intentions. Denominational (Sunni, Shia, or just Muslim [i.e., nondenominational Muslim]) differences were in line with past research and hypotheses. Importantly, dimensions of religiosity accounted for more variance in sociocultural attitudes than denominational affiliation within Islam. Results suggest the value of a psychological approach to understanding politically relevant sociocultural attitudes of religious groups living in numerical minority contexts and the importance of culturally appropriate measures when doing research with these groups.

*Keywords:* religiosity, social identity, Muslim denominations, attitudes, interfaith relationships



There has been a recent call for psychological research on Muslims living in North America, particularly including a greater appreciation and understanding of the diversity that exists within Islam (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). In the present paper, we address this need at two levels by (1) examining the role of denominational affiliations and (2) adopting a multidimensional conceptualization and measurement of religiosity. We operationally define religiosity in three ways: strength of religious identity, frequency of religious practice, and degree of self-reported religious knowledge. Furthermore, we examine how these two levels relate to sociocultural attitudes among young adult Muslim Canadians. In Canada, Muslims represent 3.2% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2013), and they are the fastest growing religious group (Statistics Canada, 2010). Our interest was in attitudes that we felt would be relevant for young adult Muslims living in the West, such as views of interfaith intimate relationships, and maintenance of Islamic cultural traditions, such as veiling and choosing Islamic names for children. Theoretical and empirical work with religious and ethnic minority groups in the West suggests that these are important topics to study (e.g., Cila & Lalonde, 2014, 2020; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010).

It has been suggested that the study and expression of ethnic and religious identity is shaped by the culture of a given country (Ghuman, 1998), which begs the question of how Muslim identity would be expressed in Canada where multiculturalism, including respect for religious diversity, has been official government policy since 1971 (Government of Canada, 2012). Despite the official federal policy of multiculturalism in Canada, religious freedom is perceived to be under threat in certain regions. Indeed, the Quebec provincial government recently approved a ban on overt religious symbols and clothing (e.g., veils) for individuals employed in the public service (Authier, 2019). This followed years of controversy in which the bill was criticized as taking a step backward in terms of tolerance of religious freedom and diversity (Naqvi-Mohamed, 2014) and interviews with religious minority group members indicated that they feared they no longer had a home in Quebec (e.g., Shingler & Marquis, 2013).

Islamophobia is a troubling Canadian reality, as evidenced in a national poll that found 54% of Canadians had unfavorable views toward Muslims, and this was 69% in the province of Quebec (Geddes, 2013) where there was a spike in reported hate crimes following a mass shooting of Muslims at a Quebec City mosque (The Canadian Press, 2017). In line with psychologists' call for further research on North American Muslims (Amer & Bagasra, 2013), these polling data suggest that a greater understanding of Canadian Muslims may be necessary for harmonious interfaith relations, particularly in light of increasing religious diversity in Canada and the rise in its Muslim population.

Thus far, psychological research on Muslims residing in the West has been conducted primarily in Britain and in the US. Little quantitative research has been conducted in Canada to complement

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 Reeshma Haji, Department of Psychology, Laurentian University;  Jorida Cila, Department of Psychology, Ryerson University; Richard N. Lalonde, Department of Psychology, York University.

Thank you to Nathaniel Davin and Season Biggs for research assistance. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Reeshma Haji, Department of Psychology, Laurentian University, 935 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, P3E 2C6. E-mail: rhaji@laurentian.ca

the qualitative work that has been done (e.g., Ruby, 2006; Zine, 2001, 2006). Although Muslims in other Western societies have commonalities with Canadian Muslims (e.g., being in a religious minority context), the salience of cultural and religious diversity in Canadian urban centers, may contribute in unique ways to a different experience of religiosity. Following the lead of past work with Canadian Jewish young adults by Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, and Naveh-Benjamin (2011), the present research assessed whether denominational affiliation and dimensions of religiosity among Canadian Muslim young adults would predict relevant sociocultural attitudes. Haji and colleagues found that denominational affiliation and various aspects of religiosity (self-perceived religious knowledge, religious practice, and strength of Jewish identity) were useful in predicting sociopolitical attitudes, such as views on Israeli politics and interfaith intimate relationships. The current research assessed both denominational affiliations within Islam (or absence of affiliation), and psychological dimensions of Muslim religiosity as predictors of relevant social attitudes (i.e., interfaith marriage, veiling, and child naming).

### A Denominational Approach to Muslim Religiosity

Although there are many schools of interpretation within Islam, most of the world's Muslims identify with one of the two major denominations, Sunni or Shia. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, a schism led to the major division between the Sunni and the Shia (Grieve, 2006). In short, Shias believe that the Prophet had appointed his cousin Ali as his successor, whereas Sunnis believe that the Prophet had not appointed a successor. Shias view Ali as the first Imam and the authority on spiritual and political matters and they follow the guidance of hereditary Imams who succeeded him. Sunnis follow the Sunna, the actions from the life of the Prophet (Grieve, 2006; Nanji, 2008). One's denominational affiliation, therefore, is important because it provides the normative cultural context for an individual's understanding of Islam, as well as the mosque that an individual's family will attend.

Previous research with young Muslim Canadians has shown the presence of a third group, those who do not identify themselves with any of the established sects, but see themselves as "just Muslim" (i.e., nondenominational Muslim; see Cila, 2012). That study found that those who identified as just Muslim were more likely to have been in an interfaith relationship compared with Sunnis or Shias, and they also tended to report more positive attitudes toward interfaith dating and marriage. Similar results were found in the Haji et al. (2011) study of Jewish Canadians; those with no denominational affiliation or self-identified as "just Jewish" expressed more openness toward interfaith relationships than those from Orthodox and Conservative denominations.

Thus, in the present study our focus was on those who identified broadly as Sunni, Shia, or just Muslim. Because the Sunni demonstrate a greater focus on adherence to the hadiths, or teachings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, it was expected that there may be more emphasis on religious practice and cultural traditions among Sunnis relative to Shias. Similarly, Sunnis were expected to show weaker support for interfaith relationships. Finally, given the expected greater emphasis on practice and traditions among Sunnis, they were expected to have greater support for the veil and a stronger intention toward Islamic names for children, compared

with Shias. Analogously, past research with Jewish Canadians showed that Orthodox Jews put more emphasis on maintenance of cultural traditions than did Conservative Jews (Haji et al., 2011).

In addition, it was expected that although just Muslims would still value their identity as Muslim (after all, they freely self-identified as Muslim), their practice of the religion as well as their religious knowledge would be weaker compared with those providing a denominational affiliation. This would be in line with past research with Jewish Canadians (Haji et al., 2011) and the relatively weaker identity and expressions of religiosity among those who self-identified as "just Jewish" compared with those who identified as Orthodox or Conservative. It was also expected that just Muslims would report more positive attitudes toward interfaith and interdenominational marriages, less support for requiring women to wear the veil, and lower intention to give one's child an Islamic name compared with those who identified as Sunni or Shia.

### Psychological Perspectives on Religiosity

Individuals express and feel their religiosity in different ways (Haji et al., 2011) and the present research tapped into this multidimensionality by using three different dimensions of religiosity: religious practice (behavioral dimension), religious knowledge (cognitive dimension), and strength of religious identity (social psychological dimension).

The first dimension of religiosity that was assessed was religious practice. For many Muslims, religious practice entails everyday activities such as praying, abstaining from alcohol and nonhalal food (i.e., food that is not allowed, meat that has not been purified by religious ritual; Nanji, 2008), but also particular activities such as celebrating religious holidays, fasting, and pilgrimage. In the present study we assessed all of these aspects of religious practice, in an attempt to address a critique concerning the lack of culturally appropriate measures for psychological research with Muslims living in the West (Rippy & Newman, 2008). The importance of practice has been emphasized in qualitative research with Muslim students and parents living in Canada who identified various behaviors (e.g., modest dress for women and girls, abstaining from alcohol and premarital sex) as necessary to staying on the "straight path" required by their religious teachings (Zine, 2001). Whereas past research has examined religious practice and knowledge as a measure of religiosity among Muslim high school students in the United States (Alghorani, 2008), that measure is long (100 items). We therefore took a more expedient approach to measuring religious practice in the present research by developing a briefer measure.

A second dimension of religiosity that was assessed was perceived religious knowledge. Specifically, the research was concerned with the extent to which individual Muslims were aware of and knowledgeable about the history of their faith, the Arabic language, and the meaning of their prayers. Consistent with Alghorani's (2008) research with American Muslim high school students, our research considered such knowledge to be an indication of a cognitive dimension of religiosity that is indicative of an individual's investment in their religion.

The third dimension of religiosity that was examined in this study is that of religious identity. Social psychologists have emphasized the importance of situating religion within a social iden-

tity perspective, arguing that there is more to religion than beliefs and ideologies (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Cila and Lalonde (2014) provide preliminary evidence suggesting the importance of incorporating a social identity perspective in the study of religiosity among Muslim Canadians. They found that religious identity was a significant negative predictor of openness to interfaith dating and marriage, even after accounting for the effect of a well-established measure of religiosity, namely *religious fundamentalism*.

Within the framework of social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), social identity refers to a sense of belonging within a group as well as the degree of attachment to that group. The salience of a social identity may vary depending on a given context. North American Muslim identity may be salient across different social contexts, however, especially because Muslims represent a numerical minority on this continent. According to the self-aspect model of identity (Simon, 2004), identity is experienced in relation to the social context, including majority-minority relations. Notably, minority identity is chronically salient for members of some minority groups (Simon, 2004). This may be especially the case for Muslims in the post 9/11 era, with the increased reference to Muslims and Islam in various news media (e.g., Powell, 2011).

The present study, therefore, used culturally relevant dimensions of religiosity to predict sociocultural attitudes. In line with past research with Jewish Canadians (Haji et al., 2011), it was expected that higher religious practice, more knowledge about Islam, and stronger religious identity would negatively predict one's personal openness to marrying a non-Muslim or a Muslim of another denomination. Additionally, it was predicted that higher scores on the three dimensions would positively predict support for veiling and Islamic child naming intentions.

It was also expected that there would be considerable variability within the denominational groups, such that those belonging to the same denomination could experience and express their religiosity differently. Given this, it was expected that, compared with denominational affiliation, individual differences in the dimensions of religiosity would account for greater variability in Canadian Muslims' sociocultural attitudes beyond the variability accounted for by denominational affiliation.

### Muslims and Sociocultural Attitudes

Our criterion variables were attitudes toward various sociocultural issues that are of importance and interest to Muslims living in the West. Specifically, the present research examined how these attitudes can be predicted by denominational affiliation and the different dimensions of religiosity. The sociocultural attitudes assessed in this study were as follows.

#### Openness to Interfaith Marriage

In 2001, approximately 9% of Muslims in Canada were in interfaith unions; 11% of Muslim men and 6% of Muslim women (Clark, 2006). The prevalence of interfaith relationships may be a concern for religious minority group members, who may already feel that their identity is under threat. Within the framework of intergroup threat theory (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009), interfaith relationships pose both a realistic threat (e.g., loss of ingroup mates) and symbolic threat (e.g., erosion of values).

Even among Muslims living in the West, religious outmarrying can be associated with family shame, particularly for Muslim women who marry non-Muslims (Abbas, 2012). Although some Muslims believe that religious devotion to Islam is a criterion for spouse selection, there is variability in ascription to this belief and putting it into practice (Abbas, 2012; Asamarai, Solberg, & Solon, 2008). Moreover, there is evidence that young Muslims in the West are involved in interfaith romantic relationships. Cila and Lalonde (2014) found that a large proportion (almost 42%) of a young adult student sample of 234 Muslim Canadians had been in an interfaith relationship. They found that greater religious fundamentalism and religious identity were predictive of less openness to interfaith dating and marriage. Finally, Cila (2012) reported that the probability of being in an interfaith relationship was higher for Muslim Canadians who identified themselves as just Muslim (as opposed to Sunni or Shia).

In addition to interfaith relationships with non-Muslims, the present study addressed interdenominational relationships or relationships between Muslims of different denominations. Such relationships are of interest because, as Muslims in Canada comprise a religious minority group, the availability of ingroup mates of one's denomination is limited. Nonetheless, interdenominational relationships may be unwelcomed by those who believe that individuals from other denominations are poor representatives of the faith. For example, some past research found that Jewish young adults who were high in religious fundamentalism were more strongly opposed to interdenominational relationships between Jews of different denominations than interfaith relationships between Jews and non-Jews (Haji, Durbin, & Lalonde, 2008). The present study therefore assessed support for interdenominational relationships among Muslim young adults, in addition to support for interfaith relationships.

#### Support for Veiling Tradition

One way that Muslim women may choose to express their identification with their faith is through veiling (Ruby, 2006). Be it a *hijab* (headscarf) or a *niqab* (face veil), the Muslim veil is a highly visible cue that communicates one's religious affiliation (Haji & Lalonde, 2012). In a qualitative study conducted in Canada, Ruby (2006) found that Muslim immigrant women reported that the hijab symbolized their Muslim identity. Some also reported that the headscarf denoted them as respectable members of the Muslim community. Similar views were expressed in a qualitative study of Muslim women in the United States (Kassiseh, 2005). Whereas the Muslim veil has customarily been examined in relation to prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Ghumman & Jackson, 2010), the current study examines individual differences in how Muslims view the veil. In line with the predictions described above, Sunnis were expected to be most supportive of the veiling tradition, followed by Shias, followed by just Muslims. In addition, Muslims who scored higher on the dimensions of religiosity were expected to be more supportive of veiling.

#### Preferences for an Islamic Name for One's Children

One of the questions likely contemplated by expectant parents, particularly those who belong to religious or ethnic minority groups, is whether to give their children a name that reflects a

religious (or nonreligious) affiliation. For instance, Aly may wonder whether to give his soon-to-arrive daughter an Arabic name, and specifically one that would reflect a Muslim affiliation. In a related vein, Salima may consider using a nickname, Sally, on her resume when applying for jobs. These are nontrivial concerns for Muslims living in Western societies, and there is some evidence for name-based employment discrimination (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Kaas & Manger, 2011). The present study included a measure of intended child-naming in this study to examine how such a choice would vary as a function of religiosity and denominational affiliation. Our prediction was that Sunnis would report the strongest preference and just Muslims would report the lowest preference for an Islamic name for one's child, with Shias falling somewhere in between. Muslims who scored higher on our dimensions of religiosity were expected to express a stronger intention for Islamic child names.

### Overview

This study sought to address some of the criticisms raised about research with Muslims, namely the failure to appreciate the great diversity within Muslim communities in the West (see Amer & Bagasra, 2013), the lack of culturally appropriate measures (Amer & Hood, 2008; Rippey & Newman, 2008), and the overall paucity of research on North American Muslims (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). To this end, the present study (1) assessed the role of denominational affiliation; (2) approached religiosity as a multidimensional construct; and (3) investigated how these relate to sociocultural attitudes of timely importance to Canadian Muslims, namely veiling, interfaith relationships, interdenominational relationships, and child naming. With regard to denominational differences, Sunnis were expected to be the most supportive of maintaining Islamic traditions (veiling, names, etc.), followed by Shias and then just Muslims, based on similar research that compared Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews and those who identified as Just Jewish (Haji et al., 2011). This was also based on greater relative emphasis on the "Sunna" tradition that is a defining feature of the Sunni interpretation of Islam (Nanji, 2008). Sunnis were also expected to be least supportive of interfaith and interdenominational marriages, followed by Shias, followed by just Muslims. Additionally, in line with past research described above (Cila & Lalonde, 2014; Haji et al., 2011), compared with those who scored lower on our dimensions of religiosity, participants who scored higher on the dimensions of religiosity (practice, knowledge, and religious identity) were expected to be more supportive of maintaining veiling and naming traditions and less supportive of interfaith and interdenominational marriages.

The present study also compared the relative predictive power of denominational approach to religiosity with the psychological approach to individual differences in dimensions of religiosity. It was reasoned that denominational affiliation within Islam is most often based on the family into which one is born, and that there is likely considerable variability within denominational groups in terms of degree of religious identity expression and adherence to cultural traditions. Thus, denominational affiliation, although a useful demographic variable, cannot fully capture the diverse ways in which individuals experience and practice their religion. Therefore, a psychological approach of individual differences in religiosity was expected to account for variability in sociocultural

attitudes, over and above the variability explained by the denominations or traditions in which individuals had been raised.

The present research focused on young adult Muslims in Canada. From a developmental perspective, it has been argued that late adolescence to early adulthood is a critical period in identity development which sets the stage for identity and relationships in adult life (e.g., Erikson, 1956). Furthermore, given the importance of gender in certain practices within Islam (e.g., veiling) as well as the salient issue of religious discrimination as it relates to Islamophobia (e.g., Zine, 2001), the study included gender and perceived discrimination as two additional factors in our analyses.

## Method

### Participants

Introductory psychology students ( $N = 189$ ; 146 women) from a large university in Toronto participated in the study in exchange for course credit. The online study asked for Muslim participants. The mean age of participants was 19.4 years ( $SD = 1.9$ ). The majority were Canadian citizens (80.4%) or permanent residents of Canada (18.5%). Most participants, however, were born outside of Canada (65.1%), with a mean age of arrival of 10.5 years ( $SD = 5.3$ ). Countries of birth varied, but Pakistan ( $n = 39$ ), Iran ( $n = 20$ ), and Afghanistan ( $n = 13$ ) were the most frequently represented. Generational status had no statistically significant effects on main study variables,  $t_s < 1.11$ , except for religious knowledge: compared with their Canadian-born counterparts, foreign-born participants reported more religious knowledge,  $t(186) = 2.01$ ,  $p = .05$ , Cohen's  $d = .31$ . In terms of denominational affiliation, participants primarily identified as being Sunni ( $n = 108$ ), Shia ( $n = 29$ ), or just Muslim ( $n = 52$ ). Although all participants self-identified as Muslims, about 71% of the respondents described themselves as practicing Muslims.

### Procedure

After providing their informed consent, participants completed the following measures in the order presented. All measures were associated with 7-point Likert scales (*strongly disagree to strongly agree*) unless otherwise indicated. Items were coded such that higher mean scores for each scale represented higher levels of the variable being measured.

**Religious practice.** An 8-item measure was developed to assess the frequency of performing Islamic religious rituals such as fasting and praying, on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always/almost always*). Items asked how often they ate halal, abstained from drinking alcohol, fasted during Ramadan, observed ritual daily prayers, abstained from eating pork, attended Friday congregational prayers, and commemorated religious festivals and holidays ( $\alpha = .85$ ). See the Appendix for the full scale. Items were based on the five pillars of Islam as well as practices that are described as forbidden in the Qur'an.

**Religious knowledge.** This 6-item measure was developed to assess self-perceived religious knowledge. Using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*a lot*), participants rated their knowledge about Islamic history, the Arabic language, the meaning of Qur'anic verses (ayat), the meaning of ritual prayers, the denomination of Islam to which they belonged, and the other schools of

interpretation of Islam ( $\alpha = .84$ ). A scale previously used to assess religious knowledge among Jewish young adults (Haji et al., 2011) was modified for relevance to Islam.

**Religious identity.** The 12-item Cameron (2004) measure of social identity, which has been previously successfully used to measure religious identity (e.g., Cila & Lalonde, 2014; Haji et al., 2011), was used. It was adapted to assess the extent to which participants identified as Muslim (e.g., “In general, I’m glad to be Muslim;  $\alpha = .91$ ).

**Support for veiling tradition.** Nine items were created to assess views regarding various aspects of the headscarf (hijab) for women. Principal axis factoring of these items with direct oblimin rotation suggested a three-factor solution. The first factor was the only one to provide a reliable measurement and it was defined by three items: “Muslim women should be encouraged to wear a veil,” “Muslim parents should be able to compel their daughters to wear the veil,” and “Veiling is a religious tradition” ( $\alpha = .73$ ).

**Openness to interfaith marriage.** Two sets of an 8-item measure for assessing attitudes toward interfaith relationships (Cila & Lalonde, 2014) were used to measure (1) *personal openness to marrying a non-Muslim* (e.g., “I am open to marrying a non-Muslim”,  $\alpha = .95$ ), and (2) *personal openness to marrying a Muslim from another denomination* (e.g., “Being married to a Muslim from another denomination is not an option”,  $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Intended Islamic child name.** Attitudes toward child-naming were measured with one item. Participants were asked, if they intended to have children, to estimate the likelihood on an 11-point scale from 1 (0%) to 11 (100%) that they would give their child an Arabic or Persian name.

**Background questions and demographics.** Demographic information was solicited at the end of the questionnaire. Participants were also asked if they had a Facebook account and whether their religious affiliation was posted there. They also rated on a five-point scale the extent to which they felt personally discriminated against based on their religious affiliation from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a lot*). Participants were also asked questions about their own experience with interfaith relationships. Additionally, although not within the scope of the current paper, participants were asked a few open-ended questions about their Muslim identity prior to answering the scaled measures described in the preceding text.

## Results

### Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all measures provided for the overall sample, as well as by gender. Independent sample *t*-statistics, and their associated effect sizes are also reported in Table 1. There were significant gender differences for all variables, except support for the veil and perceptions of personal discrimination. An inspection of the means revealed that women reported stronger Muslim identity, more religious knowledge, and more religious practice compared with men. Women were also less supportive of the various types of interfaith relationships than were men, and they also reported a greater likelihood of giving a child an Islamic name. Among those having a Facebook account, women were more likely than men to post their religious affiliation on their profile page,  $\chi^2(1, N = 153) = 6.23, p = .01$ .

### Denominational Differences

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were run to test for denominational (Sunni, Shia, and just Muslim) differences for all main study variables. Descriptive statistics for the primary measures can be found in Table 2, together with *F* statistics and effect sizes. (Due to the small numbers of participants in some cells, it was not possible to assess for Gender  $\times$  Denomination interactions.) Where the homogeneity of the variance assumption was violated, the robust Welch test was used. To follow-up on omnibus ANOVA analyses, Tukey’s honestly significant difference post hoc tests were conducted, or, in the case of robust tests, Dunnett T3 post hoc tests were used.

Results indicate significant denominational differences for all measures, except perceived discrimination. The most consistent differences were observed between those identifying as Sunni and those identifying as either Shia or just Muslim; the Sunni were found to report more religious practice, stronger religious identity, as well as lower support for interfaith and interdenominational intimate relationships. Mean responses for many measures did not differ significantly when comparing Shias to just Muslims, except for religious knowledge and the importance of using an Islamic name for children. For these variables, there were significant

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics for Primary Measures Overall and by Gender

Measure	Overall		Men		Women		<i>t</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Religiosity								
Religious practice	3.72	.94	3.40	1.10	3.81	.87	-2.25*	.41
Religious knowledge	3.07	.85	2.76	.88	3.17	.82	-2.80***	.48
Religious identity	5.37	1.16	4.76	1.20	5.55	1.09	-4.06***	.69
Attitudes toward . . .								
Veil	3.87	1.55	3.63	1.49	3.95	1.56	-1.19	.21
Marriage: Non-Muslim	3.78	2.09	5.05	1.60	3.39	2.08	5.63***	.89
Marriage: Nondenominational	4.64	1.83	5.28	1.44	4.44	1.89	2.70**	.50
Intended Islamic child name	8.34	3.20	7.26	3.68	8.66	2.98	-2.29*	.42
Discrimination	2.00	1.10	1.95	1.15	2.01	1.08	-.32	.05

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for Primary Measures by Denominational Affiliation*

Measure	Sunni		Shia		Just Muslim		F	$\eta^2$
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Religiosity								
Religious practice	4.14 <sub>a</sub>	.61	3.13 <sub>b</sub>	1.03	3.17 <sub>b</sub>	1.02	33.95 <sup>***</sup>	.27
Religious knowledge	3.26 <sub>a</sub>	.74	3.01 <sub>ab</sub>	1.02	2.73 <sub>b</sub>	.87	7.24 <sup>**</sup>	.07
Religious identity	5.73 <sub>a</sub>	.82	5.09 <sub>b</sub>	1.26	4.79 <sub>b</sub>	1.43	14.26 <sup>***</sup>	.13
Attitudes toward . . .								
Veil	4.09	1.57	3.39	1.17	3.71	1.61	†2.84	.03
Marriage: Non-Muslim	2.94 <sub>a</sub>	1.76	5.15 <sub>b</sub>	1.98	4.69 <sub>b</sub>	1.99	24.63 <sup>***</sup>	.21
Marriage: Nondenominational	4.02 <sub>a</sub>	1.83	5.38 <sub>b</sub>	1.67	5.50 <sub>b</sub>	1.36	16.39 <sup>***</sup>	.15
Islamic child name	9.23 <sub>a</sub>	2.52	8.69 <sub>ab</sub>	3.10	6.29 <sub>b</sub>	3.62	17.74 <sup>***</sup>	.16
Discrimination	1.98	1.09	2.14	1.27	1.96	1.03	.28	.00

Note. Means with a different subscript are significantly different from each other on the basis of Tukey honestly significant difference posthoc tests of means.

†  $p = .06$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

differences between Sunnis and just Muslims, but the responses of Shias did not significantly differ from either of the other groups. It is worth noting that post hoc tests did not reveal any between-groups differences for support for veiling, although the omnibus test was marginally significant.

An additional analysis revealed that listing one's religious affiliation on Facebook and denominational affiliation were not independent,  $\chi^2(2, N = 153) = 13.46, p = .001$ . Specifically, those who self-identified as just Muslim were less likely than expected to list their religious affiliation on Facebook ( $n = 14$ ). Conversely, those who self-identified as Sunni were more likely than expected to do so ( $n = 64$ ), but no significant pattern was observed for those who self-identified as Shia.

### Predicting Sociocultural Attitudes

Zero-order correlations are presented in Table 3 and results from regression analyses are reported in Table 4. An examination of the correlations in Table 3 indicates that the three dimensions of religiosity were strongly correlated, but these correlations were not strong enough to pose a problem of multicollinearity for their simultaneous use in regressions analyses. All three dimensions of religiosity were also all correlated significantly with the four criterion variables.

A series of hierarchical regression analyses were run that estimated the predictive power of dimensions of religiosity, after

controlling for denominational affiliation, on the sociocultural attitudes. Denominational affiliation (Sunni, Shia, and just Muslim) was entered in Step 1, and dimensions of religiosity (religious practice, knowledge, and identity) were entered in Step 2 for all regression analyses. Just Muslims were selected as the comparison group given that they reported no denominational affiliation. Although perceptions of discrimination were significantly correlated with three of the outcome variables, inclusion of this variable in the regression analyses did not alter the pattern of results. Similarly, inclusion of gender did not change the pattern of results. Therefore, the reported regression analyses do not include perceptions of discrimination or gender. Given that denominational differences were presented earlier, the focus of the following results will be on the added value of entering psychological dimensions of religiosity in the second step of the regressions in the prediction of attitudes toward interfaith/interdenominational marriage, veiling, and child naming.

As shown in Table 4, the second step for all four of the regression analyses accounted for a significant increase in variance in the prediction of attitudes. For openness to interfaith marriage to a non-Muslim, religious practice and religious identity both emerged as strong negative predictors in the second step of the regression analysis. For the prediction of openness to marrying a Muslim of a different denomination, only religious practice emerged as a significant predictor in the second step.

Table 3  
*Zero-Order Correlations for the Primary Measures*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Religious practice	—	.46 <sup>***</sup>	.69 <sup>***</sup>	.40 <sup>***</sup>	-.61 <sup>***</sup>	-.37 <sup>***</sup>	.40 <sup>***</sup>	.03
2. Religious knowledge		—	.41 <sup>***</sup>	.21 <sup>**</sup>	-.32 <sup>***</sup>	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	.32 <sup>***</sup>	.03
3. Religious identity			—	.35 <sup>***</sup>	-.58 <sup>***</sup>	-.29 <sup>***</sup>	.51 <sup>***</sup>	.04
4. Support for veiling tradition				—	-.38 <sup>***</sup>	-.31 <sup>***</sup>	.17 <sup>*</sup>	.16 <sup>*</sup>
5. Marriage non-Muslim					—	.65 <sup>***</sup>	-.46 <sup>***</sup>	-.10
6. Marriage nondenominational						—	-.28 <sup>**</sup>	-.19 <sup>**</sup>
7. Islamic child name							—	-.06
8. Discrimination								—

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4  
Regression Coefficients for the Four Estimated Models

Predictor	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔF	B	SE	95% CI	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔF	B	SE	95% CI
Marriage non-Muslim						Marriage nondenominational				
Step 1	.21***	24.63***				.15***	16.39***			
Sunni vs. Just Muslim			-1.75***	.32	(-2.37, -1.12)			-1.48***	.29	(-2.05, -.91)
Shia vs. Just Muslim			-.46	.43	(-.39, 1.32)			-.13	.40	(-.92, .66)
Step 2	.46***	27.52***				.19***	3.02*			
Sunni vs. Just Muslim			-.56 <sup>†</sup>	.30	(-1.15, .03)			-1.01**	.32	(-1.69, -.42)
Shia vs. Just Muslim			.64	.37	(-.09, 1.36)			-.14	.40	(-.92, .64)
Religious practice			-.62**	.19	(-1.00, -.25)			-.39 <sup>†</sup>	.20	(-.79, .01)
Religious knowledge			-.08	.15	(-.38, .22)			.09	.17	(-.23, .42)
Religious identity			-.57***	.14	(-.84, -.29)			-.10	.15	(-.39, .19)
Support for veiling tradition						Intended Islamic child name				
Step 1	.03 <sup>†</sup>	2.84 <sup>†</sup>				.16***	17.74***			
Sunni vs. Just Muslim			.38	.26	(-.13, .89)			2.94***	.50	(1.96, 3.93)
Shia vs. Just Muslim			-.32	.36	(-1.02, .38)			2.40**	.68	(1.05, 3.75)
Step 2	.18***	11.11***				.33***	15.95***			
Sunni vs. Just Muslim			-.34	.27	(-.87, .20)			1.72**	.51	(.73, 2.72)
Shia vs. Just Muslim			-.37	.33	(-1.03, .29)			1.95**	.62	(.73, 3.18)
Religious practice			.53**	.17	(.19, .87)			-.04	.32	(-.67, .60)
Religious knowledge			.05	.14	(-.22, .32)			.38	.26	(-.14, .88)
Religious identity			.19	.13	(-.06, .44)			1.12***	.23	(.66, 1.58)

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported for all regression analyses.

<sup>†</sup> p = .06. \* p < .05. \*\* p < .01. \*\*\* p < .001.

When examining the degree of support for the veiling tradition in the regression analysis, religious practice was the only dimension of religiosity that emerged as a significant predictor in the second step. Specifically, greater engagement in religious practice predicted greater support for the veil. Finally, when examining the intended use of an Islamic name for a child, religious identity was the only dimension of religiosity that significantly predicted child naming intentions. Specifically, higher Muslim identity predicted a higher preference for choosing an Islamic name.

### Discussion

This research evaluated denominational affiliation (Sunni, Shia, and just Muslim) and dimensions of religiosity (practice, knowledge, and religious group identity) as predictors of sociocultural attitudes (veiling support, support for interfaith and interdenominational marriage, and child naming intentions) among Canadian Muslim young adults. Denominations of Islam and dimensions of religiosity were important predictors of sociocultural attitudes and practices, although results varied somewhat for the specific outcome variables. Findings tended to support our hypotheses that Sunni participants would adhere more strongly to cultural traditions of veiling and naming and would be more opposed to interfaith marriage. More importantly, as predicted, the dimensions of religiosity predicted variance above and beyond denominational affiliation. Specifically, religious practice and religious identity emerged as significant predictors.

The denominational differences were consistent with our hypotheses. As predicted, Sunni participants supported more outward expressions of their religiosity. This was observed with the measures of religious practice, displaying religious affiliation on Facebook, and intending to use Islamic names for children. Sunni participants also reported the highest levels of religious identity. When it came to religious knowledge, Sunni and Shia participants

did not differ from each other, but Sunnis reported greater knowledge than those who self-identified as just Muslim. There were clear denominational differences for attitudes concerning marrying non-Muslims or Muslims from another denomination. Sunnis held the more conservative attitudes compared with Shias and Just-Muslims. In fact, contrary to expectations, the Shia and the Just-Muslim groups were quite similar in their mean responses to most of the measures that were assessed. Interestingly, there were no significant between-groups differences when it came to perceived discrimination. All three groups reported low levels of perceived personal discrimination.

The denominational differences that were observed for this Muslim sample parallel those observed in past research in which Jewish Canadians who were Conservative and Orthodox tended to report more identification with Judaism and more identity expression than those who were Reform Jews or self-identified as Just Jewish (Haji et al., 2011). In this previous research, Orthodox Jewish participants also reported having the lowest support for interfaith relationships. The results for young Sunni Muslims in Canada, thus parallel the results for Conservative and Orthodox Jewish Canadians.

The present findings are also congruent in some ways with past research on Arab Muslims residing in the United States (Britto & Amer, 2007). It was observed that those belonging to the moderate bicultural, high bicultural, and high Arab cultural groups significantly differed in terms of their identity, values, and social attitudes. Whereas this previous research focused on cultural identity of Arab young adults, however, the current research focused on Muslim young adults belonging to diverse cultural traditions. Other research from Canada has also found variability between and within Muslim denominational groups with respect to religious identity and social attitudes (Ramji, 2017). Our findings suggest denominational differences in sociocultural attitudes and



practices that were generally consistent with predictions. Moreover, the sociocultural attitudes that were examined are of timely relevance for Muslims living in Western contexts.

As assessed in our background questions, reports of perceived personal discrimination were low among participants in our study. Nonetheless, choosing not to report one's religious affiliation on Facebook and variability in intentions to give children an Islamic name suggest that at least some of our participants might have been concerned about negative repercussions of self-identifying as Muslim. Unfortunately, our research did not probe into these issues further, but they represent potentially informative lines of inquiry for future research.

Correlational analyses revealed all three aspects of religiosity (identity strength, religious practice, and perceived knowledge) were correlated with social attitudes and other variables of interest, although correlations were somewhat lower with religious knowledge. Consistent with a social identity approach to the study of religion (Ysseldyk et al., 2010), strength of religious identity was repeatedly associated with sociocultural attitudes in the predicted ways. For example, Muslim identity was negatively associated with support for interfaith relationships. These results are consistent with past work with Muslim (Cila & Lalonde, 2014) and Jewish (Haji et al., 2011) young adults in Canada. As noted previously, interfaith relationships are likely to pose a realistic threat and a symbolic threat according to a prominent perspective on intergroup threat (Stephan et al., 2009).

It was predicted that psychological dimensions of religiosity would account for variability in sociocultural attitudes over and above the variability explained by the denominations and associated traditions in which individuals had been raised. Thus, a key finding of the regression analyses was that, for all four outcome variables of interest, measures of different dimensions of religiosity predicted significant variance above and beyond that of denominations. Specifically, religious practice and religious identity emerged as significant predictors whereas religious knowledge did not, although all three aspects of religiosity were highly correlated. Notably, religious identity did not predict opposition to marriage to a Muslim of another denomination whereas religious practice did, and religious identity predicted child naming intentions whereas religious practice did not. One could argue that the tradition of marriage falls closer to the dimension of religious practice, whereas the issue of child naming falls closer to the identity dimension of religiosity. Ignoring which psychological dimension of religiosity emerged as the stronger predictor, it is clear that a psychological approach to religiosity has considerable value in predicting sociocultural attitudes, and these dimensions of religiosity account for variability above and beyond that predicted by the denominations in which people were raised.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The present findings should be interpreted within the context of its limitations. Some measures that we used were adapted from previous measures and did not have preestablished reliability and validity in their current form. Previous research with Jewish young adults provides some precedent for the use of these measures and we are reassured by the alpha reliabilities that were obtained with the current sample. Nonetheless, we note the importance of further

research into the psychometric properties of the measures that we used, particularly for religious practice and religious knowledge.

This was an online study that used a convenience sample of university students. Participants were young adults who self-selected into a study of Muslim religiosity. Thus, the sample may contain few participants who were low in religious identity and the results may not be generalizable to other age groups. Nonetheless, the study of Muslim religiosity within this age group is believed to be interesting, as theory suggests that it is a critical age for identity development (Erikson, 1956). Our research did not assess differences between Muslims belonging to different ethnic groups (e.g., Muslims of Pakistani origin, Arab origin), and we acknowledge that religiosity and cultural expressions may vary among Muslims of different ethnic groups, and this is a potential avenue for future research. This study also did not focus on specific denominational groups within Sunni and Shia Islam, nor did it consider converts to Islam (Maslim & Bjorck, 2009). Instead, our focus was on comparing the relative predictive power of the denominational (sectarian) approach toward Muslim religiosity and the psychological individual differences approach.

### Conclusion and Implications

This foray into expressions of Muslim Canadian religiosity yielded some key findings. First, gender differences were common, such that women tended to report stronger religious identity and greater expression of their Islamic faith. Second, those belonging to different denominational affiliations differed in terms of their sociocultural attitudes and practices, generally in ways that were consistent with hypotheses. Third, although religious denominations predicted some variance in sociocultural attitudes and practices, dimensions of religiosity (practice and strength of religious identity) significantly predicted additional variance. Some results suggested variability in public expressions of Muslim identity in terms of child naming intentions and religious status on Facebook, suggesting that motivations behind these public expressions (or lack thereof) should be probed further.

A key implication of these results is the value of a psychological (rather than denominational) approach to understanding individual differences in religiosity and sociocultural attitudes currently relevant for Muslims living in diaspora communities. It has been noted that interfaith unions among Canadian Muslims, though still relatively infrequent compared with other religious communities, described just under 10% of Muslim men and women in the last National Household Survey (Clark, 2006). Importantly, one cannot automatically attribute variability in support for interfaith unions to inherent differences between denominational groups within Islam. Indeed, the current results demonstrate that a great deal of variability exists within groups, and that more variability in attitudes can be accounted for by individual differences than by denominational affiliation. Specifically, individual differences in religious identity and religious practice warrant further study in relation to their prediction of attitudes toward socially relevant issues for Muslims living in the West.

As religious demographics continue to change in Western countries and as political conflicts are being reported with reference to religious group membership, understanding beliefs of religious groups living in numerical minority contexts will be an increasingly important field of study (Haji et al., 2011; Haji & Lalonde,

2012). Specifically, a psychological approach to religiosity that is culturally sensitive can provide much information about attitudes on socially relevant and often politically charged issues. Moreover, the present findings imply that religiosity is strong among Muslim young adults in Canada, but some may nonetheless be reluctant to publicly express their identity. Perhaps a future with a population with a greater understanding and appreciation of religious diversity will help to allay concerns about implications of identifying oneself as a member of a stereotyped religious minority group. The present research comprises a preliminary step toward culturally sensitive and practical approaches to studying religiosity that may bring greater interfaith understanding. We live in a time where we should be fostering knowledge about religious diversity and not building walls between religious groups.

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## Appendix

### Religious Practice Measure

1. How often do you eat Halal foods?
2. How often do you undertake a physical (food) fast during Ramadan?
3. How often do you undertake a spiritual fast during Ramadan?
4. How often do you observe ritual daily prayers (e.g., namaz, dua, tasbih, zikr)?
5. How often do you abstain from eating pork?
6. How often do you abstain from drinking alcohol?
7. How often do you attend Friday congregational prayers?
8. How often do you commemorate religious festivals and holidays (e.g., Eid, Milad un Nabi)?

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