

2012/2013 Graduate Research Grant Report
Religion and Diversity Project

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Thesis Title: Immigrant Women, Social Networks and Religion

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My doctoral research is an exploration of the lives of Muslim and Christian immigrant women in the Maritimes and the strengths and vulnerabilities they bring to the settlement process. It is a mixed methods study which compares that differences that ethnicity, religion and time make in terms of women's utilization of formal and informal social support networks after arrival. The provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are currently experiencing an unprecedented wave of migration and this is the only study of immigrant women in the region that considers the role of religion in the settlement process. The study also contributes to contemporary debates as to whether or not women who experience multiple structures of oppression are at greater risk for domestic violence in the Canadian context.

The thesis proposal was approved by my doctoral committee in December 2011. Quantitative data analysis was completed by March 2012. I obtained approval to conduct social scientific research with human participants by the UNB Research Ethics Board in February 2012. Qualitative data collection began on 14 February 2012 and was completed by 1 October 2012. I conducted six focus groups and sixty interviews with a total of 105 research participants from New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Descriptive characteristics of the sample participants:

- 31 Muslim women from 15 countries;
- 55 Christian women from 13 countries;
- Average length of time after arrival in Canada was about 4 years; and
- 19 workers from 16 agencies or organizations that work with women.

All of the interviews have been transcribed and the qualitative analysis has begun. Five conference papers with the preliminary results of the qualitative analysis have been accepted for presentation. An article based on the quantitative results has been submitted to a journal for review. The first draft of the doctoral thesis will be written by the end of February 2013.