

2014/2015 Graduate Research Grant Report
Religion and Diversity Project

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Thesis Title: Redefining Islam in Canada: An Ismaili Muslim Movement

Description:

Cummins' doctoral research examines the Shi'i Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslim community and how they are attempting to redefine the way the national population views Islam and Muslims in Canada. Cummins' project is two-fold: first, it is designed to examine Ismaili identity and participation in Canadian society; and second, it seeks to examine how Canadian-Isma'ilis are responding to negative depictions of Islam as individuals and as a community, both formally and informally.

The Religion and Diversity Project Graduate Student Research Grant (Henceforth, RDP GRG) was used to fund Cummins' research in Edmonton and Vancouver/Burnaby (January 2016), where she successfully recruited over a dozen participants to take her online survey measuring Canadian-Ismaili identity and participation. In addition, Cummins attended several Jama'at Khanas (places of Ismaili Muslim worship) to recruit participants for the survey, and also met with individuals informally to see how they are personally trying to change the way their local communities view Islam.

While in Burnaby, British Columbia, Cummins visited the first purpose built Jama'at Khana, which is also an Ismaili Centre, to see how this centre attempts to change the way the local community views Muslims. To date, Cummins has successfully recruited over 200 participants by attending Jama'at Khanas (in Edmonton, Vancouver/Burnaby, Ottawa, and Toronto), promoting the survey through social media outlets, and through the snow-ball sampling. Out of these survey participants, at least 50 have offered to be interviewed further.

This research could not have been done without the financial support of the RDP GRG. Initial findings from the online surveys were presented at Congress 2016 at the University of Calgary. Cummins is also scheduled to present some of her interview findings at Congress 2017 at Ryerson University and at the Ismaili Studies Conference at Carleton University (March 2017).