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Master's Thesis

Women Navigating Their Feelings Towards Finland; Interviews with Arabs
Seeking Asylum

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Finland is a country in Northern Europe which has popularized tolerance towards minorities and asylum seekers since it gained independence from Russia 101 years ago. While much research has been done about the experiences of immigrants and minorities in Finland, the feelings of asylum seekers in Finland has not been researched extensively. In effort to center them and understand how their feelings towards Finland are navigated, two interviews were conducted with Arabic women seeking asylum in Finland. Sara Ahmed's understanding of feelings lead the analysis on the three themes of exhaustion, islamophobia and femonationalism in this research. Through looking at feelings in the analysis of these three themes, I found that my informants do not have control over how they navigate their feelings towards Finland, and through this conclusion, more research and encouragement of the discussion of bad feelings with the asylum seeking community in Finland is hypothesized to yield more representative and humanistic understanding of the struggles of seeking asylum in Finland.

Keywords: asylum seekers, Finland, feelings, Arabic women, Islamophobia, exhaustion, Femonationalism.

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Introduction

During the past two decades, a large influx of migrants and refugees dispersed from the Arab world and the Mediterranean region into Northern Europe after the Second World War. Much of it prompted by war and religious extremism (Farris, 2017.) Finland has been one of the countries affected by this dispersion. Finland is a country in Northern Europe which gained independence from Russia approximately 100 years ago (Lavery, 2006.) As I discuss Finland in this thesis, I will be focusing mainly on incidents which have happened in Finland as my interviewees perceive them. Finland has, since its independence, popularized and advertised a tolerant agenda towards minorities and foreigners, which has prompted a movement of relocation to Finland from outside countries. While Swedish speaking Finns, a minority which exists within Finland, have lived there for 1000 years (Koivukangas, 2003) populations from other countries arrived much later. This has pressured European citizens to reshape, restructure and redefine their regulation on granting asylum, citizenship as well as distributing resources. In *Cultural Minorities in Finland: an overview towards cultural policy*, it is reported that an estimated 3689 refugees have sought asylum in Finland during 1993. (Pentikainen and Hiltunen, 1995.) This number has grown since then with the signing of the UN Geneva treaty, and there has been a synonymous growth of organizations which presumably cater to the needs and resources of the migrants and asylum seekers. The number of foreign citizens has gone from being between 10,000 and 150,000 in 1995 to being between 350,000 to 400,000 in 2017¹. Based on this information, the interest in the livelihoods of those most affected and most vulnerable has increased, giving particular attention to those without citizenship or permits. As such, my research will focus on the feelings of asylum seekers towards Finland through interviewing two

¹ Numbers provided by Statistics Finland, a platform which tracks the percentages and numbers of people from foreign backgrounds in Finland. Accessed in 2019.

women who are seeking asylum in Finland. As I look at Finland through the lens of my interviewees, I find that they speak more about the cultural interactions which appears to them in Finland, and so while Finland's existence as a political nation affects asylum seeker's livelihood, this research will focus more on the perception of Finnish cultural identity through the eyes of the interviewees in this research.

It is not difficult to see how refugees might be perceived in Finland when considering the opening statement of the section pertaining to refugees in the book by Pentikainen and Hiltunen (1995.) They claim that “globally speaking, refugees are one of the most difficult problems of our time” (p.202), instilling the now widely-known label “refugee crisis” and insinuating that refugees are a crisis which occurred on its own rather than focusing on the reasons which prompted people to be forced to leave their homeland and make a dangerous journey to Finland in pursuit of a better life. While there is a difference between refugees and asylum seekers, the former has a larger set of rights within the nation they live in (Giles, 2013) which places asylum seekers in a more hostile position in the nation they live in. In an article by Suvi Keskinen (2018), she suggests that the discussion of the “refugee crisis” is better analyzed as a “crisis of white hegemony”.² This narrative allows for the analysis of norms, discourses, taken-for-granted notions and structures within whiteness in the Nordic context, which is what I focus on in this research. In the article by Keskinen, the focus of mainstream Finnish media is not on the methods of taking care of the refugees entering the country, but “on the threats they were expected to pose for the Finnish society. Adding on top of that there is no guarantee to a stable livelihood once the asylum seekers arrive here, something which is clear in the interviews I conducted with two women who are seeking asylum in Finland as well as in the long-term

² Keskinen, S. (2018.) The ‘crisis’ of white hegemony, neonationalist femininities and antiracist feminism. *Women’s Studies International Forum*. 157-163.

questions including housing, health care, employment and educational services which are posed in Keskinen's article. (2018, p.159.)

Gaining access to the community of migrants within Finland who are willing and able to contribute to interviews and the collection of data is a challenging task. As discussed by Stephen Egharevba (2002), multiple issues arise when asking migrants to share information about their experiences in Finland including the lack of trust between the police and the migrant community, and the confusion in determining what constitutes a hate crime from the perspective of the migrants interviewed in Egharevba's research. As a master's student from Egypt with an Arabic background, an interest in women's rights and a feeling of responsibility to share my voice and power with those around me, I felt invested in hearing about the emotional experiences of coming to Finland from those who are seeking asylum. With an overwhelmingly positive talk of relaxed residency regulations, available resources and notions of gender equality advertised to female asylum seekers, (See; Helliwell, Layard and Sachs; 2018 and Statistics Finland; Gender Equality in Finland, 2018) hearing about their feelings towards Finland should reaffirm the ideas which are popularized about seeking asylum in Finland.

Where "I" Stand in Finland

It is important to reflect on my path as an Egyptian woman in Finland before and at the time of arrival to Finland as there are some areas in which my path intertwined with that of asylum seekers, and there are also many areas in which my path is different than that of asylum seekers. Through my socialization in Finland, I understood that my place was one of an Arabic woman, too lucky to be here, in Finland, and therefore obligated to be grateful at every turn for the chance to be finally free of my country's shackles (Shukla & Suleyman, 2019.) Having received my first university degree in the United States, I was familiar with this discourse. A

discourse that placed me as exactly foreign enough to be interesting but not worth investing in, which allowed people to express their interest in my background yet refrain from providing me opportunities I qualified for. I also changed through my time in the United States, as I became more intertwined with Western ways of living and ways of being. I began speaking English in an American accent and spending most of my times around Americans while purchasing American products and celebrating American holidays. All the while I was still an Egyptian woman only living for a temporary amount of time in the United States. As my time in the West went by, I began to see sets of ideologies and practices that included inclusion at certain places and exclusion from Others, more when I arrived to Finland, and as soon as I began speaking to the participants of the organization which I found interviewees through, I understood that they were part of a socialization system I am interested in researching.

There are aspects which define how my experience changed upon beginning my studies in Finland, which are related to the topic I have chosen for my thesis. Having travelled and lived in countries in which I was not recognized as a citizen or as belonging, my identity was consistently shifting, moving from Arab and brown to being fragile and threatening. As I looked closely at these identities, I found that the choice of label which was imposed on me never depended on my own perception of myself, but on the culture and ideology of the country I was in. They depended on depictions grouped together and called “Orientalism” as of 1979 by Edward Said. Orientalism is defined by Said as “an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness” (1979, p.6.) Having lived in the West for over five years, I have become accustomed to witnessing it in the ways people acted towards me and around me. However, in Finland I found that this imposed identity overshadowed my academic, personal and legal

agency. This also resulted in an interest to see how systematic these identities were and how they affected our existence in Finland.

In this description of my personal past and current relationship to Finland, the usage of “I” is intensified as it is important to link the attachment between my inspiration to write a thesis about the emotions based on the experiences of asylum seekers in Finland and my own struggle. While my informants discussed their own feelings mostly without disruption from me, I did relate to many of their feelings of Otherness and being a minority, which makes me gives me a feeling of belonging through conducting this research. This makes the reflection of where “I” stand in Finland important as I was personally affected and, more importantly, moved by the data collected. And while this thesis is centered around the feelings of asylum seekers, there is a possibility that I would write about my personal reflection on these interviews in the future, looking into the feelings I have as a woman from the Third World researching about the people from the Third World. As I use the term “Third World” and “Third World Women,” I reclaim the identity of myself and my interviewees being women from the Third World. These terms have allowed for the emergence of Third World feminism which is one of the most prominent branches of feminism focusing on Third World women as is discussed by Ranjoo Seodu Herr (2014, p.1.) They have also been criticized, as is discussed by M.D. Litonjua (2010), as reducing the agency of people from the Third World since they emerged from the West and, as such, terms such as “Global South” and “Two Thirds World” became more popular as a method of moving away from a Western outlook on our world. While I do acknowledge the criticisms put against the term Third World, I choose to use it in my identity as well as my research to normalize being a woman from the Third World.

The selective checkpoints I mentioned earlier in my recollection of the experiences I went through were ones I constantly endured whenever I was travelling outside and within the Arab region but were ones I did not critically think about until beginning my master's studies. They were checkpoints I got through, unlike many other women. Women who have escaped, who have fled, who have gone into hiding. These women have found their experience of seeking asylum and their feelings towards it based on these experiences to be difficult to discuss in Finland, with the majority of the research being from Finnish citizens who usually do not get to experience it firsthand but control the emotions of those who seek asylum as well as how the process of obtaining asylum is publicized. But as a newcomer to Finland, I was doubtful of criticizing the comments I received and research I read about the experiences of seeking asylum regardless of who it was from. It was not until I began feeling a shift of emotions about integration through my own feelings as well as through what I heard of the feelings other non-Finnish people I met in Finnish society had, along with becoming aware of the validity of these feelings, that I decided there is more to be said about asylum in Finland than what I had heard. For reasons which I will discuss in detail, my research question is

How do female Arabic asylum seekers navigate their feelings towards Finland?

In an effort to shed light on the demographic of women who rarely have the chance to represent themselves in Finnish media, in researching the way in which asylum seekers navigate their feelings, I acknowledge and give power to their emotions as valid and as existing due to sources outside of their bodies. When discussing "navigation," I imagine a ship which encounters obstacles in its path that it has to maneuver its way around. The same can be said about the interviewees in my research who are faced with different situations and have to decide on the best way to feel given all the available options of feelings they are presented with. As I

analyze their feelings, I believe my research will reduce the dualistic thinking the West has of Third World Women, specifically from the Middle East, as it presents not only the situations they are faced with, but how they feel towards these situations.

Western feminism has frequently been critiqued for its lack of inclusivity of Third World women's issues as feminist issues (see: Mohanty, 2004; Abu-Lughod, 1998 & Jacqui, 1997), this has increased lack of knowledge about Third World women in general. As Irene Gedalof explains, "while there is much Western feminist scholarship that takes the situation of women in non-Western contexts as its object of inquiry, there is still little that attends to the work of non-Western feminists in order to see how it changes, complicates or challenges the theoretical assumptions and models we work with" (1999, p.3.) In dismissing the work of non-Western feminists, the introduction of Third World women in the West has been limited to seeing them as subordinate and submissive as opposed to the backward and victimized look which was pressed upon them before their arrival in the West (Farris, 2017.) Maria Rosa Cutrufelli (1983) is one example of as a feminist who is vocal about her views on the oppression of women of Africa, in which she acknowledges that there are some initiatives that women do take in Africa, but that in the bigger picture they do not provide a larger sense of agency for women within the continent. Through this perception, Cutrufelli as a Western feminist contributes to the larger narrative of an either-or perception of Third World women. Implications of the dualistic thinking about Third World women can reduce the agency women have in discussing their own feelings from their personal standpoint, and so through shifting the focus point for my informants to talk about what they have been through and what they hope to achieve, the knowledge and narrative about Third World women will increase.

Through these observations and understandings of the outlook on Third World women in the West, I saw there is a lack of research on the feelings of women from the Middle East, and to quote Sara Ahmed's *The Politics of Emotion* (2014, 14) "I am tracking how words for feelings, and objects of feeling, circulate and generate effects: how they move, stick, and slide", and so, I am hoping to look at how the feelings of seeking asylum are expressed among those who seek asylum themselves and how they are able to discuss these feelings.

Feelings and expressions of feelings can originate from outside or inside bodies and can be good or bad, but as the interviews focus on issues of belonging and Otherness, the feelings which will be discussed are bad emotions. A feeling is a way of feeling emotions which are dependent on outside objects, whereas an emotion is a feeling of bodily change (Sara Ahmed, 2004.) A bad emotion might simply be explained in contrast to a "good" emotion, which is one that yields "good" perceived reactions and makes one feel good. (see: Aristotle, 2003; Ahmed, 2004; Darwin 1904.) Sara Ahmed's body of literature focuses on bad emotions and explains how it is seen as unproductive and unwanted to the point that specific bodies are seen as the origins of unproductive, unwanted bad feelings (Ahmed, 2004&2005.) And while this understanding is centered around the bodies who deem other bodies "bad", by looking at the bad feelings which these other bodies have, there becomes a pressing of bad feelings on the original bodies who make others' unwanted. The participants who I have interviewed have the bad feelings pressed upon them by Finnish authorities and are seen as the objects of "badness". But in interviewing them and seeing which feelings factually are produced by asylum seekers, I analyze the contradiction of how asylum seekers are perceived by outsiders versus how they actually perceive themselves.

I will firstly begin by situating my research and explaining what “feelings” are and how I find them in the interviews I conducted. I will then introduce my participants, how I came to meet them and the way in which our relationship built up to the point of conducting interviews with them. Afterwards I will analyze themes I found in my interviews, the similarities between them and how they relate to my understanding of feelings. My themes will center around the feeling of exhaustion, what influences it and how it affects the lives of the informants as it is the feeling felt most by my informants. I will afterwards discuss the indicators of Islamophobia from the situations encountered by the informants and how these situations leave feelings on the bodies which encounter them. Finally, I will introduce the framework of femonationalism, which is analyzed by Sara Farris (2017) through the outlook of European politicians towards Muslim men and women, but I will be explaining it through the feeling’s felt by my informants as Muslim Hijabi women residing in Finland. In the final discussion, I will be combining my understanding of these analysis and looking at what they say about the way Arabic women feel when they are seeking asylum in Finland.

Theoretical Background

My research is situated within post-colonial feminist theory. Post-colonial feminism is a critique and expansion that includes gender within post-colonial theory. A post-colonial approach deconstructs the narrative of Western superiority on the Global South and allows for a reconstruction of a narrative more representative to those who are non-Western. It focuses on the lives and experiences of Third World Women, but not without looking at how their identities are created by and through Western Feminists (Mohanty, 2004; p. 22.) When using the term “Western Feminists”, I reference Chandra Mohanty in *Under Western Eyes* (2004; p.18) in explaining that Western feminists are not a homogenous group, and that the critique of their practices is not a critique that applies to all of them. Rather, in using the term “Western Feminists”, she points to the strategies employed by writers, and to a certain extent activists, who create a binary which singles out other women, such as Third World Women, as non-Western. As with the definition of Western feminists being difficult to homogenize, Third World Women and their debates on feminism are difficult to constrain to one idea. While there are many ideas of race and sex among Third World Women, what unities us is our ways of thinking of race, gender and class, and how we relate them to each other (Mohanty, Russo & Torres, 1991.) This is not to say that there are not criticisms against the term “Third World Women”, as much of the literature by Mohanty (2003), Jacqui (1997), Nayaran (1997) discusses how there are differences within specific struggles of Third World women that push many women in the Third World not to identify as such. For example, I would be included in the category of Westernized feminists by virtue of where I received my education and what level of education I have achieved so far, but as I focus on the intersections of race, gender and class from a Third World Women’s perspective. In the case of my research, Western feminists are ones who teach, integrate, avoid

and represent women who are non-Western. They are the ones who mainly interact with my informants as well as with me. In the same sense, Mohanty argues that the creation of the group non-Western from a Western eye allows for the unification of the struggle of non-Westerners. In the discussion of the Arab world and the identity of Arabic and Muslim women, Mohanty concludes that through a Western feminist's research, "all Arab and Muslim women are seen to constitute a homogenous oppressed group... Their patriarchal family is carried over from the times of the prophet Muhammad. They exist outside history." (2004; p.28.) I find this to be an ideology worth looking into and in looking further into this narrative, we find that Arab and Muslim women's struggles are not unilateral, and neither are their experiences.

Through the field of feminist post-colonial studies, a new reality is constituted in which non-Western women are the ones who control how they are represented and what is represented of them. Specifically, I will be looking at the feelings of the post-colonial experience of women from Third World Countries. Post-coloniality alone focuses on post-colonial culture and the discourses created by the West or the post-colonial world itself. It is a field of study that looks at "the historical phenomenon of colonialism, with its range of material practices and effects, such as transportation, slavery, displacement, emigration, and racial and cultural discrimination" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1995; p.7.) It is important to research the experiences of Arab, Muslim women from an emotional perspective, and I find that the work of Nira Yuval-Davis elaborates on its importance eloquently. She discusses the constructions of contemporary citizenship and explains the complexities of 'earned citizenship' which is the citizenship acquired through proving the worthiness of receiving citizenship by "obeying the law and supporting themselves and the members of their family economically without any dependency on the welfare state, but also that they would be engaged in 'voluntary' public activities in

community or charitable organizations, whether or not they would have the necessary time or energy to spare!” (2011; p.59) Not all these requirements would be extended to receiving an asylum status, but most of them hold true (Hansen & Weil, 2001.) Looking at these points of difference is crucial to the way we understand how gender and borders shift the dynamics of discrimination Third World Women go through. In intersecting gender with a postcolonial approach, the dynamics of the relationship between and among genders shifts from one that compares the lives of Western and non-Western women to one which allows for the construction of a movement and a voice for non-Western women. One of the ways we create new truths and realities about non-Western women and post-colonial culture is through the study of feelings.

In my study of feelings, I find Sara Ahmed’s work to be a guide in navigating and analyzing the feelings my informants talk about. The understanding of emotions, feelings and affect is distinct; an emotion is a feeling of bodily change, a feeling is dependent on the object we have feelings for, and finally affect focuses on the impression made towards one’s feelings (Ahmed 2004, p.3-6.) One way of looking at the difference between each is to think of it as a process, one *becomes* emotional, *has* feelings, which *generate* affect. Simply put, one cannot have affect without having emotions and feelings. And while Sara Ahmed states that she uses emotions and feelings interchangeably (2004, p. 8), I find that emotions are the bases of feelings since they have to generate from within, unlike feelings which can generate from the outside. I focus on the middle of the process, which is feelings, since it does not depend on the inside but on the outside of one’s emotions. Through this definition, outside influences become a large factor determining one’s feelings. One’s feelings being dependent on external factors can result in bad feelings, which are feelings that are considered to be harmful rather than beneficial. Ahmed focuses on understanding how bad feelings move in the public sphere and how they can

be a gathering ground for collective unhappiness of Othered bodies (Ahmed, 2010.) She also discusses more in detail the way that feelings can move, in that they can move in an inside-out model. An inside-out model of emotions is one that is focused on emotions that are felt within the body and are then expressed through an outward display of emotions (Ahmed 2004, p.8.) This is in contrast to an outside-in model, which in turn suggests that feelings can exist within groups, making them homogenous and transferable. Ahmed notes in this explanation of the outside-in model that “it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and Others, that surfaces or boundaries are made” (2004; p.10.) Though Ahmed focuses on how emotions are transferable, such as through her example of “I feel sad, because you are sad” (2004; p.10), I will be focusing on one’s cause of one’s sadness as it relates to structures of racism, orientalism and sexism.

The feelings which will be focused on are embodied in Othered bodies, which signifies the importance of specifying why and how I understand, theorize and analyze what is being said to express one’s feelings, paying attention to specifically “bad” or “unhappy” feelings. To illustrate theoretically what bad and unhappy feelings do, I will contrast them with a good and happy feeling; love. Love is seen as a reasonable, generous feeling used to justify imperialism by white bodies against Othered bodies (Haritaworn, 2017), making those who display love as reasonable, generous people. As will be illustrated in my analysis, people who seek asylum are consistently expected to display rationality and generosity to the hosting country to be deemed integrated enough and worthy enough to remain in the country, they are expected to show love to the hosting country. But love is not a reasonable reactionary feeling when one is treated with violence, rage is. (Haritaworn, 2017.) And while violence is not the only way through which women who seek asylum are treated, it does occur regularly enough that the participants in my

research feel comfortable discussing its manifestations with me. As it is important to look at rage, it is also important to look at the feeling past rage; exhaustion. For me, and apparently for the participants in this research, exhaustion comes after rage, as an aftermath and a way for the body to process the rage it went through. But exhaustion does not originate by itself, it originates from other feelings, thoughts and actions which the body goes through until it has to shift from the point of rage to exhaustion. By focusing on post-colonial theory in exhaustion, I acknowledge that exhaustion operates from outside of the body yet remains within the body and affects how the body deals with the outside.

In focusing on post-colonial theory, it is important to acknowledge and discuss why I have not chosen decolonial theory or critical race studies instead. The origins of post-colonial theory derive from the work of diasporic scholars, such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak and focuses on the issues of the socio-economic and the material. Alongside that, it was developed in a specific geographical context which included the Middle East and South Asia. Postcolonial studies also differ from decolonial studies in that postcolonial studies mainly focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast, decolonial theory emerged by diasporic scholars in South America such as Maria Lugones and Anibal Quijano (2003 & 1991.) It historically focuses on the initial colonization of land by Europeans. Theoretically, postcolonial theory focuses on reinventing a narrative about Third World countries whereas decolonial theory focuses on analyzing the narrative of Third World countries to fit a modern ideal of civilization. Despite focusing on post-colonial theory in this research, decolonial bodies of literature is significant in understanding and contributing to the conversation on feelings and Othered bodies which I cannot disregard (see: Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2010; Zembylas, 2018; Snyman, 2015.) Critical race studies, on the other hand focuses on understandings of race and how it relates to

power and law while factoring in white supremacy as an upheld power structure which influences the relationship between law and racial power (see: Crenshaw, 1988 & 1994; Bell, 1995; Williams, 1995; Delgado, 2017; Jones, 2002; Matsuda, 2018.) Even though I do acknowledge the significance and contribution of critical race studies to my understanding of discrimination and race, I will approach my research from a post-colonial angle as it contributes most to the analysis of the participant's interviews.

Through my research, I will analyze the feelings which Arabic women go through as they seek asylum in Finland. My methodology to conduct this research is in-depth interviewing, which means that I will explore the emotional impact of texts provided by my informants. Ahmed, in the same book, writes about the “emotionality of texts” (2004; p.12) which is a close up of the figures of speech shown in texts and assist in expressing emotions and the way they generate. In “the emotionality of texts” Ahmed uses the example of the word ‘mourns’ and suggests the link it would have to other emotions such as love, anger or hatred. In the same sense, I find that attaching and linking the words of my informants to different emotions will benefit in “tracking how words for feeling, and objects of feeling, circulate and generate effects: how they move, stick and slide” (2004; p.14.)

A large emphasis on my research comes to the identity of the women I am interviewing. I am not only focusing on their gender but also on the intersection of their national and religious backgrounds. My informants have been dislocated due to war in the homeland and are Muslim women. When researching Muslim women in the EU, it is crucial to discuss how their religion can affect their agency, as is indicated by Catarina Kinnvall in *Globalisation, Diaspora Politics*

and Gender.³ Kinnvall stresses how “Muslim women are increasingly being caught in the middle as visible symbols of religious and national discourse” (2011. p.147) Their identity is molded in contrast to the identity of Western women. This is not to say that there aren’t any Muslim women who are Western, or Western women who have been dislocated, but that my informants identity is largely based on the dislocation that was forced on them because of their gender and religious background in their homeland, and by contrast, their identity is also formed through their gender and religious background in Finland. Their identity as Muslim brown dislocated women in Finland is viewed in contrast with the identity of white Finnish women. Western Women and Third World Women are created in contrast, with the Western Woman being modern, civilized, liberated, vocal and in control, while the Third World Woman being domestic, silenced, poor, uneducated and traditional (Mohanty, 2004: p.22.) This point of difference is constructed in the West, and occasionally in the Third World, which means that it affects the feelings of women who migrate from the Third World to the West such as in the case of my informants.

While I am focusing on the informant’s feelings as a reconstruction of truth, it is important to be reminded that their truth is not separate from the eyes of the West, and that much of their truth is also informed by the West. This becomes an issue when trying to look at research from a post-colonial perspective as it is not possible to disregard all the narratives of the West when the position of the informants and the research is in the West. Thus, post-colonial feminist theory will allow me to see my informants for who they are without neglecting that who they are is largely defined by who is looking at them in the West. What is meant by the West in this research is the discourse, character and understanding of the idea of the West as a construct

³ This article comes in a series of articles grouped in the book “Gender Equality, Citizenship and Human Rights” by Stoltz, Svensson, Sun and Wang. (2011)

creating in contrast with the Other (Hall, 1992.) While it does not define all bodies based on how they look at them, it does define bodies which are Othered, since this is the method in which the West is created. The idea of understanding that the perception of my participants, whose bodies are Othered, of themselves is informed by who is looking at them can be traced to Du Bois (1903) in his essay on double-consciousness. On the one hand there is urgency to escape the hatred white people have for Black men and on the other hand, there is an instinct which pushes them to fit in with the white people.

As both my informants are Arabic Muslim women, their identities are up for a Western-wide debate (see Delphy 2014; Mohanty 2007; Farris 2017.) A large part of that debate is the extent to which they are allowed to practice and represent their religion freely, which is usually grounds for publicizing their private choices, such as the choice to wear the Hijab. This oppression manifests itself as Islamophobia, which is a concept I will focus on discussing from my informants' point of view.

Displaced Iraqi Women

Women in the Global South have been historically forced to flee to the West for a wide variety of reasons. Whether it be in escape from the West or escape to the West, the relationship between displaced women and the West is a complicated one. A displaced woman is one whose identity of being displaced is one which others define her by, given a set of conditions which may include displacement within the country of conflict, otherwise known as internally displaced women, or outside the country of conflict, also known as refugees (Giles, 2013.) The external displacement of women accounts to half of the total displacement of people (UNHCR, 2009 p.3) and part of that half includes the women interviewed for this research. Yet the women who are interviewed are not refugees but asylum seekers. The difference here relies on the legal status the

displaced individuals have in the country they fled to. As the women have not yet obtained their status as refugees in Finland, they are still seeking asylum, hence the term asylum seekers (Giles, 2013.)

The decision to flee a country can be a quick decision for women comprising of multiple different factors, as they are sometimes not only responsible for themselves but for their children and/or their elderly family members. This is the case for my participants in this research, one of them is a mother who witnessed the dangers of remaining in Iraq on her children and the other is one of the children who witnessed the dangers directly at school and in public. And they will make clear in the analysis section the effects of displacement in Iraq along with the countries they fled to, I will provide a brief history and clarification on the Iraqi war and how difficult it can be to only view it from one perspective, further supporting the decision to focus my research on the participant's feelings towards Finland.

After the 1991 war between Afghanistan and the United States (U.S.) ended, the movement of "war against terrorism" began against Iraq by the U.S. The reason why Iraq was the prime target for this war having to do with the U.S.'s inability to entirely defeat Iraq in the Gulf war along with the religious tension between Sunnis and Shi'is which was otherwise seen by the U.S. as 'terrorism'. (Nakash, 2003.) The focus on Iraq by the U.S. increased tension for Saddam Husayn, the leader of Iraq at the time, and as he is Shi'i⁴, the urge to rule and regulate Iraqis grew into violence at the state as well as individual level. Beginning between 2006 and 2007, the tension between Shi'ite and Sunni⁵ communities in Iraq led to violence and death of civilians

⁴ Shi'i's formed a majority in Iraq which was controlled by Sunnis who overwhelmingly controlled most of the Arab World.

⁵ Sunnis controlled most of the Arab World, and as a minority they began being on the receiving end of hatred and disdain by Shi'is who sought control as they outnumbered Sunnis.

(UNHCR, 2009) which have then forced some of them, including the informants for this research, to flee Iraq. And while there have been developments since the war erupted in Iraq, the lives of my informants have moved slowly since their displacement.

The updates which have taken place since the Iraqi war within Iraq can be heard about in news and scholarly work since the early 2000's but for those who have had to flee, the developments of their lives pass at an alarmingly slow rate (Giles, 2013) and a downside of having less updates to speak about for displaced women becoming less important. When one becomes less important, it is expected that when they speak of their updates, they speak of them happily; including talking about their updates and what they have gained out of displacement. This happy feedback will not contribute to the wellness of displaced women, but to the wellness of who hears about displaced women. And so, in talking about unhappiness, more attention is centered on "how we immerse ourselves in collective struggle, as we work with and through others who share our points of alienation. Those who are unseated by the tables of happiness can find each other" (Ahmed, 2012.)

As such, talking about unhappy experiences which lead to unhappy feelings, not only does it provide my research with an analysis of how bad feelings are navigated to bring the discussion of the well-being of asylum seekers in Finland to academia, but it also helps women who are going through the process of seeking asylum and feel unhappiness due to their displacement find collectivity in their unhappy feelings.

Methods

Through connections in my master's program, I was recommended an organization which would be a good option for my research. It is an organization which supposedly serves as a safe space for women who are at different stages of asylum. What is meant by safe space in this context is a physical space where the women are encouraged to discuss their feelings towards seeking asylum in Finland, they are not scolded or attacked when they do, and are exclusively surrounded by women for the most part⁶.

When researching for and with asylum seekers and migrants in the European Union (EU), it is important to specify which category is being discussed and what regulations they encounter when they enter the EU. As Wuokko Knocke points out in "Migrant and Ethnic Minority Women"⁷ the definitions by which migrants are constrained are determined by 'host' countries as a power play, since "it socially defines and situates powerless groups in society" (2000: p. 140.) For example, while my informants are non-EU nationals like myself, the civil, social, and political rights we receive from the government and the policies we follow differ drastically. In the same article, Knocke references that EUROSTAT, a service that collects data, divides foreigners into nationals and non-nationals. A further division, however, places foreigners into five groups which include refugees and asylum seekers, such as my informants, and EU migrants/ immigrants, such as myself. This division means that, for instance, the restrictions on travel and work within the EU, as well as the limitation of social benefits received by the state (2000; pp.141-142.) This is important to clarify where my informants are placed in

⁶ There is one Arabic translator who is a man that I am aware of.

⁷ The article is in a selection of articles collected in a book titled "Gender and Citizenship in Transition" (Barbara Hobson, 2000.)

the proximity of the state since a large amount of the decisions which affect their lives comes from that proximity.

In terms of the organization, it had been a governmentally funded hub for asylum seekers and their children while they awaited their decisions on their ability to stay legally in Finland. Only last year did the space transfer into a recognized organization which is externally funded. The organization assists with child-care through volunteers who care for the children and play with them. It also offers Finnish language courses to Arabic and Kurdish speaking women and the Finnish language is encouraged to practice during the events and social gatherings held by the organization. To a certain degree⁸, there is legal assistance to women who are going through the process of seeking asylum through reviewing immigration applications. Finally, they participate in craftivism events, during which they may pick a specific craft to work on or sit and talk with the other participants in the organization. Through these craftivism gatherings I met my informants and found out the history and purposes of the organization. From my interaction with the organization, I found that it is mainly led by Finnish women but targets women from Arabic and Kurdish backgrounds as it includes Finnish language courses by instructors who speak both languages.

Prior to meeting some of the participants, I emailed the organizers to give a brief introduction about my research as well as the demographic of women I am hoping to interview, which is Arabic women who are in the process of obtaining their residence permit in Finland. I was flexible on the age group, marital status and national background since I was not sure which women would be comfortable sharing their feelings with me. After being advised to attend a group craftivism event where the participants gather every week to work on a craft and have

⁸ From the information gathered by my informants, the legal assistance is very limited and confined to verbal advice

discussions in regard to seeking residence in Finland, I attended my first craftivism event on the 20th of November 2018. Communication between us was in Arabic as most of the participant's native language is Arabic. I had attempted to communicate in English with the participants at the first event I attended but found that Arabic was more understood, even by Kurdish-speaking participants. This also meant that the interviews were conducted in Arabic, then transcribed and translated to English. Initially, I planned on only including the English translation of the interviews, but after reflection on the importance of remaining true to the interviewees and the information they provided me with, I decided to add the original text first and then translate it in English.

At my first encounter with the organization, I found that I would need to work on building trust by keeping my life and feelings about Finland known to them as I saw they were not open to having discussions with me or asking more about my background. Their level of familiarity with me was important to increase the level of comfort for my informants to talk about their feelings, so I focused on investing time and energy towards making them as comfortable as I could. This is a point which is noted in a weekly journal I kept throughout the process of collecting data. Keeping a weekly journal has been researched to promote reflexivity and understanding to the researcher along with, I have found, helping understand the researched participants. (Borg, 2001) To promote more understanding of the encounters the participants and I have with each other, I shared some of my personal history prior to coming to Finland, the experiences I encountered since my arrival, and the evolution of my feelings towards Finland.

I arrived to Finland initially as a tourist over the summer of 2016, then again as an international student in the Spring of 2017 to pursue a gender studies international master's degree. Between the year of 2016 and 2017, regulation on residence permits and their

requirements changed drastically. From a once tuition-free education, the fee had risen up to 10,000 Euros an academic year⁹, an amount not readily available for non-European students to pay. This affected the percentage of international degree-seeking students who accepted the offer to study in Finland. I found that I was alone in my program, with the exception of a student from the European Union who was doing the same master's program alongside a PhD in a different field. I invested months in finding social circles and events where international students like myself existed without succeeding. I eventually began to compare my experience with the research on the happiness of migrants in Finland¹⁰ I continue to read about. This happened at the same time that I began getting to know other international students who had similar experiences to mine.

I shared with the participants who attended the craftivism event my educational background and the context in which I had come to Finland in 2017, as a student from Egypt. This information prompted them to see me in a specific light, which may have affected the answers I received from my informants as well as from the other women I got to know at the organization. In an effort to understand how this affects my research, I situate myself as a “halfie” researcher¹¹, one “whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, parentage” (Abu Lughod, 1991: p. 137.) As I spent the duration of my undergraduate degree in the United States and continued my education in Finland, I am not considered fully Arabic or fully Western. My identity is one of a researcher who identifies as a

⁹ Added to the annually required 6,720 euros for personal expenses

¹⁰ Helliwell, John F., Huang, H., Wang, S. & Shiplett, H. (2018) ranked Finland as the happiest country in the world for international migrants in the World Happiness Report.

¹¹ This is also important in discussing the dynamics of the relationship I had with the managers of the organization. In the four times I attended the craftivism event, my identity shifted between being an Arab woman in Finland (read: a refugee), the organizers began speaking to me in Finnish on multiple occasions, a practice done with the participants in the organization to get them accustomed to speaking Finnish.

woman of color from Egypt discussing my research with an academic, white, European audience and researching people from the Arabic community. It is also worth noting that I do not identify as Muslim even though through my background and my name, most people make this assumption.

My identity may have shifted the findings as well the questions raised in my interviews. It may have been the case that my informants associated me more with being Americanized because of the level of education I have received generally and where I received it specifically. I became aware of this as I began interacting with the participants at the craftivism event and shared with them my background of arriving to Finland as a student, not an asylum seeker. I was reminded that “sharing the same background as the participants does not necessarily make the researcher more knowledgeable about the meanings of the participants’ feelings, values and practices” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993: p. 391.) Even though I am an Arabic woman who relocated to the West, I never sought an asylum in the countries I entered or was forced to flee my home country, which makes my informants experiences different than mine and therefore makes me different from them. It is also important to discuss being introduced to the informants through the Finnish organizers, which could have led the informants to assume that I will be gathering information that would be in the best interest of the organizers. Alternatively, if I had met the informants first before the organizers, our relationship would have been much more trusting and open. I also communicated with the organizers in American English initially, a language and accent that they did not understand but can recognize, making the first impression of myself to the informants one that is unfamiliar to them.

After approximately meeting different women twice at the craftivism event, I met a mother, Amal, and her daughter, Rana¹², who seemed open about their feelings about seeking asylum in Finland as well as their journey of arriving to Finland. I had planned to interview three women, but after familiarizing myself more with the lives of Amal and Rana, I found that it would be more beneficial to the consistency of my analysis to only interview two women. Amal and Rana are from an Arab country and fled in 2006, making their way to Syria then Turkey and, eventually, Finland. While they have been in Finland for three years, they did move from a different city to the one where we met, which is their current city and the one where they found the organization, we got to know each other through. To protect their personal information, I did not ask about their ages but instead learned that their age range would be 50-70 and 15-25, respectively. They are both practicing Muslim women who wear the Hijab. The daughter was outgoing and very talkative in the organization while the mother was slightly more reserved and focused on working on a craft. The mother, however, expressed excitement when offered a nickname for my research. After some thought, she decided on the name “Amal” which means “hope” in Arabic. I was introduced to them through another participant in the organization and we discussed in a large group about being Arabic in Finland. The second time I met them, I privately asked if they would consider joining my research as interviewees. I would also like to note that I kept journals of the first two encounters with the participants, which I will be referencing, before beginning the interviews. I drafted consent statements and forms in English entailing the rights participants have and the details of the research, which I also translated to Arabic to hand out to my participants. A copy of the forms remained with the researcher and a

¹² The informant’s real names have been concealed to protect their identities, instead they picked nicknames to use in this research.

copy remained with each of the participants. I will discuss the issues of confidentiality more thoroughly in the upcoming subsection (2.2.)

In the consent forms, we agreed to have two interviews, one with each of the interviewees, during which I would ask them to discuss their emotional and personal feelings towards Finland. The nature of the questions were open-ended and were mostly dependent on how the conversation went. Some examples of the questions are:

Can you tell me about yourself?

How do you see your life in Finland?

How was life like in your home country?

This form of interviewing is best known as in-depth interviewing, while I did meet with them for the interviews once I did gather sensitive information about their feelings and their experiences in Finland. Johnson (2001) elaborates on how in-depth interviewing focuses on information which is “very personal... such as individual’s self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge, or perspective.” While I had a group of questions including the examples I included above written before I conducted the interviews, I found that I had to shift my questions to gain a better body of data. This shift in my questions depended on points that my interviewees wanted to talk more about, or words I felt needed to be explained. I saw it as a way to give my informants more control over the interview. The questions I asked focused on looking at the informants’ home country and their feelings towards it, then reflecting on Finland and their emotions towards it and finally, how their feelings changed and evolved as they began their journey to make Finland a home. These questions pertained to the comfort and convenience of the participants to allow them to discuss the situations they felt comfortable sharing.

First, I will be introducing my theoretical basis for this research and then I will be using excerpts from the interviews I had with Rana and Amal to discuss the existence of an Islamophobic agenda towards Arabic women in Finland. I will follow that with an analysis of the complexities of oppression that Arabic women have from Finnish women under the name of femonationalism, the effect this has on the feelings of the asylum process as well as the well-being of the women in general. Finally, how these experiences can shift the discussion of asylum seeker's agency in Finland.

Ethics and Ethical Discussion

While there is a continuous discussion about the ethics of collecting data throughout my thesis, it is important to explain how ethical practice within my research allows me to share some information while concealing other. The nature of interviewing has to be dealt with sensitively in terms of choices on storage, deletion, usage and publicity. And while I did inform my participants about their rights of contribution as well as withdrawal of information, I still found there would be more issues after collecting data and through that, I decided that the most ethical decision to make is to destroy the interviews, both recorded and transcribed, after submitting my thesis for evaluation. But I will firstly explain the ways I have collected and transcribed the interviews, then move on to other ethical implications and how I address them.

As I have recorded interviews without a recorder but with a cell phone, I decided to record on my laptop for assurance of being able to transcribe all the interviews. I informed my participants first about when I will begin recording and again when I actually began recording. The interviews were only heard by the me. And while I did require help in understanding Iraqi filler-words as a result of having a different dialect, I only asked acquaintances about the meaning of a specific word without providing context (for example; the word “ماكو” pronounced

as “Makou” is unfamiliar in Egyptian Arabic speakers but is common in Iraqi and Syrian Arabic speakers.)

The interviews themselves also require a great deal of consideration and discussion in terms of ethical practices. A large body of research on interviewing as ethical practice and power structures which exist within interviewing exists (see: Patai, 1994 & 2016; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Mullings, 1999), specifically pertaining to interviewing Third World women (Patai, 1994.) But as I am a Third World woman who has been educated in the United States and continues to be educated in Finland, the set of ethical consideration I need to take into account are different.

I do not speak fluent Arabic, specifically in Iraqi dialect, and that can place me as an outsider to Arab culture. An aspect of the ethical dilemma lies on my Westernized identity which allows me to be viewed as a person trustworthy and educated enough to conduct research, let alone actually be on the receiving end of data about my research through the participants in the organization. And while my Westernization might have had a good effect on allowing me to do interviews, it does not necessarily place me as trustworthy for the women I am interviewing. Scheyvens and Leslie (2000) researched the ethical implications of being an outsider interviewing Third World Women and how important it is to consider every move before, during and after meeting the participants. The participants in this research demonstrated the relief of being reaffirmed of their importance in conducting significant research, something that I also practiced with my research participants as well but was unaware of its commonness among gathering data about Third World women. I also reassured them that they do not have to answer any specific questions and began my interview by simply asking them to tell me about themselves, in doing so I attempted to give them the agency in choosing which parts of their lives they felt comfortable discussing and which parts they would rather avoid.

Going now in the discussion of data collection through storytelling, otherwise known as in-depth interviewing, there is much ethical complication when asking a person who has been through trauma to recount it. I do ask my participants about experiences which occurred to them in the past, which deals with the construction of people's memories. As it is important to note the ethical complication this puts on the participant who is recollecting the memories since they are constructed based on their truth, their truth remains a way in which they prioritize the importance of the experiences they encounter as well as their perception of those encounters (Sangster, 1994.)

On Arabic Interviews, Transcription and Translation

As indicated above, my communication with the participants, and so my informants, in the organization was in Arabic. This meant that our interviews were also in Arabic, which left me to be in control of the process of transcription and translation. Because of the wide range of dialects within the Arabic world, including the difference between Egyptian Arabic dialect and Iraqi Arabic dialect, I had to take into consideration the emotional weight of words which I am translating and be as truthful as I am able to be to those emotions. Considering that, I made the decision to include the original interviews before translating them to English. I am also an Egyptian Arabic speaker, and as Egyptian Arabic is the most popular dialect in the Arab world, this privileges me to be understood by all other Arabic dialects without the need for me to understand them. This influenced my understanding of the Iraqi Arabic which my informants were using and made it difficult for me to fully grasp some filler words in the interviews. Having worked and communicated with my informants as well as other women at the organization, I have become more familiar with Iraqi dialect.

Building on Pirjo Nikander (2008), I also found that including the original language in research can disrupt the European culture of encoding ideas which are organized from top to bottom and left to right. The Arabic letters are written from right to left, opposite to that of English, which allow the readers to notice the difference between reading English and Arabic. I, therefore, decided to include the original text in every part I analyze from my data.

Exhaustion

I start my analysis by looking at exhaustion, which I suggest can be a form of hatred and exclusion of bodies through Sara Ahmed's (2004) exploration of emotions. Ahmed explains the feeling of exhaustion within feminism as that of being "heavy, slow, down and brown" (2017, p.146), but as Ahmed discusses, the shape that bodies take is dependent on the contact they have with object and others (2004, p.1) and while isolated incidents of exhaustion can be difficult to put into pattern, Egharevba suggests that "considerable weight must be given to the victim's opinion, which can lead to a subjective conclusion" (2002, p.76.) This explanation maps my analysis of the feelings of exhaustion Rana and Amal have. As I am using post-colonial theory in my understanding of exhaustion, I will be analyzing how my informants feel as a reality of their experiences and I will then use that reality to understand how Rana and Amal show exhaustion as a way of reacting towards Finland.

During the interviews with Rana and Amal, I found that the ways exhaustion is defined, the bodies it was shown on and how it was displayed were different, which prompts me to separate the analysis of those parts of the interviews from each other. I will begin by looking at Rana's experiences of exhaustion, how she discusses and expresses it, and more importantly, how she reacts to being excluded from Finnish society through exhaustion. After looking at the meaning behind exhaustion in Amal's life as well, I will discuss how the origins of this feeling affect the way Rana and Amal navigate their feelings in Finland.

Establishing a Base

When I arrived at the organization on 18th of December around 14:00, I greeted Rana and Amal who were sitting in the children's area talking with other women at the organization. After fetching some coffee, I asked them if they were ready for the interviews and if so, who would

like to be interviewed first. Rana agreed to be interviewed first and suggested having her mother, Amal, come along. We sat in one of the lounge rooms towards the back of the organization space. I sat on a long sofa while Rana sat across from me in an armchair and Amal sat on my left in another arm chair. I set up my laptop and phone recorders, handed them the consent statement and form to be filled out, then notified them once both recorders started.

The first question I asked “tell me about yourself” was broad to set the tone for our conversation. My aim was to give space to Rana and Amal in which they can tell about themselves from the point they preferred. Both seemed to have an answer which describes their method of arriving to Finland ready, which is not an answer that would pertain to their personality, but one which focused on information that would be vital to me as a researcher. In the events where my informants engaged with the organization, this had been the expected response from them and so I found this to be a common theme of some answers that Rana and Amal gave, as it took a while for me to be able to successfully communicate that I was not only interested in their journey to Finland but in how they felt about it and in their wellbeing throughout it.

Exhaustion in Rana’s Journey

Rana began talking about her life when I asked her the first question “tell me about yourself”. Her decision to answer my question only pertaining to legal issues could be a possible consequence of being a “halfie” researcher, which might have made Rana feel that I am not invested in her personal background but her political existence in Finland since I am only there to gather information.

In the first ten minutes of our conversation, Rana told me that because she was very young when she was in Iraq, she does not remember much of her time there. She was born in

Iraq but did not consider it home, whereas Syria is the place where she began identifying her place within her surroundings. She added that she understood there were problems in the country, but not necessarily how they affected her life. Instead, Rana discussed her journey in Syria and then in Finland and repeatedly expressed the toll this journey had on her. She initially began by indicating that she was old enough to be conscious when she left from Syria, then began vocalizing how this journey affected her. First by explaining how she felt in Syria:

رنا: الوضع تعب كثير. انا بطلت مدرسة, ما قدرت اكمل

The English translation to this is as follows:

Rana: The situation was very tiring. I stopped school, I could not continue.

Rana elaborated that her exhaustion was rooted in the feeling of not belonging, both legally and socially. She explained that since her family fled Iraq quickly, she had no documents to show her Iraqi citizenship which made it difficult for her to enroll in school. She also expressed how the difference between Syrian and Iraqi dialect made it difficult for her to socialize among peers at school once she was able to enroll. She continued talking about her personal struggles in Syria:

كان كثير صعب على بالبداية انو اتأقلم ويا بنات سوريا و هما كان عندهم نظرية انو نحنا ايجينا على بلدهم و انو اخدنا من بلدهم فكان كثير انو انزعج انو ياخذون ب نظرة "العراق اجو اخدو بلدهم " فكان انو مو كثير منيحة حياتي بسوريا. فأنا كثير تعبت بسوريا لأن من اول ما بدأت ما قدرت اداومهم

It was very difficult to adjust among Syrian girls and they had the outlook that we came to their country and took from their country. So it bothered me a lot that they had an outlook that Iraq had invaded them..... it was not very nice, my life in Syria, so I became very tired in Syria from the beginning because I could not socialize with them.

This passage not only discusses her discomfort with being viewed as an outsider but being emotionally tired from the lack of inclusion and acceptance she hoped to experience in Syria. In a way, this lack of inclusion and acceptance is experienced as pain and rejection. According to Sara Ahmed, pain is not only a self-evident experience, it is an association between sensations and other states (2004, p.23.) In Rana's words, the association is between tiredness and socialization from being excluded by others. This point is also discussed by Ahmed when she

states that “hate is involved in the negotiation of boundaries between selves and others, and between communities, where ‘others’ are brought into the sphere of my or our existence as a threat.” (2004, p.51.) She explains that this threat is felt by the other through their “pressing” against the self. I find that Rana’s understanding of how Syrians rejected her is through the pressing against her as well as the Syrian girls turning towards themselves.

She also discussed the feeling of not belonging in the country, bearing in mind that Syrians and Iraqis both speak Arabic in different dialects, less different than that between the Egyptian Arabic dialect and the Iraqi Arabic dialect. She then spoke about the same feeling when she arrived to Finland:

بس كثير تعبنا من البداية و لان اخادنا رفض الاول و لما اخدنا رفض كثير صار عندنا كعائلة انا تعبنا و صار عندنا قلق، تفكيرو انا بطلت مدرسة و رحنا على مدرسة لغة، تعلمت اللغة الفنلندية فلما صار انو اخدت رفض بطلت، قعدت بالبيت سنة كاملة. يعني ابتعدت عن الناس و عن الدراسة كثير، ما كنت اتقرب على احد. فصار كثير انو حالتي النفسية تعبت، انو حتى بالبيت، ما اتكلم مع احد، يعني كثير كثير تعبت لدرجة انو... يعني الحياة طلعت من عيني

We were very tired from the beginning and because we received a rejection initially, we as a family became exhausted and concerned. Overthinking. I stopped school. I went to a school, to learn the Finnish language, so when we received the rejection, I stopped. I stayed at home for a whole year. I mean, I distanced myself from people and from studies a lot. I would not get close to anyone, so I was so psychologically exhausted that even at home I am not talking to anyone. I was very very tired to the point that, I mean, I mean life had left my eye.

The same point of association between exhaustion and other states is reiterated in this text, only now Rana is also pressing against the bodies that rejected her and turning towards herself by being alone and distancing herself from others. Rana understood many things about social location in Finland, not only that she was distressed from the point of her departure from Syria, but that a large aspect behind her distress is the rejection of her residence permit. Rana seemed eager to understand Finnish and to belong in the society, but after receiving a rejection for her residence permit, this hindered her desire to continue attempting to socialize for some time. At this point, Rana decided to completely disengage from the Finnish society and preferred

to be at home. This leaves much to be said about the level of rejection felt by Rana and the way that Rana dealt with this rejection. Sara Ahmed (2010)¹³ shows how integration of Othered bodies becomes a way of survival, and in building on this idea, Rana's refusal to integrate into Finnish society by staying at home would be a way of refusing to survive in Finland. While this might have seemed to Rana to be an apolitical act within Finnish society, this can be seen as a display of ungratefulness towards the hosting country. In Rana's decision to navigate her feelings of rejection by Finland, she is therefore seen by the Finnish society as an ungrateful migrant.

After taking some time to herself, Rana attempted to go back to learning Finnish and socializing:

رجعت اخطلت بالناس و عم اروح عالمدرسة و عم اتعلم شوى شى لغة بس كداخل ما مرتاحة بقلق, تفكيري و ضغط صار من كل النواحي. ماكو استقرار. كحالة نفسية, ابد مو مرتاحة. العقل دائما مشوش. النوم ماكو زين, من كل النواحي تعبنا

I returned to mingling with people and I went to the school and learned some language but regardless, on the inside I am not comfortable. Anxiousness, overthinking and pressure came from all corners. There's no stability. Psychologically I was definitely not comfortable. My mind is always interrupted. Not sleeping well, I mean from all aspects I'm tired.

In Rana's life, stability and comfort go hand in hand. As she recognizes anxiety, overthinking and pressure, she understands that it is rooted in a feeling of discomfort and tiredness. This is an alternative way in which Rana talks about how she dealt with exhaustion. Rather than disengaging with society, Rana decided that losing sleep and living with the awareness of the anxiety would be a better choice. While this feelings and acts are only felt within Rana, they nonetheless express a way of navigating feelings towards Finland. She continued to explain what caused her to feel this way:

اريد انو اوصل لمرحلة انو استقر, انو بصير الى حياة, الى هدف, الى انو اعرف شو اسوي. يعنى هنا بفلاندا واقفة على كل شى (...).
تحسين ان كل هدفك صار اقامة. فا هادا كتير ياتر على حياتنا

I mean my goal is to reach a level of stability, to have MY life, MY goals, to know what I am doing. Not here in Finland waiting on everything (...) You feel that all your goals have become residency, so this affects us a lot.

¹³ The Promise of Happiness, Sara Ahmed. P. 122.

In this continuation, Rana gives origin to the lack of stability she is feeling. Not only lack of stability, but lack of agency which is demonstrated in her emphasis on the word “my” which she reiterates twice in speaking about her life and her goals. This explanation provided by Rana shows that the exhaustion she felt is not rooted in her past experience outside of Finland, rather occurred after she arrived to Finland. Rana also speaks to the domino effect the residence permit grants in Finland, as once she is able to obtain residency, she will be able to focus on her life and goals, something she is unable to do now.

While Rana does not explicitly express exhaustion as being a part of the domino effect, she does speak about how residency becoming all her goals affects her. In Rana’s inability to receive her residency, there are many restrictions to how she is able to express her feelings to Finland, as well as the spaces where she is able to experience Finland. While she tells me about the instances of trial and failure in integration with Finland, I find that there is no option for her to navigate her feelings towards Finland in one way, as she does not even spend much time telling me about the “bad” feelings she has towards Finland for rejecting her and chooses to move on with telling me the rest of her story.

Exhaustion in Amal

As indicated in the methods section, Amal is Rana’s mother and the age difference between them is at least 20 years. Hence, Amal grew up and remembers a life before being dislocated to Syria and Finland. I began my interview with Amal with the same question, “tell me about yourself?”. She began by telling me about her life there:

كنا عايشين بالعراق. الحمد لله كنا مبصوتين. ابوهم كان يروح الشغل بالصبح

Amal: we were living in Iraq. Thank God, we were happy. Their father work in the morning, he would leave and come back... nothing was up.

Amal told me about her relationship with her mother and siblings when she was young, and how she lived a happy life in Iraq before the war began. She had married young and loved

her husband dearly, a point which she could not contain herself from smiling about. Her smile then disappeared when she began telling about the introduction of terrorism to her life. It was through her husband and children that she found out that the danger of terrorism would not skip her. She talked about the fear she felt when her husband left in the morning for work without knowing if he will return. The situation deteriorated when her son and daughter returned from school claiming that a veiled¹⁴ man came to the school and instructed them to stop attending. Worried about her children's education, Amal decided to escort her children to school. After a few days passed, Amal became more fearful for her family and her own future in the country. She lived amidst constant explosions and massacres, both of which her son was a victim of but luckily, survived through. At this point, Amal expressed how she felt about Iraq:

*كل يوم انفجارات و قتل و نهب لما هيك صار ما تريديين هالبلد. هادا بلدنا بس من الدبح و القتل
Every day there is an explosion and killings and stealing until you do not want this country. This
is our country but due to the massacres and killings...(sigh)*

The distress felt by Amal in Iraq had reached a point of rejection of her nation. She had considered herself Iraqi even when extremists were instructing her children to cease attending school. Yet as the situation became more constant, Amal detached from being Iraqi to a point of not wanting the country as a result of Iraq being attached to the pain that Amal felt. Ahmed (2004) explains that pain appears as it occurs in relationship to others who authenticate it and witness it, those being Amal and her family. In the same chapter, Ahmed also adds that “pain is not simply an effect of a history of harm; it is the *bodily life of that history*” (2004, p.34.) The life of that history then becomes inseparable from the country, making it unwanted by the bodies that feel the pain. The response Amal's family had to that not wanting Iraq was fleeing it.

¹⁴ The veil in this context is a covering of the entire body except the head, a known outfit for men who are religiously extremist.

In the middle of the night, not to far after the incidents which injured Amal's son, the family fled the country for Syria, which was not very welcoming to them:

"أبسط شئ تطلعين برة البيت يتفرجون عليك "هادول عراقيين
The simplest thing, you leave the home and people look at you like "these are Iraqis".

Amal's perception of how Syrians saw her is similar to that of Rana's, but as Amal has a family to provide for, she was unable to turn away from Syrians the same way Rana did. Amal continued talking about how Syria made her feel:

آخر شئ, هيك انقر فنا من سوريا. كان امان و ما فى شئ, بعدين صار حتى الخبز ما تقدر ناخده. يعنى هيك اللي عنده واسطة
بيروح يشتري و بجى
Finally, we got disgusted from Syria. It was safe with nothing happening, then all of a sudden you could not even get bread. Those with connections can go buy it.

Disgust is a separate feeling from exhaustion. It does not only make us see objects as bad but sees their badness as an inherent quality that is involuntary (Ahmed 2004, pp. 83-84.) To see Syria turn from a place worth fleeing to, to a disgusting place is equivalent of how Ahmed explains the different pulling of disgust and desire. "Disgust pulls us away from the object, a pulling that feels almost involuntary, as if our bodies were thinking for us, on behalf of us. In contrast, desire pulls us towards objects, and opens us up to the bodies of others" (2004, p. 84.) The orientation of disgust in Amal's words is towards Syria, which had not welcomed them from the beginning, but steadily gave them less to want there. However, the orientation of desire was not in longing of Iraq, but of Finland, as Amal describes it:

قال خلى نطلع. أى بلد؟ قالوا فنلندا تعطى حقوق و تعطى اقامة و تعطى راحة و كل شئ. (...) يعنى يحبوا اللاجئين (...) اتبهلانا
بالطريق, نمنا بالشوارع. يومين نمنا بالراصيف. بهللة. الحمد لله اننا وصلنا هونا
We said let's leave. Which country is good? They said Finland gives rights and residency and comfort and everything. (...) I mean, they love asylum seekers. (...) We were destroyed in the journey, we slept on the streets. Two days we slept by the sidewalk. We were destroyed. Thank God we made it here.

Amal and her family's desire towards Finland is for two reasons which she states. Firstly, she was notified that Finland gives rights, residency and comfort among other things. She was also told that love is something that is given to asylum seekers in Finland. Under those terms, the

family decided that the disgust, whether it is oriented towards Syria or towards the journey to Finland is worth enduring to reach the desired Finland. At that point, Amal and her family literally and emotionally navigated their way towards Finland as a place that is worth enduring disgust and destruction over to reach the point of being desired in the desired Finland. Whether or not Finland communicated the same desire back in the bodies of the asylum seekers was not a point which concerned Amal until they received the rejection for their residency permits, which we discussed twice throughout our interview:

First at the beginning of the interview:

إنهارينا كلنا, كلنا. (...) قالوا "هاى نقلة و هاى رفض" انا فاقدة الوعي

We all collapsed, all of us. (...) They told us "here is a transfer and here is the rejection" I fainted.

And again halfway through:

نحننا كنا ورا الرفض, كنا ما نروح عالمدرسة. خرب مزاجنة. ما نريد نطلع برة. انا يمكن شهر ما طلعت برة. انسودت الدنيا
يعينى

When we received a rejection, we stopped going to Finnish school. It ruined our mood. We did not want to go outside. I spent maybe a month without going outside. Life was dark in my eyes.

This reaction comes after Amal and her family had moved to Finland and received the rejection of their residency while staying in a refugee camp. After being rejected, the police notified them that they will be transferred to another city as they cannot stay in the same city after being rejected. The two passages I included above seem to be the only times when Amal openly expresses her exhaustion in front of her family. Firstly through being unconscious after receiving the rejection, which is a bodily reaction which she has no control over, and then through staying at home and rejecting being integrated in Finland for a month, a reaction which Rana also had after receiving the same rejection, only Rana stayed at home for an entire year. While Amal stayed at home for a shorter period than Rana, possibly as a result of having the

responsibility of being one of the heads of the household, I see it bearing the same weight as Rana's refusal to survive in Finland after being rejected by it.

Otherwise, Amal's demonstration of exhaustion was in how she saw her children's future crumbling and how she tries to maintain an optimistic face for them:

القلق، صح انا ما ابين قدامك انا اضحك و اروح و اجى بس قلق. يعنى مستقبلهم راح. (...صح اروح و نجى بس مستقبل مجهول. صح انا هالاء امان، فى كهربية، فى مى. هيك ننام و نفيق، بس ما فى راحة نفسيتنا تعبانا كثير. انا هالاء بالبيت بصير كنى صغيرة. اضحك معهم و اجى بس جواية محترقة

I'm anxious, even though I do not show this. I laugh and come and go but I'm anxious. I mean, their future is gone. (...) Yes, we come and go but with an unknown future. For me now, there is safety, there is electricity, there is water. We are able to sleep and wake up, but there is no comfort. Our mental state is very exhausted. Now at home, I am like a little girl. I laugh with them but on the inside, I am burning.

Amal talked to me about how she hides her pain from her family at home as she feels that her children are losing their future because of the continued displacement and rejection they face. Growing up, Amal had the options to choose the type of lifestyle she wanted and was very satisfied with how her childhood and adulthood went, but she expressed that the lack of comfort because of the uncertainty of her children future is a cause of her exhaustion and her worry. In this case, the level of anxiety she feels comes out in a "burning" sensation.

Burning is a form of pain which is intensified. While pain connects elements of sensory experience and an aversive feeling state¹⁵, burning within suggests that the origins of the pain is external and the feeling state is unavoidable. When using the word "burning", I am reminded of skin which has been burned by fire, which forces us to feel pain that we cannot be distracted from, that has to heal for us to be able to think about other matters. Sara Ahmed explains that while emotions and sensations are different, they cannot be separated from one another. In this

¹⁵ Cowan 1968: 15

case, Amal senses a burning within her which is indicative of her emotions and even though she is able to act as if she has in another state of emotion in front of her children, she does not escape the burning within herself.

What does Exhaustion Say

In looking at the way people navigate their emotions the process becomes unfixed as it moves between what is displayed on the outside and what is felt on the inside. Since I am not only analyzing the feelings which are publicly seen by others in my informants, I find that there are many contradictions between the words my informants use to describe their emotions to the public and the way they actually feel towards their emotions in private. There is no one way to deal with feelings, especially those that are not considered “good” feelings. Rana, as a young woman, has faced her exhaustion by isolating herself and losing sleep, while Amal has had to take care of her family and be a source of strength for them, which allowed her to only show exhaustion through her worry about her children’s future.

I find through the presentation of exhaustion in my informant, they navigate their feelings depending on their surroundings. In quoting Sara Ahmed, “the solitariness of pain is intimately tied up with its implication in relationship to others” (2004, p.29), in that much of the exhaustion expressed by Amal and Rana is solitary but is dependent and shifting based on who is surrounding them. When Rana and Amal are in the same space or around family, they show exhaustion as they both encounter it from the same sources. Yet as they step out of that space, their expression of exhaustion becomes dependent on who surrounds them and what type of relationship they have with them.

What implicates this conclusion is exactly the relationship my informants have with outside spaces. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the relationship that is formed

with my informants is based on the perception the outside has with my informants and that leaves less space than is already given for Rana and Amal to navigate their feelings as well as their identities as Arab Muslim women in Finland. And so, in understanding that the way feelings are navigated is dependent on an outside source, it becomes more difficult to manage what affects their feelings.

Islamophobia

The hatred that women in the West receive comes in different forms depending on the bodies that encounter it. Founded by Lester and Rose (2015), The Runnymede Trust is a race equality think tank which was one of the first to publicly employ the term “islamophobia” and outline the methods it manifests in society under four banners of exclusion, violence, prejudice and discrimination against people who ascribe to the Muslim faith. While these four categories were outlined to contextualize Britain’s manifestation of islamophobia, the same pillars apply to how violence against Islam appears in Finnish society as is apparent in the similarities between the encounters Amal and Rana have and the research on experiences of Islamophobia in Britain (2015.)

The four methods in which Islamophobia is identified appear distinct, yet it can be difficult to draw the line between when one method ends and the other begins. In Rana and Amal’s lives, the Hijab is a visible part of their identities as Muslim women. While wearing the Hijab in Iraq and Syria is common, it does stand out in Finland as it is a minority that wears it, and both Rana and Amal seemed to be aware of this. Therefore by taking a post-colonial feminist approach to Islamophobia, I find it important to recognize the ways in which Rana and Amal identify Islamophobic acts as legitimate Islamophobia in Finland as in doing that, I create new realities and begin to center Muslim women’s feelings. It is also important to note that Islamophobia does not exist in the same ways in the West as it does in the Arab world. In the West, Islamophobia against Muslim women originates from the fear of the agentless woman who might eventually become an accomplice to her male partner’s violence against the democracy of the West (Delphy, 2015.) While the narratives for “liberating” Muslim women from their religion and

their men vary, they usually result in the expressed hatred for women who wear the Hijab, even if they do not conform to their religion or their men.

Rana and Amal wore the Hijab in Iraq, Syria and Finland, but they only felt oppressed because of it in the Finland, as they had not mentioned any bad feelings related to the Hijab in Syria or Iraq with as much depth as the feelings they told me they had in Finland.

I will begin by analyzing my discussion about the Hijab, Islam and its perception in Finnish society with Rana and then Amal, but as I saw there were many similarities between how they felt about how Finnish society perceives them, I find it more useful not to divide my analysis of Islamophobia between Rana and Amal in this chapter as I did with the previous chapter.

The Intensity of What We Wear

During my interview with Rana, she talked about the way she views herself in the Hijab and how she believes Finnish people see her. When I asked Rana about her socialization in Finland, she said that she did not know many people in her same age group who are Finnish. I decided to ask more about the reasoning behind this:

ياسمين: غير اللغة, شيفة ان فى سبب خلاكى متخطلتيش اوى مع الفنانيين؟

رنا: انا صار ثلاث سنين عايشة بفنلندا كلاجئة, ما عندى اختلاط, ما عندى حفلات بشوف عدد كثير فنلنديين و انا شفت ان اكثر البنات اللي بعمرنا ما بيحبوا يتقربوا علينا كنهنا انو حجاب. كثير انو على فنلنديين تقيل انو بشوفوا البنات محجبات, انو عليهم النظرية, ما يعرف. انو بيتقدوا و ان اكثر شى نظرة الاسلام ان هم داesh, ان هم مشاكل. اكثر شى انو سبب انو الفنلنديين ما يتقربوا علينا

Yasmin: In your perspective, what is the reason -other than language maybe- that made you feel like you could not mingle much with Finnish people?

Rana: I have been living in Finland for three years as a refugee, there is no mingling or going to parties where I see a large group of Finnish people. I saw that most girls our age do not like getting close to us, because of our Hijab. I felt that it is very intense for Finnish people to see women in Hijab, they have a look, I don't know... they criticize and know that this is the look of Islam, that they (we) are Daesh, they (we) are problems. It is the biggest reason why Finnish people decide not to be close to us.

Rana was not only conscious of how she feels she is viewed by Finnish women in the same age range as her, but she believed that this was the main reason why they would not get to know her. In this case, Rana did not specifically discuss her personal relationship with the veil¹⁶ but instead the impact it had on her perception by Finnish women. Rana explained that her knowledge about Finnish people is quite limited, but even when factoring that into consideration, she still has enough input to process how she believes she is perceived by them. Rana talks of the “intensity” the Hijab has when it is seen by Finnish people. As is discussed by Ahmed, “*the impression of a surface is an effect of such intensification of feeling*” (2004, p. 24.) The intensification of feeling in this case would be felt by Rana, who believes it to be an impression of the Hijab worn by Muslim women, which the origins of the intensity. In the example provided by the same text Ahmed wrote, an example about the skin is given where the skin only becomes visible once it is impressed upon by others, otherwise the intensity would not be felt. This is the same intensity which Rana feels pressures Finnish society to view her as an undesired Other who one should not get close to, and the same intensity which Rana believes can only originate from the veil. This impression of the intensity of the veil was again noticed in an encounter on the public transportation bus which Rana recalled:

في كثير ناس ما بيحبونا, ما بيشوفونا انا نحنا عايشين ببلدهم و انا شفنت كثير انهم يعطردون علينا. يعني بصوق,
 بالباص. كان مرة بعيني انا شفنت ولد فنلندي قاعد و في بنية صومالية اجت تقول "بس بدى اقعد هون" كان ما بيرد عليها. اكو منهم
 كثير ما بيحبوا ان نحنا ايجينا عليهم و قعدنا هنا. خاصا انو يشوفون نساء محجبات و حسيت انا انو خط احمر بيبتعدوا عنه

Rana: There are many people who do not like us, do not see us living in their country and I saw a lot that they oppose us. I mean, in the market, in the bus, many times I see this. One time I saw with my own eyes a Finnish boy sitting and there was a Somali woman saying, “can I just sit here?” and he was not answering her. Many people of them (Finnish citizens) do not like that we

¹⁶ It is important also to note that not every veiled woman will see her veil as a part of her personality or a defining part of her identity.

came to their country and stayed here. They would see a veiled woman and, I felt, they see that as a red line to be far away.

When Rana told me about this encounter, I wondered if there might have been any indicators that the “Somali woman” is not a Finnish citizen. She only characterizes the woman as one that is Somali and groups the woman in a homogenous “we” as in Hijabi women. Nonetheless, Rana perceived her to be an outsider in Finland, and saw a manifestation of herself with this woman on the bus in terms of the both of them wearing the veil. In Rana’s eyes, the veil has become a reason for Finnish citizens to provide her with only silence. While Rana accepted that she is not welcomed in Finland, through her recollection of the way the Finnish man responded with silence to the women on the bus summarizes the pain which is pressed upon her in Finland. While silence in Finland can be considered part of Finnish identity, it does not have the same intent when it is being directed at different bodies. If we look at the silence we receive at the end of a conversation in comparison with silence we receive when we would like an answer to a question, we find that the response as silence has different connotations in different situations. The Finnish boy’s intentions in not answering the woman might have been innocent, yet Rana understood it as part of a larger collective of situations which are translated to her as Islamophobic in that it is against the Hijab.

The Moroccan: One of The Asylum Seekers

On August 18th, 2017, a Moroccan man seeking asylum stabbed multiple people in Finland, and it opened a large debate about security in Finland as is discussed in an article by YLE following the incident. The article reads that the stabbing took place in central Finland, yet the heightened number of police and “surveillance of foreigners” would be focused at airports and ports (YLE, 2017), which are far away and target different groups than the ones who might

be present in Central Finland. This event had its impacts on Rana and Amal's private life in Finland:

يمكن ما كنتى هون, مغربى ضرب بالسنتر واحدة فنلنديا و ماتت فا بهالوقت صار ضجة... بوليس ما دقوا الباب و نحنا قاعدين بالمطبخ نتعشة و فتحو الباب علينا. فاتو هيك و بنتى, تعرفين نحنا لابسين حجاب, فراحت سبال هيك. اما انا مرة كبيرة قلت معلش. قالوا ""ليش هيك عملتى؟"" قلت "عشان الحجاب".

Amal: Maybe you were not here, but a Moroccan hit a Finnish woman who died in the center and during that time there was a shock.... The police came (to the asylum camp), the ones who you see in the supermarket, without knocking the door. We were having dinner in the kitchen and they barged in on us. They passed just like that and you know my daughter and I wear the veil so they hid their hair. I am an old lady so I said it's ok. They asked (the police) "why did you do that?" so I said, "because of the Hijab".

In Amal's recollection of the incident, the police took no interest in knocking on the door of their apartment or respecting their privacy. Additionally, they needed explanation for why the women in the household were hiding their hair. After Amal told them that they wear the Hijab, the police notified the family that they were in the apartment looking for a Moroccan man, to which Amal told them there was none.

In a news article by Yle (2018), it is stated that the suspect was apprehended in the same day sometime after the incident occurred, as he was stabbed by the police and therefore had to be hospitalized. Yet the policemen told that they were continuing their search for a Moroccan man. At the same time, they viewed the women as attackers simply because of them protecting their privacy. In "The Politics of Belonging", Nira Yuval-Davis discusses civil rights in the realm of the notion of Citizenship. She explains that "the global war on terrorism' discourse has been used in many cases as a justification for curtailing people's civil rights" (2011, p. 53.) While the war on terrorism has an established grounding in the United States, it does affect other Western countries and their perception of Muslims. In this situation, the policemen's urgency to search

the apartment overshadowed the privacy and rights of the women living in the house, threatening their privacy within their home. As far as navigating their feelings, Amal had no time to consent to the entry of strange men in her apartment, let alone have time to look within herself and be able to recognize how she feels.

In my separate interview with Amal, she told me about an experience she personally encountered that resembled the one which Rana had witnessed:

قبل شى شهر صعدنا عالباص ما فى محل. قعدت جنب مرة كل دقيقة هيك تعملى. هيك اتعصر قلبى قلت اقوم. ما فى محل. انا عندى دسك بضمهري فما اقدر اقف, و الطريق بعيد. و كل دقيقة هيك تعمل. قلت يا ربى يعنى انا عندى مرض هيك تعمل, اللى عندوا مرض ما يسوى هيك. اخر شى هى نزلت قبلى قالت "قومى". انا انسانة. الله خلقتى و خلقتك. قمت قلت "اتفضلى", هى كانت اصغر منى. سبحان الله ما يستقبلونا كويس.

Amal: After about a month, we were on the bus and there was not a lot of space so I sat next to a woman. Every moment she would do this (signaling being elbowed) to me, my heart felt strained and I wondered if I should stand up but there is no space. I have a disk in my spine so I cannot stand, the journey is long. And every moment she keeps doing this. I wondered if I was sick for her to be doing this, even if you were sick people do not do this. After a while of her doing this, she left the bus before me. She shouted, "get up". I am human. God made me just as he made you. I said, "go ahead", she was younger than me. It's a shame they do not accept us.

Encounters as this one are rarely discussed and can be dismissed as a misunderstanding, but I saw how Amal felt about it as a lens through which she navigates her feelings based on how she is able to react. Amal, while being elbowed by a woman sitting next to her on the bus, wondered if the origins of the hatred displayed to her by the woman was within her. In a text by Audre Lorde (1984; pp. 147-148), she remembers an encounter on a Harlem bus in which she realizes she is the object of hate for a white woman sitting next to her rather than a roach which Lorde thought was crawling up between them. Ahmed (2004, p.53) explains that once Lorde realizes it is not a roach but rather her own body that the white woman is scared of becoming unclean and touched by, Lorde becomes the object to keep away from in order to remain clean and untouched. This is evident in Amal's consideration of standing up even while having a back that is unwell and being

in a busy bus for a long duration of time. Afterwards, Amal begins to consider her body as a sick one, one which requires distance from in order not to get contaminated.

There are many bodies that can be a subject of this hatred, be it intentional or not. But as Ahmed concludes from her analysis of Lorde's encounter, "it is not simply that any body is hated: particular histories of association are reopened in each encounter" (2004; p. 54.) In this example, the history may be one which vilifies Muslims based on the attack which happened in Finland and in this example, Amal's roads to navigating her feelings are dependent on the literal and figurative space she is given within places as public as the city bus.

Rana had not discussed the context and time when this incident took place, but during my interview with Amal, more context was discussed and I understood that there might be a link between Rana's veil and the effect it has on Finnish society. As is seen with the encounters both Amal and Rana faced, the emotions become "intense" and confusing to understand. I had wondered why both the informants choose these specific instances to recount as evidence of how they perceive Finnish society to see them and it is apparent that the emotional weight of this situations are large enough to remain in their minds and be available for recollection. The emotional weight is referred to them as "intensity", an intensity which does not come from the Hijab, but from the outside bodies' encounters of the Hijab, of how the Hijab makes others feel. In this realm of intensity, while Rana and Amal do not share the same intensity that they believe others have, the sensation of the intensity is still transferred to them. In reference to the question of how they navigate their feelings towards Finland, it appears that Finland is determining how Arabic women are able to navigate their feelings. Even more so, they control what feelings are up for navigation.

On Perception

Before Amal had recalled the encounter on the bus, I had asked her about her perception of Finnish society. Perception and feelings are interconnected as feelings are informed by outside objects, which includes perception. In discussing the perception Amal and Rana feel is directed towards them, I acknowledge that there is an outside source to how they feel rather than it being emotions which can arise only within the self and not outside. Amal's response indicated a strong belief that Finnish people do not interfere in other people's lives and have an independent, free life. This prompted me to ask about the origins of this belief, since Rana had told me that she did not necessarily mingle with Finnish youth of her age:

اول شى انا شفت بعينى شو بيعملوا. و ثانى شى انا قنالك انو كنت عايشة قبل هنا بمكان ثانى, عاملونا اسبوعين شو النظر بالمجتمع الفنلندى و شو ان هم حياتهم و المعلومات اللى منهم اخدت. يعنى هما عاطونا معلومات عن دراستهم و عن الشغل و عن حرية البشر فهادا كله عرفت من المعلومات اللى عاطونا عن فنلندا

Rana: First thing, I saw this with my own eyes, what they do. Second thing, like I told you I was living in (another city) before, they told us there about Finnish society for two weeks, about what they do, so after this information that they gave us about their work and their studies and their freedom of people, so I know about all this from the information they gave us, Finnish women.

This seems to be a point which resonated with Amal as well, only it registered different for each of them. Rana came to the conclusion that Finland offers freedom from her own eyes first and from the information which she heard second. While Amal's response when I asked about her perspective about Finnish women and their freedom in our separate interview was different:

كل واحدة حرة. زى ما بنتى قالت لما كنا بالمدينة الثانية قالوا فنلندا هيك و هيك. يعنى المراة لها حقوق و تروح و تيجى. ا أغلب الحقوق احنا ما عندنا

Amal: Every woman is different. When we were in (same city as Rana had mentioned), they told us about Finland and women's rights and freedom. Most rights we do not have.

Amal had only come to the conclusion of Finnish women's freedom through the information she was told and created a contrast between what she was told and what "we do not have". When I asked about the rights she meant in the previous quote, Amal indicated that they had to do with being a single parent and going on errands, things that Amal said she was not necessarily interested in. What Amal did seem to be interested in is receiving privacy within her own home and a residence permit.

In an article titled 'Doing "Integration" in Europe'¹⁷, an example of a method of integration used is a movie in which a 'modern Dutch women' explains the requirements of ideology and practice needed to be fulfilled in order to integrate to the Netherlands. In one specific section, the presenters of the movie assert that "men and women are equal.... Men and women have the right to live with or marry the partner of their own choice." (Naar Nederland 2005.) In this movie and similarly, in the experience of my informants, immigrants are fed with the pretense of freedom and mutual respect. Yet as this next quote illustrates, the experiences of my informants do not reflect the mutual respect that is discussed:

انا عندي سؤال عالموضوع ده. عن الانتقاد بين الخوف من الحجاب و حقوق المرأة
امل: هم حسبهم احد يضغط علينا و احنا نلبس هالحجاب. بس لأ, احنا عندنا الاسلام. الواحده تصلى و لازم تلبس
الحجاب. كل واحدة بحريتها بس احنا مقتنعين انو الاسلام يلبس حجاب. اكو صديقتنا ما تلبس الحجاب. كل واحدة و طبيعتها, بس
هون ما يستقبلونا

Yasmin: Tell me about the contradiction of avoiding women who wear the veil and believing in women's rights.

Amal: They believe that someone pressures us to wear the veil. But no, we have Islam. Women pray and wear the veil. Everyone to their own freedom but we believe that Islam means wearing the veil. We have a friend who does not wear the veil. Every woman and her nature, but here they do not accept us.

Amal in this quote expresses her own desire to be wearing the veil and understands how this can be a personal choice which other Muslim women and other women may not agree on.

¹⁷ Marc de Leeuw & Sonja van Wichelen (2014.) Gender, Globalization and Violence; Postcolonial Conflict Zones.

She also disclosed that “we” believe that Islam “means” wearing the veil. This highlights how for Amal, wearing the Hijab is a decision that results from being convinced that this is the right choice. As is suggested by the information given to my informants through Finnish women, Amal practices mutual respect and freedom of religion, which may, unfortunately, not be reciprocated and leads to an imbalance of power between how Amal sees freedom and respect and how other Finnish women see it. In the same article by de Leeuw and van Wichelen, this imbalance of power means that “these cultural tropes turn the right for citizenship into a demand for cultural loyalty.” (2014, p.148.) The loyalty discussed in the article expresses a need for an exchange of feelings or ideas.

Loyalty as a feeling does not always originate from concrete sources. A person might be loyal to their partner only under the assumption that their partner has never betrayed someone, which might be founded on hopefulness rather than actual knowledge. The same idea is held for cultural loyalty, it does not originate from a knowledge that one’s earned citizenship will not be compromised, but in spite of the chance that it might be compromised since the benefits of cultural loyalty overwhelmingly outweigh the harms. This feeling of loyalty originating from within ourselves means that it is not necessarily dependent on how we are treated by the state, but rather what the state can provide in exchange for loyalty. Amal’s exchange for cultural loyalty is the possibility to receive asylum in Finland, and when the stakes are that powerful the standard for how high the person is willing to withstand is raised. This standard can then infiltrate the how we feel about the nation regardless of what the nation does to us. Based on the information which Amal gave me, she has withstood abuse in public as well as in her private home, which leads me to the same conclusion which I have been consistent with in this chapter;

the way in which Amal and Rana are able to navigate their feelings towards Finland is dependent on Finnish bodies more than it is dependent on how Amal and Rana feel.

The Emotions Islamophobia Leaves

Between intensity and loyalty, there are many differences as well as points of relativity. Intensity seems to be originated from outside bodies, which Ahmed confirms can be a way for our internal bodies to register our skin as bodily surface (2004, p.24), but in looking at what intensity as a feeling does, we find that it only appears to affect the bodies that receive and register the intensity. This allows me to understand that Rana saw the intensity as a way of disapproval of the Hijab. This disapproval, when combined from different reactions Rana receives from different people can have an impact of understand that all Finnish people disapprove of the Hijab. While this might not actually be the intent of Finnish people, it is worthwhile considering how easy it was for Rana to recall instances related to her Hijab as a way of navigating how people in Finland feel about her, and in this case, we understand intensity as an external feelings which is pressed on Amal. This means that for Amal, loyalty is the idea which she sacrifices control over her feelings for. Based on how she felt about the situations which she shared with me, her mind has not changed about exchanging loyalty for being able to securely stay in Finland.

As discussed earlier, the struggle of Third World women is one that is homogenous to Western feminists, as is also mentioned by Mohanty in *Feminism Without Borders* (2004; p.25.) Mohanty discusses the impact of grouping all women, such as “women of Africa”, which can lead to the homogenization of the issues and the dependencies that the women face. In this case, the category ‘Muslim women’ in Finland clumps the issues and voices of all women who are Muslim. In the Name of Women’s Rights by Farris discusses femonationalism in the French,

Dutch and Italian context (2017.) Femonationalism refers to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam and anti-Immigration campaigns which results in the stigmatization of Muslim women and men under the disguise of gender equality (Farris, 2017 p.4) and through the interviews I found that there are similarities between those and the Finnish context. In the Italian and Dutch context, gender inequality is seen to be an ethnic problem, one that will be eradicated through the liberation of racialized women. The case for France differs a bit as it is constructed as a Muslim problem which directly interferes with the notion of Laïcité¹⁸ This again is evident in Mohanty's analysis of Pirzada women in Iran who are only viewed through Islam and who have their identity suppressed under Islamic Rule. But as Patricia Jeffrey (1979) discusses in her research on Islam; Islam can affect some women but not others, specifically when considering the geographical context the Muslim person is in.

In the chapter "Femonationalism", I look at signs of otherness observed towards Muslim women by Finnish women under the banner of protection and loyalty to the nation. I will look at this by analyzing the information which Rana and Amal were communicated by Finnish women as well as looking at what ideas Rana and Amal have about Finnish women in terms of how they perceive them in contrast with the encounters they have had with Finnish women. Finally, I will critically conclude what the contradiction about hearing about women's rights and actually experiencing them does to Rana and Amal's feelings and how, in return, it informs the navigation of their overall feelings towards Finland.

¹⁸ Directly translates to 'secularity' and is one of the principals which was developed during the French revolution. (Winkler, Elizabeth. (2016) Is it Time for France to Abandon Laïcité?)

Femonationalism

In 2017, Sara Farris published the book “In the Name of Women’s Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism” in which she coined the term Femonationalism. Femonationalism refers to the “exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam campaigns” as well as “to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality” (Farris 2017; p.4.) Farris examines this phenomenon through the analysis of political campaigns in France, The Netherlands and Italy. Specifically, Farris does not only focus on one political party, but looks at the campaigns of right-wing politicians, feminist-intellectuals and neoliberal policies which target non-western migrants.

While Farris’s book showcases femonationalism in politics, it first traces its origins with the migration flow of people from the Mediterranean region (Farris 2017; pp.22-28.) She explains that while the European economy benefited greatly from this migration, most of the migrants were framed as lazy, uncivilized, unambitious and dangerous by European politicians. This was also made possible as most of the migrants were men, which simplified vilifying them. The case was, however, different for Muslim migrant women who arrived to the West after their husbands, fathers and sons had settled in the West. They were portrayed as passive and submissive because of the difference they displayed to Western women, who had fought for the liberation of their bodies while migrant women who fought for the liberation of their countries. (see: Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Mohanty 2004; hooks, 1981.) In the European context, the understanding of femonationalism is limited, as Finland is known for its progressive stance on gender equality, which presumably equates to a progressive stance on migrant women’s equality. Keskinen (2018) explains the perceived notions of gender equality in the Nordic context as

exceptional and tolerant towards gender and sexual minorities, as well as migrants and racialized minorities (2018, p.158.) This point of pride and progression within Nordic culture is challenged by recent research (Keskinen, 2018; Hubinette & Lundstrom, 2014) which criticizes the understanding of progressive gender equality within Finland as it excludes Othered bodies such as those of migrants and asylum seekers. I found that it is also traceable in the interviews I conducted with Rana and Amal. While they are not the ones generating Femonationalist ideology, they do apply the same perspectives to their feelings about Muslim women and Western women. By connecting femonationalism to feelings, the effect of femonationalism becomes a traceable one not only in the media, but also in Rana and Amal's feelings towards Finland. As mentioned before, Rana and Amal first stayed in a different city than the one they currently reside in, where they were encouraged to assist in setting up church meals and socialize with Finnish women who were part of the church. This is also the case for the current city they reside in, which is what introduced them to the organization I met them through. In both of their descriptions, they shared how they "found out" about women's rights in Finland and what their understanding of it is. From those excerpts, I will analyze how their view of Finland reinforces Femonationalist ideology and how that ultimately affects their feelings towards Finland.

Telling Women about Women's Rights

Through a post-colonial approach, the understanding of women's rights and liberation is different depending on the background, the historical and geographical context, and the intersection of the different identities' women have. Bearing that in mind, I analyzed this section to look at what information was given to Rana and Amal about women's rights in Finland, and how this makes them feel towards Finland. I asked Rana to tell me about her experience of being in Finland in contrast with how her life was in Syria, and while I did not ask her to specifically

focus on one aspect she could compare between both countries, I was hoping to learn more about what she feels constitutes liberty and freedom within Syria and Finland. Rana explained that she has not experienced much in Finland as she was transferred shortly after arriving to her current city of residence and did not have many opportunities to socialize with people around her. While she was staying in another city before moving to her current place of residence, she talked about her involvement with Finnish women outside the camp:

كان كل المحافظة بس السوبر ماركت بس اثنين ثلاثة كان في و كان في هناك نساء يعملوا منظمات و كانوا بيحوا ياخدوا النساء بطلعوا برو, يحدون على مطبخ الكنيسة و كان انو يشاركونا في تغيير جو انو الكامب و التفكير و انتظار. فكان ان هادة حلو ان بالنسبة لنا فكانو يحكو عن شو المجتمع بفنلندا و شنو حقوق المرأة و الدراسة بفنلندا

The whole province was basically just two, three supermarkets and there were women there who made organizations and they came to take the women to a church's kitchen and they got us involved for a change of pace, instead of being in the camp thinking and waiting. So that was nice for us, they would talk to us about the Finnish society and about women's rights in Finland and about studying in Finland.

Rana talks about her engagement with the previous city, a city which was quite small with limited movement. As she was staying in a refugee camp, she, along with the women in her family, was encouraged to participate in unpaid labor in a church kitchen. When talking with the women during the craftivism event when I was first introduced to the organization, I found this to be a common practice among the women which is advertised to them as pass-time activities that would distract them from the asylum-seeking process, rather than as work which should be done by individuals who are part of the church as they will be reaping its benefits. There is no doubt that Rana benefited from socializing with the women at the church, but this does not illuminate how Rana and other women who were staying in the refugee camp were used for the church's benefit. In addition, while completing this work, the women were communicated information about the rights that "women" have in Finland which Rana discussed in more detail during our interview:

فكان اسبوعين كان احد بييجي من السوشال ان الفنلنديين بها حقوق مكو هيك. فعرفت انا ان تجربتي انو بفنلندا انو المرأة الها دور, حقوق, الها الدولة بفنلندا مو نفس الدولة العربية, انو المرأة ما الها حقوق, انو هادا كثير فرحني. انو يصير عندها شوي جرانة و حقوق تظمن اننا بقدر نعمل غير اشياء لو ما نحب, مو ان كا أنغلق بمجتمع و ما تقدر تعمل هيك و انا ما الها حقوق

Someone from the organization came for two weeks to talk to us about rights in Finland and so on, so then I knew, with my experience in Finland that women have roles and rights, that the state in Finland is not the same as the state in the Arabic country, where a woman has no right so this made me very happy. That a person would have more courage and rights that make her relax about being able to do what she wants, not like staying in a closed society where you can't do this or that or having any rights.

In the first passage I quoted in this analysis, the information communicated to Rana about Finland as a country depended only on how Finnish women perceive it, while in the second passage Rana is communicated that not only is Finland a place for women's rights, but that it embodies those rights in contrast with Arabic countries which have no rights. The Arabic countries are painted as a space where "a woman has no right" whereas Finland is a space where "women have roles and rights". I put the category women in quotation marks as I felt that Rana speaks about these women as if they are the only ones who are women, and that she does not see herself as a woman who belongs in the same category. I saw Rana's using of third pronouns as a way of distancing herself emotionally from Finnish women. So while Rana communicated to me that Finland gives women rights, when I asked more information about the rights which Rana felt she had in Finland, she only expressed hopes for having these rights in the future as she does not have them now, since she has not yet obtained her residency permit.

Farris gives a possible explanation for this detachment between how Rana feels towards rights versus other Finnish women's rights as she discusses how immigrant women in the West, specifically from the Middle East with Muslim backgrounds, are seen as liberated from the oppressive conditions to which Islamic fundamentalists were subjecting them. (2017; p.28) This is a point which is usually overlooked by Western feminists as if Third World Women do not know the extent of their rights or that they are "passive and submissive" (Farris, 2017: p.24)

either by Third World men or by the Western world. So while Rana and Amal say that they feel convinced and happy with their choice of religion, they are still fed ideas about how unsupportive Arabic countries are of their rights as women in comparison to Finland which encourages them to pursue what they desire in life. In the same answer, Rana continued to talk about how the rights she saw women have in Finland:

يعنى شفت كتير فرق ما بين المجتمع الفنلندى و المجتمع العربى, يعنى حبيت كتير نظرى عن مجتمع فنلندا. هدفهم الدراسى (...) يعطوكى امل و تفائل, انو ما انتهت الحياه حتى لو كبيرتى. انو لك هدف و تقدرين تعملين كل شى, ما فى شى واقف قدامك

I saw many differences between the societies, Arabic and Finnish, I mean I like my outlook on Finland. They aim for academics (...) they give you hope and optimism, that life is not over even if you are older. You have a goal and are able to do everything, nothing is standing in your way.

Encapsulated here is Rana's repetition of comparison between Arabic and Finnish societies, only now she is focusing on her perception of Finnish women within Finnish society rather than simply comparing both country's ideas of women's rights. The three points Rana makes about why Finland is different from Arabic countries are; the importance of academics, the focus on optimism and hope, and the continuity of goals as the person grows older. These are points which can be often communicated within women's rights narratives by nationalist parties as a way of denouncing Muslim communities as misogynistic towards women (Farris, p. 115) and these points are very connected to feelings, as hope and optimism are feelings which are felt from the outside in (Ahmed, 2004.) The points of comparison of societies are seen to be lacking within Arabic, and specifically Muslim, communities and to be endorsed towards migrants and asylum seekers who aim to integrate within Western society. By contrasting these points which Rana speaks about having in the West with what she actually has, we find that most of them are not applicable in Rana's life.

In specific, while Rana talks about aiming for academics, she is not allowed to pursue any education without a residence permit except learning Finnish language; Rana also talks about having hope and optimism, points which she talked about losing in Finland in the chapter “Exhaustion”; lastly, she talks about continuing to have goals at older age, and while Rana is quite young, her mother is older and seems to not share the belief about a hopeful future in Finland. This leaves a question to be asked; what does Rana gain of declaring these points as a reality in Finland even if they do not resonate in her or her family’s life?

Even though I discussed the benefits of giving loyalty to Finland earlier, it is important to focus on them in this analysis as well. The ideas with which Rana is convinced can be seen as theories, since they are well advertised as existing within Finnish society, and specifically within the organization I did my research at. While the actual reality of whether or not these points are applicable in Rana and Amal’s lives can be seen a practice. In the contradiction of theory and practice, Farris discusses what happens when “the principles that guide political action are contradicted by that very action” (2017, p. 117.) And while Farris here speaks of the neoliberal political agendas as the ones doing the actions, they still are applicable since they are where Rana and Amal’s ideologies stem from. In this contradiction, there is a disconnect between what Rana sees as “women” and what rights she feels she should have in Finland as a woman. And so this contradiction about women’s rights and exclusivity of the definition of “women” can leave an impact on Rana’s feelings. This impact is felt when Rana, continuing to answer my question about the perception of women in Finland, began using “us” to refer to migrant women who wear the Hijab and are seen as very “intense” (see pages 43), amplifying the impact that migrant women have on Finnish women and portraying that impact as originating from the Hijab and not from the understanding of the Finnish women who give Rana the feelings of intensity.

The commonalities between Rana and Amal's perception of themselves and of women's rights in Finland were unavoidable as Amal seemed to share the ideas about women's rights in Finland, as was apparent in our interview:

هون فى امان و فى ترفيهات. يعنى المرة عندها حقوق, لو تروح عالمدسة توصل لمستواه. ورا المستوة يجوز الاقامة, يجوز
تسغلة

*There is safety and things to do here, like women have rights, they go to school and be of worth.
And this worth helps her find a place to live and work.*

Beyond referring to women as “them” similarly to what Rana did, education and work are the two points which Amal also found to be important in a woman's worth. These are similar to Rana's points regarding academics and having goals in Finland, and as with Rana's situation in terms of having these rights, Amal does not have them either. I was interested in tracing the origins of this perception of women and women's rights and so I had asked Rana about the way in which she was welcomed in Finland when she first arrived:

و الله الصراحة يعنى مو كثير استقبلونا. اكو منهم حبو الاجيء العربى, فى اكو منهم لأ. ما احبو انو اخدنا بلادهم و قعدين فيها. يهتمون بينا و يقهرون وقت ما يشوفوا انا سبنا بلدنا و يريدون يجون يخططون معنا لأن يحاولون ان يطلعونا من الحالة اللى نحنا فيها اما انا شفت ان
بنظرية ثانية فى كثير ناس ما بيحبونا

Honestly, they did not welcome me very much. Some of them love an Arab refugee, some others no. They do not like that we took their country and are sitting in it (...) I mean they care for us and they want to mingle with us to take us out of the state we are in but I saw in another aspect, there are many people who do not like us.

When I initially asked Rana about how she felt she was perceived in Syria, the notion of Syrians seeing her as she “came to their country and took from their country” was mentioned, which allows me to see the connection between her feelings in Syria and her feelings in Finland. However, the reasoning for those feelings of being perceived as rejected are different. When Rana and I talked about her feelings in Syria, she explained that it was partly due to the students around her in school who saw her as an Iraqi intruder, and partly due to the beginning of the Syrian war which erupted shortly after Rana and Amal's family arrived to Syria. It also seemed

to be an important point for Rana to mention that while some Fins cared and wanted asylum seekers to be in Finland, others did not like them.

The feelings of rejection Rana and Amal feel in this section are consistent as they discuss their understanding of “women’s” rights in Finland, and as they separate themselves from the category of women while learning about the rights of women. A feeling of otherness is constructed towards Finland such that Rana and Amal would like to feel included in the category of women but see themselves as different.

Women Talking about their Rights

While telling women about their rights suggests an outside knowledge and assumption which may or may not apply in the lives of the women seeking asylum, the same women talking about their rights suggests firsthand experience of being able to recognize rights as their own. In this section I looked at Rana and Amal’s ways of recognizing rights they have in Finland which are applicable in their lives, rather than ones they are communicated about from others, and how the contradiction between both can affect the feelings of Rana and Amal towards Finland.

I will be identifying the times when Rana and Amal talk about their rights in Finland by looking at when they say “I” instead of “they”, as this was a common distinction that they made when discussing their own rights in contrast with the rights they perceive all Finnish women to have. I will then analyze the usage of “I” versus “they” in the discussion of different rights and what that means for Rana and Amal’s understanding of their rights in Finland as women who are seeking asylum. I will analyze the feelings these distinctions have on Rana and Amal.

I asked Rana to explain to me how she compares her life in Syria, as she had indicated earlier in the interview that she did not have much memory of Iraq, to Finland. Rana began by explaining that she feels better in Finland, emphasizing that:

هون كثير ارتاحيت: شفت انو المجتمع يختلف عن اللي عشتوا بسوريا. حسيت هون بأمان, حسيت هون انو اللي دور لو اخدت الإقامة, انو هيصير اللي هدف بحياتي امشي عليه.

I became very comfortable; I saw a different society than the one I experienced in Syria. I felt safety here, I felt like I have a role here, if I obtained residency here, I will have an aim in my life to follow.

Rana linked the experience she has in Syria with how she is able to assess her feelings in Finland and specifically the evolvement of her feelings towards countries she is Othered in. The difference of society helped Rana understand that she feels worthy of safety and having a role in Finland. The point of having a role, which Rana points out, in Finland is contingent on being able to benefit the society. But as is apparent from the text, immediately afterwards Rana elaborates that once she obtains residency in Finland, she will have an aim to follow. This shows that while Rana wants to have the benefit of feelings safety in Finland, she is unable to support that feeling until she receives her residency. To understand more about this feeling of safety, I asked Rana to explain more about how she came to realize this feeling:

ياسمين: و دلوقتي حاسة انك عندك الامان دة؟
رنا: اكيد. و قوة عندي انو شفت المجتمع الفنلندي كيف عم بيعيشوا
ياسمين: و انتي حاسة دلوقتي ان دي حاجة كفاية تخليكي قاعدة ف فنلندا؟
رنا: اكيد يعني انو من كل النواحي انو العيشة بفنلندا تخلينا انو نحب فنلندا و نستمر نضل بيه و لو الله اراد اخذ الإقامة. يعني بتحسي ان من كل النواحي امان في مجتمعك و في دراستك

Yasmin: you feel that you have this safety?

Rana: Of course. And I have power in Finland from seeing how people are living here.

Yasmin: and you feel like this is enough to keep you in Finland?

Rana: Of course. From all aspects, life in Finland makes us love Finland and want to stay here, and if god wills to receive residency. You feel safe from all aspects in society and in your future

Rana does not only express feeling safety, but power. Power coming from seeing people living in Finland. As I explained earlier, feelings arise from the outside and are linked to other objects, in this case the object being power. Rana has power from the safety she sees Finnish

people have to the point that she feels love towards Finland and has hopes to stay so she is able to continue feeling love towards Finland. The same, however, cannot be said for Amal's perspective on her rights in Finland:

ياسمين: حاسة ان انتى عندك نفس الحقوق و نفس الصوت زيهم؟
أمل: انا افكر انو عندى هالشاغلة بس مو متأمله. لا سمح الله لو جالنا رفض نرجع مافى هالأمل

Yasmin: Do you feel that you have the same rights and voices in Finland as Finnish women?

Amal: I would like to think that I have these things but I am not optimistic. God forbid, if we receive a rejection and had to return, we will not have this hope.

Amal's perspective is different in that she wants to be feel she has rights in Finland, but as she has not received her residence permit yet, she does not feel optimistic. Amal not feeling optimistic is more relative to receiving a rejection than it is to her hopes about Finland giving her a residence permit. In the understanding of feeling that I explained earlier, feelings depends on other objects and in this case, she does not feel optimism but would like to feel it. This complicates her feelings towards Finland as Finland has not given Amal a reason to be optimistic. I asked Amal to reaffirm and elaborate on the feeling of hope she expects to feel once they receive their residency:

ياسمين: يعنى حاسة ان لو تخذوا الإقامة هنا هبيقة فى أمل؟
أمل: اكيد. لان هالاء احنا قاعديين بالكامب, ما تقولين هيك بيت كويس. مجبورين. لو عندى امكانية ما كنت اقعد ب هال كامب لأنو بناية قديمة و بيه رطوبة

Yasmin: so you feel that after you receive your residency here you will have hope?

Amal: For sure. Because now we are sitting in the camp, you cannot even say that we are living in a home. We are forced. If I had the opportunity I would not stay in the camp because it is an old building and it has humidity.

Amal had not mentioned any information about the place where we lived before this question. As the family has not received residency yet, they continue to live in a refugee camp; a place which Amal consistently called "a place to live", never "a home". This can be a way for Amal to distance herself emotionally from the space, as Amal called her place of living in Iraq "home", which brings the idea of good feelings, of wanting to be there and feelings of belonging,

while acknowledging the place of living in Finland as “sitting in the camp” can be a way to dissociate from this place. As Amal reaffirms that she will have hope once she receives residency, she says that they are forced as a family to stay in the camp, and forcefulness is based on the lack of options. Options are what gives one a feeling of choice and therefore, control, and in the loss of it, one loses hope. This is not to say that all hope is lost, but that all hope can be lost if they do not receive residency in Finland, and that feelings about having hope towards living in Finland are not on the table as Amal does not state that she feels hope while waiting for the decision on her residency, but does state that she will lose hope if she receives a rejection.

The relationship between hope and belonging to a nation is interdependent as Farris explains. Women of a nation are seen to be bearers of collectivity and reproduction (2017, p. 78), and as reproduction symbolizes hope for the nation through children who care for the same future as the nation, women who are not part of the nation would need to prove their ability to give the same type of reproductivity as women of the nation. The situation for Amal and Rana then becomes difficult as they continue bearing for the nation without any care from the nation being given.

At the end of the interview with Amal, she explained the importance of communicating gentleness and empowerment. She told me about how the participants in the organization organized surprise parties for each other and had to take the role of supporting each other and being gentle with each other. She specifically ended her interview by saying:

نعطى واحدة للتانية هيك شوية قوة. احنا محتاجين هالحنان. انا هالاء كبيرة, فى نسوان كمان كبار بس ما جايين, هيك نعطيهم حنان الصغار. الدنيا مو بس اكل شرب, فى حنان كمان يتراد

We empower each other and we are compassionate with each other. We need this compassion with each other. I am old now, there are other ladies now that do not come by, this helps them. Life is not just food and drink; compassion is also needed.

While Rana and Amal and I mostly discussed bad feelings, Amal did not forget to mention the importance of collectivity between women while they seek asylum. Amal talked

about birthday parties they planned for one another, and how they make her feel like she has something to look forward to. She also expressed the support she felt from the organization:

*هم احسن شى بس بيحضنوا و يقولوا "لا تخافين. انتى هون و مطمئنة. انشاء الله اللى تقضر عليه نساعدكم
The best thing they do is give you a hug and say "do not be scared. You are here and you are safe.
Whatever we can do to help, we will do."*

It is clear to see the impact of the support Amal receives from the organization. Rana also shared similar feelings about collectivity and support in the organization in Finland:

*لو بتشوفى نفسك و الفرق بين كيف عايشة و جيتى بالبلد انو استقبلك ماكو فنلنديا. بيعطوكى حقوق كامل كانك فنلنديا اكيد لك
إنتماء
When you see yourself and the difference of how you can live, and you come to Finland and they welcome you, not as a Finnish person. Yet, they give you full rights as a Fin; of course you will belong to
Finland.*

This shows the importance of a supportive community and feelings of belonging for Amal and Rana, in which good and bad feelings are allowed to exist and to be discussed while they are in Finland. This type of supportive community and acceptance of different feelings can be a collective of love, which is a way to bond with others (Ahmed 2004, p. 124) and just as bad feelings can be navigated towards Finland, so can good feelings which push Amal towards the need for collectivity and belonging within Finland.

Results

Discussion around the borders of asylum seekers has been a topic of interest within Finnish society after the influx of migrants from the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and while there has been analysis on the economic, social and political benefits and downfalls of having multicultural migrants in Finland (see: Keskinen, 2018; Egharevba, 2006; Koivukangas 2003) there has been much left to say about how the migrants themselves feel towards Finland. There has been research pertaining to whether or not non-white residents in Finland experience racist encounters (Egharevba, 2006), but little has been researched on the feelings of asylum seekers and what those feelings do to how they feel towards Finland. I defined feelings as being dependent on the object we have feelings for, therefore emerging from an outside source yet not being able to exist without emotions as they are the foundation of how reactions happen within the body (Ahmed, 2014.) I chose to only look at feelings since they focus on outside objects being the reason for those feelings, which allowed me to look at the outside experiences encountered by my informants and analyze how they change their feelings towards Finland. In an effort to examine the feelings of women who seek asylum have towards Finland, I interviewed two Arabic women seeking asylum in Finland through an organization funded by the government of Finland. I asked the informants about their lives before and after coming to Finland, how they felt about it and what their expectations about Finland were and how it informed their feelings based on the encounters they have here.

I divided my analysis into three themes which I looked at through my understanding of feelings; exhaustion, Islamophobia and Femonationalism, and later found that exhaustion was a common feeling which maneuvered through all three themes. While each of the themes had its own support within the data I gathered from my informants, they are collectively tied to being

viewed from an emotional analysis. I used the work of Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2004), Sara Ahmed (2004) and Sara Farris (2017) as the main inspiration for my analysis. Mohanty guided as the main inspiration for looking at my data through a post-colonial feminist lens (2004.) Ahmed explains themes of exhaustion, rejection and pressing in terms of bad feelings, which I have found to be common in the discussion on the three different analysis chapters. I then found Keskinen's research on white hegemony (2017) to inform my understanding of Femonationalism within Finland. Farris coined the term Femonationalism (2017) and wrote about how the discourse of liberating Muslim women can be harmful to the lives of Muslim women in the West, as such I analyzed the ways in which my informants discussed women's rights and how that affects their feelings.

I have found that my informants have little to no control over how they feel towards Finland. While at times they are able to process exhaustion, anger and sadness, they still isolate these feelings from how they feel towards Finland. In the first chapter of analysis, the extent of exhaustion originating from rejection Amal and Rana felt reached the inability to integrate, yet Amal and Rana have continuously showed that they do not bear the freedom to feel without consequences as they had to reintegrate into society without any change in legal status.

In the second chapter of analysis, I looked at the feelings that Islamophobic encounters leave on Rana and Amal, bearing in mind that Islamophobia is a form of oppression directed towards people who are Muslim (Lester & Rose, 2015.) I found that the same results were yielded as Rana and Amal had felt oppressed as women who wear the Hijab in Finland, yet they were unable to express their bad feelings towards Finland all the while continuing to receive and process bad feelings Others had about them. This created contradictions between how my informants felt about their Hijab and how other people made them feel about their Hijab.

In the final chapter, I looked at Femonationalism which is the discourse used by Western media, feminism and politicians to create a stigma about Muslim men (Farris, 2017,) and how this rhetoric informs the feelings of women who seek asylum in Finland. While femonationalism is yet to be discussed in Finnish research, I found it to be evident in Rana and Amal's beliefs about women's rights in Finland and their rights as women seeking asylum in Finland. An "us" versus "them" theme was reoccurring between how Rana and Amal talked about themselves as women and how they talked about their perception of Finnish women's rights. This contradiction seemed to create hope for Rana towards Finland and to destroy hope for Amal towards Finland. Yet Amal pointed to the importance of collectivity about women's empowerment and the need for gentleness around each other, something which she was not informed about from the outside, but rather felt its importance from her time spent in the organization and in Finland.

Discussion

The influx of asylum seekers from Arabic countries to the Nordic region prompted consideration and reorganization of the border control and rights which are afforded to those able to enter and stay in the region. Keskinen relabels the "crisis of refugees", a term afforded to the arrival of foreigners to Finland to center them as the perpetrators, to the "crisis of white hegemony" (2018.) To demonstrate the extent of the crisis of white hegemony within Finland, there has been tighter regulation on asylum approval among seekers from Arabic countries and a rise in a narrative of acceptance of alt-right ideology (YLE, 2018;2019.) This has affected the livelihood and freedom afforded to asylum seekers. Bearing in mind the struggles they already face in terms of mobility, access to health care, education and housing (Valtonen, 1998), issues of emotional wellbeing and mental health also arise. As is apparent in my research, discussion about bad feelings towards Finland becomes hindered because it can affect the decisions which

are made on the behalf of asylum seekers in Finland. This can push bad feelings to disappear into silence, which diminishes the existence of bad feelings towards Finland by asylum seekers.

While the lack of discussion on bad feelings does not necessarily equal more discussion on good feelings, it does highlight good feelings as the more reoccurring feelings among asylum seekers.

Sara Ahmed discusses the consequences of speaking out against nations as immigrants of the nation as a form on ungratefulness of hospitality and love which allows the immigrant to enter the nation to begin with (2004, p. 170.) The case is even more unstable for asylum seekers as we discussed their situation as being more vulnerable than the situation of immigrants or refugees (Giles, 2013.) This signifies the importance of focusing on helping vocalize the bad feelings Others have towards the nation, as the level of love and gratefulness should not be the measure of worthiness of being part of a nation.

Tell me how you feel

The nature of asking questions about feelings to informants is a difficult task which does not always yield the most honest results between how they feel and what they tell me they feel. In addition to the “Halfie” researcher (Abu-Lughod, 2008) complications which I suggest may have altered the answered I received; I also have found that asking women who are in powerless position to the state about their feelings cannot be looked at without criticism.

I entered the organization as an outsider who does not receive pay from the government for this research or gain benefits as a client at the organization, this positioning may have placed me in an unclear situatedness for my informants, where they might not have been fully aware of the side I am on. While I did meet with Rana and Amal before asking them if they would like to be part of my research as well as made sure that we remained within the organization so that they are aware and can control who hears and does not hear what they share with me, I still cannot

guarantee that the information I received from them was completely authentic. As loyalty towards a hosting nation is a crucial point in being accepted and integrated for people who seek asylum, specifically in Finland as “integrity” is one of the requirements for obtaining citizenship, it makes the discussion of criticizing Finnish society even more sensitive.

Where to go from here

Almost six months ago, I interviewed women who are seeking asylum in Finland in hopes of sharing a glimpse of the feelings they carry every day. I was asked when I entered the organization to become a volunteer as a female Arabic translator is needed for the discussion of confidential issues pertaining to violence against the participants in the organization. As volunteering while collecting data would have hindered my ability to focus solely on the informants and gaining the information I needed for the research, I decided to wait. Looking back at this decision, I find it to be an accidentally wise one, since I could have skewed the feedback I received in the interviews as a researcher who is dividing her time between asking participants to discuss their feelings genuinely and following the orders of the managers within the organization, orders which may or may not have been beneficial to the livelihood of the participants and my research’s informants. Waiting to decide on my involvement with the organization also allowed me to find how I could be an asset to the women who are participating in this organization.

There is no surprise in saying that based on how my relationship with the organization started, the interviews I included in this research were not the only interactions I have had with them after I finished gathering data for my research, as I began learning more about their lives and they started learning more about mine. I found that there is a need to focus on the emotional and mental support within the community of Arabic women and a need for a space where we can

share stories as a form of validation and mutual understanding. As such, I began an Arabic women's support group within the organization in which the participant's input and agency is equally as important as that of the organizer. While it is not intended to be a political group, discussion of situations that happen to Arabic women within Finnish culture are encouraged and validated. This type of community activism can be beneficial as it finds a place in a collective struggle which voices the recounting of unhappy encounters and situations as important and valid.

It is also important to discuss the future of the women I interviewed outside of the organization. They are still waiting for a decision on their asylum application, and this wait not only hinders their access to work, healthcare and socialization, it also affects their emotional and mental wellbeing. Finland saw a shift in parliamentary elections in 2019 with a 17.7% win for the Social Democratic Party, and only 0.2% difference to the second biggest party, True Finns (Statistics Finland, 2019.) As significant as it is to shift the control to a Social Democratic Party, the overwhelming popularity of the True Finns party, a party that pushes forward the loudest anti-immigrant rhetoric (Arter, 2010), is indicative of the outlook the Finnish community has towards immigrants. This loudness does not only translate to less safety for people of color and the Muslim community in public, but to a possible continuation of pushing for stricter immigration regulations which may in turn backfire for Rana and Amal. Therefore there is a need for continued education about different regulations pertaining to asylum seekers for Finnish and non- Finnish residents within Finland.

Finally, based on my observations on interactions at the organization and the conclusions I drew from this research, future research could focus on the contribution white Finnish women have in disorganizing and disrupting organizations which aim to support asylum seekers as I

have seen a reoccurring theme of asserting power and pushing integration into spaces intended for asylum seekers only. And so in understanding the power dynamics which are upheld by white Finnish women within organizations targeting People of Color, there can be continuation of learning about how to re-center the conversation on the wellbeing of People of Color, especially those from Third World countries.

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