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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF DISPLACEMENT
Displacement and migration involve enormous challenges and opportunities, both for people who move and for the countries that receive them. Religious involvement affects this process in powerful ways, as does social class and gender.

In particular, under pressures of a rapid, often difficult, social and cultural transformation, changing gender dynamics in a new country can in time lead to a new understanding between migrant partners. Alternatively, it can lead to heightened struggle and in some cases to domestic violence, with severely damaging effects, particularly for women and children. For example, Muslim men, reacting to a cold reception they may receive in their adopted country, sometimes try to reclaim the dominance they once enjoyed in their countries of origin by adopting very conservative practices and beliefs, and justifying them in the name of religion. Thus migration to a new country can actually strengthen a newcomer’s attachment to their homeland.

A BETTER SHARED UNDERSTANDING
A collaborative international research project based at York University, Diaspora, Islam and Gender will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the diaspora concept. In particular, it will help identify those aspects of the migratory experience that shatter or reinforce a group’s attachment to its vision of the homeland, affecting its readiness to adapt to a new country.

The project’s research findings will assist migrant communities in identifying problems and opportunities involved in the process of maintaining a distinctive culture while making a positive contribution to the larger community. Within Canada, the study may also help policymakers at federal, provincial and municipal levels to design and implement programs that promote harmonious relations between migrant communities and the host country.

In particular, the project will be useful in challenging stereotypical ideas that portray Muslim diaspora as alien and strange - ideas that cloud the actual differences that exist among individuals and drive people to embrace the very notion of ‘culture’ with which they are labelled. A surer, factual understanding of the realities of diasporic life should help break the hold of these distorting and harmful ideas.

A SOUND INVESTMENT IN OUR FUTURE
The social issues affecting our world today are highly complex. Solving them requires an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that incorporates many perspectives such as economics, sociology and history. York’s research delves deeper, providing the kind of comprehensive insights that provoke meaningful social change. A sound investment in our future.

Diaspora, Islam and Gender marshals the expertise of researchers from Canada, Israel/Palestine, Iran, Britain and France to explore the wide variety of factors related to class, gender and religion that affect the migratory experience. By doing so, Diaspora, Islam and Gender will offer a fuller and more sophisticated view of the migratory experience of individuals and of migrant families as complex social units.

Symposia such as “Women’s Voices from the Middle East” and the major international conference “The Making of the Islamic Diaspora” have already brought together internationally renowned scholars in this field.

REAL-WORLD SOLUTIONS TO REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES
Real-world challenges demand different angles, different approaches, and different attitudes. Interdisciplinary and collaborative, York University research delivers relevant insights and meaningful solutions that address today’s complex social issues.

THE COST OF NOT ACTING
Without the interdisciplinary approach of projects like Diaspora, Islam and Gender, the knowledge of individual scholars will remain segregated, and policymakers at federal, provincial and municipal levels will be impeded in their ability to design and implement programs that promote harmonious relations between migrant communities and the host country. Policymakers also need to know how well they are doing, and learn from the experience of migrant peoples. A democracy thrives when the learning goes both ways.