Islamic and Muslim Studies in Australia

Edited by
Halim Rane

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Contents

About the Editor

Halim Rane

Associate Professor Halim Rane leads the Islam in Society field of study at Griffith University. He is one of Australia's leading scholars in the field of Islamic Studies. His research focuses on contemporary Islam in the West, religious and ideological extremism, and interfaith relations. He has authored over 60 publications on Islamic and Muslim issues, including six books. Assoc. Prof. Rane is a previous recipient of the prestigious 'Australian University Teacher of the Year' award and he is the current President of the Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (AAIMS).

Preface to "Islamic and Muslim Studies in Australia"

This Special Issue comes at a time when the study of Islam and Muslims continues to be of high academic, social and political importance. Muslim population growth in Australia, the Asia–Pacific region and globally as well as ongoing tensions in Islam-West relations has raised the need for a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. This has been intensified by the narrow and distorted framing of Islam and Muslims within contexts of security and othering. Particularly since the turn of the century, in Australia and Western universities more generally, the study of Islam, and especially Muslims, has been preoccupied with a focus on villains and victims at the expense of the rich and diverse topics that have historically been pursued. This Special Issue seeks to challenge and transcend the constraints of this paradigm by confronting underlying assumptions and stereotypes and featuring research that contributes to Islamic and Muslim studies more broadly.

Halim Rane
Editor

Introduction to the Special Issue "Islamic and Muslim Studies in Australia"

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The field we call Islamic studies has a long history that could be said to date from the 8th and 9th centuries in the Middle East when Muslim scholars, including Quran exegetes, hadith compilers, jurists and historians, began to systematically write about the teachings of Islam. What many refer to as classical Islamic studies continues today in Muslim-majority countries and has been an academic field of study in Western universities since the 16th century. In more recent decades, Islamic studies has been joined by Muslim studies. While the former tends to focus on the formative Islamic texts, documents and literature, such as the Quran, hadith and a multitude of classical writings on Islam, the latter tends to be more anthropological and sociological in its focus on Muslim communities and societies. In both respects, Australian universities are relative newcomers. While the University of Melbourne has offered Islamic studies since the latter half of the 20th century, most of the handful of Australian universities engaged in Islamic and Muslim studies today only began researching and teaching in these fields in the past two decades. As such, Australia has a relatively small but growing number of scholars that contribute to these fields. The aim of this Special Issue is to showcase some of the important research currently being undertaken in Islamic and Muslim studies by Australian academics.

In total, eight articles are published in this Special Issue. All of which involve original, empirical research, using various methods of data collection and analysis, in relation to topics that are pertinent to the study of Islam and Muslims in Australia. The contributors include long-serving scholars in the field, such as Professor Fethi Mansouri; mid-career researchers, including Adis Duderija, Zuleyha Keskin, Mehmet Ozalp, Joshua Roose and myself; and early career researchers: Mirela Ćufurović, Sara Cheikh Hussain, Nafiseh Ghafournia, Jessica Mamone, Paul Mitchell, Aidan Parkes, Riyad Rahimullah and Shane Satterley. These contributors represent many of Australia's universities engaged in Islamic and Muslim studies, including the Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, Deakin University, Griffith University and the University of Newcastle. The topics covered in this Special Issue include how Muslim Australians understand Islam (Rane et al. 2020); ethical and epistemological challenges facing Islamic and Muslim studies researchers (Mansouri 2020); Islamic studies in Australia's university sector (Keskin and Ozalp 2021); Muslim women's access and participation in Australia's mosques (Ghafournia 2020); religion, belonging and active citizenship among Muslim youth in Australia (Ozalp and Ćufurović 2021); responses of Muslim community organizations to Islamophobia (Cheikh Husain 2020); Muslim ethical elites (Roose 2020); and migration experiences of Hazara Afghans (Parkes 2020).

This Special Issue comes at a time when the study of Islam and Muslims continues to be of high academic, social and political importance. Muslim population growth in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and globally, as well as ongoing tensions in Islam–West relations, has raised the need for a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. This has been intensified by the narrow and distorted framing of Islam and Muslims within contexts of security and othering. Particularly since the turn of the century, in Australia and Western universities more generally, the study of Islam, and especially Muslims, has been preoccupied with a focus on villains and victims at the expense of the rich and

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diverse topics that have historically been pursued. This Special Issue sought to challenge and transcend the constraints of this paradigm by confronting underlying assumptions and stereotypes and featuring research that contributes to Islamic and Muslim studies more broadly.

The social and political climate post-9/11 has seen an emphasis on the study of Muslims in relations to terrorism, radicalization, extremism and other violence-related contexts. In his article in this Special Issue, "On the Discursive and Methodological Categorization of Islam and Muslims in the West", Fethi Mansouri examines these issues. Addressing the ethical and epistemological challenges of researching Islam and Muslims in the West, he discusses the impact of how Islam and Muslims are constructed and categorized. In particular, the author considers the role of public discourses on the development of research agendas and projects. This article cautions that the ethical and epistemological foundations of social science research, including inclusion and respect, are at risk of essentialist/orientalist representations of Islam and Muslims in the West.

The framing of Muslims in relation to security has encouraged research on the prevalence, impact and responses to Islamophobia, in which Muslims tend to be studied as victims of ire, prejudice and various forms of mistreatment. Sara Cheik Hussain's article, "Muslim Community Organizations' Perceptions of Islamophobia", makes an important contribution to our understanding of how MCOs have been impacted by and respond to Islamophobia. It is noted that Islamophobia has had a two-fold impact on MCOs by imposing demands on their time and resources that would otherwise be spent on addressing other community needs central to the organizations' work. The author highlights the need to build intercommunity solidarity, utilizing supportive institutional, multicultural schemes and establishing a separate Muslim advocacy organization to respond to the problems Islamophobia poses to MCOs and Muslim communities more generally.

A number of articles in this Special Issue contribute to both Islamic and Muslim studies. My contribution, co-authored with the team that conducted the research presented, bridges the gap between the fields of Islamic and Muslim studies. Our article, "Islam in Australia: A National Survey of Muslim Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents", is the largest and most in-depth study to date of how Muslim Australians understand, interpret, manifest and express Islam. Based on a large national survey and focus groups with Muslims from around Australia, we present findings on: the typologies of Muslims; sources of influence concerning Islam; interpretations of the Quran; perspectives on ethical, social and theological issues; issues of concern; social connections and sense of belonging; views on various Muslim-majority countries; and perspectives concerning political Islam, including jihad, caliphate and shariah. The picture we capture shows that the majority of Muslim Australians have a moderate, progressive, ethical-oriented understanding of Islam, while for the minority, Islam aligns more closely with puritan, Islamist and legalist interpretations. Other key findings include a strong rejection of violent extremism among Muslim Australians and a very widespread view of engaging with non-Muslims as family; friends; colleagues; and, in general, social interaction as normal and good. This research provides a nuanced and contextual understanding of Islam in Australia that challenges and puts into perspective many of the pejorative views about Muslims that have circulated among Australians in recent decades.

The gap between the fields of Islamic and Muslim studies is also bridged by Nafiseh Ghafournia's article, "Negotiating Gendered Religious Space", which makes a timely and much-needed contribution to our understanding of how Muslim Australian women negotiate access to and participation in Australia's mosques. Based on qualitative interviews, the article documents the experiences of Muslim Australian women in relation to restrictions imposed on them by men who control the mosques and how this impacts on their identity, participation, sense of belonging and activism. The article also explores the views of Muslim Australian women on such contentious issues as gender segregation. This research raises important questions and insights concerning the understanding and manifestation

of Islam among Muslim Australians and contributes to the broader discussion concerning the rights and status of women in Islam and Muslim communities.

In association with the growth in research on Islam and Muslims has been an interest in studying Islam at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels among Muslim and non-Muslim Australians. Over the past two decades, more Australian universities began offering Islamic studies programs, majors and courses. In their article, "Islamic Studies in Australia's Universities", Zuleyha Keskin and Mehmet Ozalp focus on the teaching side of Islamic and Muslim studies, presenting a broad overview of the Australian higher education sector's contributions to these fields. The authors discuss the appeal of Islamic and Muslims studies for Muslim and non-Muslim students and consider the Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilization (CISAC) at Charles Sturt University as a case study for addressing a number of challenges arising from teaching classical Islamic studies in contemporary Australia.

The study of Muslims in the West shows significant interest in youth, particularly in the context of security concerns with radicalization and violent extremism. In their contribution to this Special Issue, Mehmet Ozalp and Mirela Ćufurović provide a systematic review of the literature on Muslim youth in Australia. The authors identify three main themes in the literature pertaining to the impact of terrorism policies on identity, the relationship between religion and civic engagement and active citizenship. Finding gaps in the literature on Muslim youth in Australia, they provide insights on key issues needing further research.

Highlighting the spectrum of experiences of Muslim Australians, the final two articles in this Special Issue focus on Muslim elites, on the one hand, and the struggles of new migrants, on the other. In his article on "The New Muslim Ethical Elite", Joshua Roose examines the understudied area of Western Muslims engaged in elite professions, particularly how this may shape Muslim citizenship in the West and its implications for the manifestations of Islam in Western capitalist contexts. At the other end of the spectrum, Aidan Parkes' article, "Afghan-Hazara Migration and Relocation in a Globalized Australia", explores the lived experiences of Hazara Afghan migrants in Australia. In particular, he documents the processes of cultural and identity change associated with relocation in an individualized and globalized Australia. These studies contribute to our understanding of Muslim identity in Australia and how Islam manifests among Muslim Australians in relation to the cultural, social and political contexts.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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On the Discursive and Methodological Categorisation of Islam and Muslims in the West: Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

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Abstract: This article reflects on the ethical and epistemological challenges facing researchers engaged in contemporary studies of Islam and Muslims in the West. Particularly, it focuses on the impact of the constructions and categorisations of Muslims and Islam in research. To do this, it considers the entwinement of public discourses and the development of research agendas and projects. To examine this complex and enmeshed process, this article explores ideological, discursive and epistemological approaches that it argues researchers need to consider. In invoking these three approaches alongside an analysis of a collection of recent research, this article contends that questions of race, religion and politics have been deployed to reinforce, rather than challenge, certain essentialist/orientalist representations of Islam and Muslims in the West in research. As this article shows, this practice is increasingly threatening to compromise, in a Habermasian communicative sense (i.e., the opportunity to speak and be heard for all concerned), the ethical and epistemological underpinnings of social science research with its emphasis on inclusion and respect.

Keywords: Muslim migrants; reporting/representing Islam; epistemological bias; social categorisation; methodological reductionism

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1. Introduction

I want to contextualize this article by recounting a series of events and personal exchanges I have had over the years in relation to conducting research that is focused on Muslim migrants in the West. Back in 2014, I was conducting fieldwork in the southern French town of Grenoble where large numbers of North African migrants have settled since the mid-twentieth century. The research project I was conducting at the time was funded by the Australian Research Council and aimed to examine, and indeed debunk, the circulating assumption that Islamic religiosity is often associated with lack of local civic engagement and social integration among Muslim migrants. I had arranged an interview with a local religious leader, an Imam, that did not go to plan from the word go. The Imam, an Algerian-born migrant himself, was very aggressive and deeply cynical about researchers, academic institutions and their publicly funded research. My own identity as a Muslim researcher did not preclude me from the tirade of allegations about researchers colluding with 'infidel' governments in order to whitewash imperialist, neo-colonial agendas that aim to subjugate Muslims and delegitimize Islam as a faith. Whilst in the end I managed to have a somewhat useful conversation with the Imam, though no formal interview was conducted, this incident highlighted a significant chasm between research agendas and methodological framings and the reality on the ground of everyday Muslim life in the context of migration, settlement and the negotiation of difference. The Imam's scepticism towards me and his rejection and de-legitimization of research funded and approved by public institutions, seems to be reflective of a growing concern about the motives, the utility, the assumptions and the impacts of research on the lives of ordinary individuals.

More recently, I have also been involved in interesting discussions with members of the Australian Muslim community in Melbourne regarding their growing concerns about prevalent Muslims-focused research framings. As an Australian Muslim scholar, I was approached by individual members and leaders of a prominent Muslim community organization who wanted to discuss their apprehensions about the framing of research questions in a project on Islamic religious leadership in Australia. This project was being undertaken by one of our Institutes' early career researchers, which is why these questions were directed to me in my capacity as the Institute's director.

The meetings—which were initiated and organized to consider and address community apprehensions vis-à-vis institutional research framings—progressed beyond the initial agenda that was focused on the project's research questions around religious leadership. Indeed, the discussions engaged with the broader questions of the relationships between research agendas, researchers' positionality, government policies, media narratives and community concerns. The conversations were respectful, honest and conducted in good faith, and left no doubt of the impact of institutionalized practices—be they in research, government policy processes or media reporting on community attitudes towards Muslims and Islam. The key message was that the repercussions of these practices on community members are immediate and profound, even when the intention of such practices is to ameliorate or offer support in difficult circumstances.

These exchanges were challenging on personal and professional levels and prompted deeper thinking about these community-specific concerns, as well as about the deeper epistemological and ethical questions they raised. This is especially the case at a time when, around the world, government rhetoric and policies are at their zenith in regard to agendas focused on security, counter-terrorism and a neoliberal muscular take on social cohesion (Kymlicka 2007, 2015). Thus, my starting point is questioning whether, and to what extent, we still have a substantial problem around research framing that amounts to reinforcing prejudices (Allport 1954; Said 1978) and, in some cases, engaging in epistemic bias (Elmessiri 2013; Said 1997). My exchanges with Australian Muslim community representatives prompted deeper reflections on questions around research design and the specific interview questions that had caused such alarm. These reflections led me to consider whether there is a need to critically appraise dominant research methodologies, as well as broader related ontological questions, in relation to research on minority groups that already suffer entrenched prejudice, institutional discrimination and socio-cultural oppression (Allport 1954; Aslan 2009; Hassan and Martin 2015). More deeply, I wanted to question the assumption that well intentioned research is inherently 'innocent' and that, consequently, as researchers, we are not implicated, nor are we responsible for, the production and reproduction of negative framings and reification of categorisations (Brubaker 2012) that in principle at least we ought to deconstruct and disrupt.

Therefore, this article asks a series of inter-related questions. Are current methodological approaches and conceptual framings in need of renewed critique? Are categorisations inherently problematic and unavoidably reductionist? Should we do away with 'othered' categories of analysis altogether? What are the implications of this for the insider/outsider researcher debate? Furthermore, are the contestations these questions imply more acute when it is white researchers studying minoritized 'people of colour', as is argued forcefully in the burgeoning literature on decolonizing methodologies (Smith 2012; Wilson 2016)? Or are these challenges inherent to the epistemological process itself, which reflects, in addition to contemporary politicized agendas, deep ethno-centric assumptions about knowledge-production processes that often reproduce the scholarly traditions of colonial legacies and imperialist tendencies in the context of oppressed groups (S. Schmidt 2014; Said 1978)?

2. Setting the Scene: Research on Islam and Muslims in the West

Over the past 20 years, a surge in the study of religious minorities has mirrored and coincided with a political focus and media emphasis on all things related to Islam and Muslims (Buskens and van Sandwijk 2016; Klausen 2005). The genesis of this swell was earlier, perhaps, with the political events of the late 1970s, when the war in Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution started to

intensify the international public gaze on Islam and Muslim countries (Said 1997; G. Schmidt 2011). This intensification reached exponential levels following the 9/11 attacks, the subsequent global war on terror and the more recent conflicts across the Middle East and North Africa region in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings (Mansouri 2020). No doubt these political events with their almost exclusive emphasis on violence, terrorism and anti-democracy tendencies have contributed to growing research and media agendas where framing and reporting have become almost inherently problematic and negative. Indeed, many studies have examined the sharp increase in newspaper articles and editorials centring on Islam and Muslims, and the mostly negative framing given to conflicts, risks, instabilities and terrorism (Bowen 2014; Ogan et al. 2014). This portrayal of global Islamic politics, Islam and Muslims, was also accompanied by an enormous rise in sociological research on Islam practices and Muslim migrants in Western cities (Baker et al. 2012; Silvestri 2005; Roy 2004; Werbner 2002).

In reflecting on the problems inherent in understanding and researching 'othered' groups that are 'different' from 'us', Stuart Hall asked 'How do we represent people and places which are significantly different from us? Why is "difference" so compelling a theme, so contested an area of representation? What is the secret fascination of "otherness," and why is popular representation so frequently drawn to it?' (Hall 1997, p. 25). His explanation for this fascination with 'difference' linked constructed notions of 'identity' with notions of the 'Other'; that is, with those deemed outsiders, who are not understood to share cultural traits and historical narratives with a dominant society.

In relation to Muslims in Western cities, there is no doubt that much of the contemporary public discourse, and to a large degree, scholarly attention, are driven by an underlying assumption, mostly generated through negatively constructed and differentiated identities. Socially constructed collective identities understand Muslim peoples' values, religious doctrines, political attachments and cultural practices to be incompatible with Western ways (Akbarzadeh 2016; Mansouri et al. 2015; Raihanah et al. 2013; Mansouri and Marotta 2012; Mandaville 2001). This increasingly problematized framing of Islam and Muslim citizens in the West, including in Australia, is largely responsible for rising levels of Islamophobia (Allen 2010; Aslan 2009) and negative attitudes towards Muslim citizens in comparison to other ethnic and religious migrant groups (Mansouri and Vergani 2018; Markus 2017). In discussing Muslims living in the West, one has to keep in mind that these are not homogenous communities marked by complex diversity around language, ethnicity, religious traditions, or jurisprudence schools among other variables. Indeed, other than the obvious groups of Sunnis and Shiites, Muslims exhibit all the ingredients of a super-diverse global community that is united by the core pillars of their monotheistic faith. Whilst of critical importance, these complexities associated with internal heterogeneity are beyond the scope of this article.

Furthermore, and although the negative media and political emphasis on Islam and Muslims that is shaping public opinions and sustaining anti-Muslim attitudes is problematic, the focus of this article is solely on the scholarly attention on Islam and Muslims in the West. Such academic attention, this article argues, has been growing in recent decades in ways that go beyond the usual interest in migrants and other minoritized communities. Illustrative of this trend is the significant increase in articles on Islam and Muslims in the West in leading international academic journals. As Brubaker (2012) reported in his analysis of religion-focused publications in leading journals, just 5% of the articles published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies (ERS)* between 1978 and 1996 related to religion in general. This proportion more than doubled in the following decade and by 2010–2012, 14% of the journal's articles centred on religion, with a majority of these (almost three quarters) being focused on Islam.

This growth in research and publication on religion continues unabated with a disproportional emphasis on Islam and Muslims, mostly within problematized framings. In a recent survey exploring the past seven years of the *ERS* journal's articles (2013—present), 180 of 909 articles (20%) focused on various aspects of religion and religiosity (Mansouri 2019). Of those 180 articles, 60% focused on Islam and Muslims, and of those, 75% centred more specifically on Muslims in Europe. To put this into some perspective, this journal is not focused on the study of religion and indeed states on its website that it 'aims to be the leading journal for the analysis of the role of race, racism, ethnicity, migration

and forms of ethno-nationalism'. Religion is certainly an important dimension of these issues, but not the main factor given the number of intersecting variables at play ranging from age and gender to socio-economic status and cultural heritage. It should be added here that the analysis of the *ERS* journal could well apply to any number of other similar journals within humanities and social sciences and that its inclusion is only motivated by the fact that it was the focus of Brubaker's seminal work on categorisation and analytical framings.

There are, of course, times when scholarly attention to Islam and Muslim communities in the West is not only intellectually justified, but also important to consider the ways in which Muslim migrants coalesce around their religious or cultural identities. This often happens as part of the gradual integration and adaptation process or in the face of external threats, most notably exclusion and discrimination. That is why, when Muslims living in the West perceive these identities to be under attack from media and government policies, they often turn to intra-community bonding and networking practices that prioritize their collective 'Muslim' identity. Such practices often take place whilst overlooking intra-community differences in favour of, or drawing attention to, 'common knowledge, values, practice, and/or shared life experiences relating to denigrated or discordant social identities' (Tinker and Smart 2012, p. 643). This way of mobilizing a collective Muslim identity in the face of social exclusion and political marginalization, although understandable from an intra-community solidarity perspective, nevertheless raises important questions about the wider oppressive discourses and practices that produce these framings, including within research agendas where Islam and Muslims are often engaged with as the 'problematic other'. However, and as this article argues, there ought to remain a distinct differentiation between collective group identity claims in the face of oppression on the one hand, and reductionist external constructions that are attached to hegemonic agendas on the other. Such negative framings are often articulated within media-related, policy-specific or epistemological contexts.

The escalating focus on Islam and Muslim communities in the West and the resulting research agendas, which are often state-funded, has led to non-Muslim researchers having 'great sway over the "Muslim narratives" in public policy and the broader media coverage' (Islamic Council of Victoria 2017, p. 3). In Australia, the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) argues that this increase in Muslim- and Islam-centric research has been 'driven by methodologies used extensively with security, counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism, violent extremism and social cohesion' (2017, p. 1). Subsequently, this has had a significant effect on 'the self-perception and health and well-being of Muslim communities' and led to an 'unfair burden' of 'over-consultation' on Muslim communities (2017, pp. 3–5).

As the above areas of research focus identified by the ICV demonstrate, this upsurge in research is not divorced from, but rather is enmeshed in, deeper socio-political and historical contexts. Research does not take place in isolation and, indeed, often reflects historical, political and social processes (S. Schmidt 2014). Undoubtedly, the contemporary study of Muslims in the West remains interwoven with the legacy of Orientalism (Said 1978). A legacy that Secularization Theory, for example, has further sharpened through its framing of an oppositional relationship between Islam and by extension, Muslim migrants on one hand and 'secular' Western societies on the other (Casanova 1994, 2006; Taylor 2007; Asad 1993, 2004).

It is Edward Said's (1978) seminal book *Orientalism* that stressed how long standing prejudices intertwine with colonialist agendas to entrench oppression, subjugation and dispossession. Said asserted that, ' . . . the discourse of the West established an image of the Orient as backward, barbaric, and inherently inferior. Middle Easterners thus became caught in the process of othering without the agency of defining their own identity' (cited in S. Schmidt 2014, p. 21). Colonialist projects were enabled, among other things, by research agendas. Said argued, the Western scientific project of 'knowing' the 'other' (be that Indigenous, colonized or Eastern peoples) is perpetuated through 'institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial

styles' (Said 1978, p. 2). It is this systematic instrumentalization of knowledge that has created and entrenched unequal power relations. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 1) writes:

> . . . the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity.

Much critical theorizing of colonization seeks to resist, disrupt and re-construct 'knowledge' creation under its reflexive, decolonizing auspices. In doing so, both Said and Smith's work draws upon Foucault's power–knowledge nexus, where the latter is instrumentalized to enact, sustain and indeed justify the former. As Smith writes, ' . . . research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions' (Smith 2012). Such epistemological understandings and methodological practices determine overall research design and objectives, and ultimately, govern the scope of scientific knowledge claims. Thus, there needs to be more explicit and critical examinations by researchers as to how knowledge construction is understood and approached and how such construction is invariably context-specific and socially situated (Darlaston-Jones 2007).

3. The Epistemological and Methodological Challenge for Islam-Related Research Agendas

When conducting research where the subject participants are members of minoritized groups, especially those belonging to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, researchers need to be cognizant of their positionality vis-à-vis the 'researched', in particular, how such positionality impacts and shapes the conceptual framings and overall research orientation (Bourke 2014). Scholars working within contemporary Islam- and Muslim-related research are faced with these ethical, epistemological and methodological challenges, which they must contend with in order to overcome potential racial and epistemological bias.

Firstly, there is a need to come to grips with the homogeneity/heterogeneity dualism that shapes much scholarly discussion about Muslims in the West. As Tinker and Smart (2012, p. 644) argue:

> . . . there is unarguable diversity within the group 'Muslims': not only national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political and sectarian variation, but also cross-cutting differences relating to class, gender, age/generation, migration, sexuality, disability, etc. The dualism of homogeneity and heterogeneity is not, of course, solely a problem when conceptualizing collective Muslim identity, but nevertheless, it is prominent in scholarship on 'Muslims in the West'.

The necessity to communicate and narrate the internal diversities of those of Muslim faith reflects a wider methodological and theoretical orientation to resist essentialist, racialized framings that have emerged from anti-racism agendas. Understood in this manner, identities are inherently enmeshed, fluid, and shaped by relations of power. Thus, research epistemologies and methodologies must enable the communication of intra-community heterogeneity, in order to engage meaningfully with the multi-faceted complexity of individual lived experiences, and not seek to impose singular, linear knowledge claims upon people.

Secondly, and relatedly, there is also the need to connect researcher positionalities to pre-existing relations of power that permeate the processes of research itself (Bourke 2014). Many researchers try to address these issues in their work by engaging in deep theoretical explorations of the nature of power, authenticity, social relations and the nature of knowledge itself (Spivak 1987; Squires 2008).

An example is the recent intercultural turn in diversity and migration studies that rejects methodological nationalism, ethnocentricity and cultural prejudice (Mansouri 2017; Menski and Shah 2006) and insists on the primacy of the inter-personal, inter-cultural and transformational social engagements across difference (Zapata-Barrero 2019).

The uncritical reproduction of constructed concepts, theoretical or discursive, can reify a particular interpretive lens. In this case, the use of Muslims in the West, or Islam, as a category of analysis in research agendas, can harden homogenous and politicized understandings of those of Islamic faith who reside in Western nation-states. This, in turn, denies their heterogeneities, as well as reflecting and projecting certain power configurations inside and outside the concerned communities. In Australia, pertinent examples include Australia Day celebrations and 9/11 anniversary commemorations, both of which often reduce understandings of complex events to reductionist binaries that are communicated as 'us' versus 'them' (T. Abbas 2004; Gaita 2011). The use of such binaries in framing and interpretive lenses has been instrumental in maintaining and justifying colonial discourses and sustaining 'othering' processes (Smith 2012; Imtoual 2009). In the case of research on Islam and Muslims in the West, this polarizing often occurs along ethno-religious lines, what Huntington infamously coined a 'clash of civilizations', through which Islam, and its adherents and teachings, are rendered incompatible with convivial co-existence and mutual acceptance (Mansouri et al. 2015; Vertigans 2010; Werbner 2005; Said 1997).

Given the politicalization of these categorises, it is therefore crucial that we reflect on the related ethical and epistemological challenges for research agendas focused on Islam and Muslims in Western contexts (Brubaker 2012; Funk and Said 2004; Said 1994). The extensive research being conducted on Muslims in the West 'has extended scientific knowledge on the topic, but at the same time it has created such a diversity of interpretations that this could itself be a new subject of research' (Bectovic 2011, p. 1120). Furthermore, this rapidly growing field of research also includes new agendas and in some cases, conceptual framings, that are inherently antagonistic to Islam and Muslims. For example, government-funded research has largely centred on official approaches to countering violent extremism, muscular social cohesion measures, and harsh migration and asylum seeker deterrence practises. Furthermore, the increased saliency of law enforcement at borders, aimed almost exclusively at Muslim people, has created a broader social and policy agenda, which has led to a body of research that amplifies and reifies the problems of binary categorisations outlined above (Mansouri and Vergani 2018; Jakku 2018; Kymlicka 2015). Consequently, research agendas are particularly problematic because they generate broader understandings and interpretations of Islam that are then used, or appropriated, to drive further discourse, policies and practices that single out, essentialize and problematize Islam and Muslim communities. This often takes place when researchers use Islam and/or Muslims in the West as units of analysis in research frameworks in ways that can reinforce particular fixed, circulating discursive narratives. The challenge for researchers, if they want to avoid such conflation, is to steer away from cultural relativism and ethnocentrism in conceptualizing, analysing and writing about Muslim subjectivities, 'The first tends to evaluate other cultures and religions from its own, while the second assumes that cultures and religions can be understood only from within' (Bectovic 2011, p. 1122). As a result, how 'othered' cultures, religions and individuals are framed requires overcoming the excessive tendencies of both ethnocentrism and cultural relativism in current research.

For this reason, this paper argues for a more critical use of analytical categories such as 'Muslims' and 'Islam', particularly in the context of social integration in the West, to avoid methodological and theoretical reductionism. Such critical use requires an assessment of ideological, discursive and epistemological elements of research. To do this, I now consider how these three interconnected elements are understood and employed in recent research that engages with questions of race, religion and security in reproducing and reinforcing, rather than re-framing and challenging certain ideological positions, historical and contemporary epistemological approaches and discursive orientations.

Thus far, much of the research conducted on Islam and Muslims in the West has been framed in ways that risk compromising, in a Habermasian communicative sense, the opportunity for all concerned

to speak and be heard (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1990). Such a disempowering communicative process can undermine the ethical and epistemological underpinnings of social science research. Exclusionary and reductionist practices are often framed as necessary for loosely defined, and ultimately ill-conceived, notions of public good and national interest. Indeed, many research agendas and priorities, including those run through national research councils, such as the Australian Research Council, often direct research funding to areas perceived to be in the national interest, as in the above list of examples, even if this ends up targeting, scrutinizing and vilifying certain groups. Thus, we need to disentangle, critically and reflexively, intersecting factors in the knowledge construction process. This includes considering the epistemologies that researchers employ, and their related research methodologies and methods. These research frameworks must contextually construct knowledge, both spatially and temporally, in ways that centre relational dimensions and manifestations in what it is we claim to know.

In addition to political and security concerns, research on Muslims in the West has also covered diverse social issues. As Jeldtoft and Nielsen (2011) emphasize, this includes research on how Muslims in the West respond to globalisation, participate in transnational practices and are involved in civil society activities at the local level. Much recent research has focused on socio-legal questions that explore how 'Islamic law is implemented in Europe and employed by Muslims' (Jeldtoft and Nielsen 2011, p. 1114). The assumption here is two-fold: firstly, that Muslims living in the West have an underlying commitment and attachment to a set of religiously inspired laws; and secondly, that these 'foreign' laws are inherently risky and incompatible with the civilizational outlook of Western societies (Mansouri et al. 2015; Rohe 2006).

Much of this academic attention has problematically operationalized 'what it means to be Muslim', as a category of analysis. As Brubaker argues, we must ask 'Who—and what—are we talking about when we talk about "Muslims"?' (Brubaker 2012, p. 2), insisting that answering these questions must involve a careful consideration of the enmeshments of the academic category of analysis researchers use with an 'an increasingly salient—and contested—category of social, political and religious practice' (2012, p. 1). The latter category 'of self- and other-identification' is:

> ... profoundly shaped by the prevailing ways in which people are identified by others; and other-identifications may be shaped—though usually less profoundly, especially where major asymmetries of power are involved—by prevailing idioms of self-identification, especially by publicly proclaimed collective self-identifications. (Brubaker 2012, p. 2)

The escalation of Islamophobia is a pertinent example of the impact of entwined processes of categorisation, oscillating between the analytical and the socio-cultural. In discussing the post-9/11 rise in levels of Islamophobia, Vertigans identifies the ways in which 'stereotypes are utilized [...] to denigrate the outsiders based on characteristics of "group disgrace"'; to the point where these 'outsiders' are 'categorized' as the 'minority of the worst'; that is, characterized by the 'behavior of the least desirable' (2010, p. 29). In addition to this socio-political context, such categorisation is understood to have a long history—'a long-lasting trend in Western societies, increasingly manifested in recent decades' (Allievi 2005, p. 29), which has 'transformed one category into the other ... The other, the different, the foreigner, the immigrant ... [a]nd today the Muslim' (Allievi 2005, p. 3). Thus, Allievi goes on to argue, in public debates, the related 'polarization, at present, is on the Islamic one' (2005, p. 29), which further reify, racialize and (mis)represent the whole community in ways that render them not worthy of empathy, care or respect.

4. Ideological, Epistemological and Discursive Conundrums on Researching Muslims in the West

There are several important points to consider when reflecting critically on the current conceptual framings and discursive categorisations of Muslims and Islam in the West. First, there is the banal idea that the (visible) Islamic practices of Muslims in the West are at odds with contemporary socio-political understandings of civic nationalism, social cohesion, political attachments and national belonging in the West (Mansouri et al. 2015). This, in turn, fuels a public (mis)perception of a deficit in Muslim civic

engagement, where they are characterized as being unable and/or unwilling to engage in the social life of their Western local communities and broader nation-states. Furthermore, this (mis)perception helps perpetuate the view that religious affiliation and observance are somehow linked, directly or indirectly, to violent extremism. There is a view in many Western public discourses that excessive Muslim religiosity might produce adverse social and security situations (Mansouri and Vergani 2018). Implicit in this assumption is the central question of whether Muslims living in the West have the individual capacity and the collective religious leadership to be able to fully engage as active citizens without betraying their faith. This framing is underpinned by difficult ideological, epistemological and discursive questions, which those engaged in research on the lived experiences of Muslim people often fail to engage with in nuanced, contextual and in-depth approaches.

Ideologically, practices of racialized categorising by researchers reify the disempowerment of people who identify as Muslim, as it aids majoritarian ascriptions of an identity that denies agency, heterogeneity or authenticity. 'Muslim', as a category of practice in Western discourses, assigns a prescriptive identity that fails to resonate with those to whom it is applied. This reflects a major shift in how migrants of Muslim faith are identified and referred to in public. They are no longer recognised by their national or regional origin, for example, as Arabic or Moroccan, but rather they have come to be exclusively identified in very particular religious terms (Allievi 2005, p. 3). This reflects a particular homogenous imagining and construction of Islam in the West, which, as a result, paints certain beliefs and practices as being passively held by all, but which Muslims themselves may not hold or exercise.

This discursive shift in the process of recognizing migrants has had profound institutional effects, which, in turn, have enormously impacted individual Muslims and their communities. New suites of programs and intervention strategies, as well as research projects, squarely focus on Muslim peoples' civic nationalism, social cohesion and political attachments and their senses of national belonging. Much of this research is driven by a deficit hypothesis that problematizes everyday Muslim lives in ways that the lives of other religious individuals and groups are not (Mansouri and Vergani 2018). The related research agendas risk reifying, even fetishizing, and reinforcing a particular type of religious visibility, namely that of being excessively religious and not necessarily understood in positive terms.

This process is not without response from those on whom this research focuses; that is, Muslims have reacted to this relentless public discursive stigmatization. Brubaker writes that 'the experience of being stigmatized as Muslims in everyday interaction or public discourse leads some to reactively assert a Muslim identification, to revalorize what has been devalorized' (2012, p. 3). Indeed, research has shown that, within such a hostile political milieu, even those migrants who were not previously religiously oriented often start to identify more strongly as Muslims, in some cases invoking such labels as 'secular' or 'cultural' Muslims (Spielhaus 2010) to justify these self-ascribed religious identities.

The contested interplay within religious identification processes is not only taking place between self-ascribed identity notions (Muslims) and other-identification (non-Muslims), but also within Muslim communities. This has led to the emergence of intra-community tensions over leadership, representativeness, authenticity, ostracization, self-disciplining and self-repudiation (M.-S. Abbas 2019). Indeed, as part of the political rhetoric constructed within securitized agendas, 'divisions may be created within the suspect community where members correspond more closely to "problematic" Muslim identities . . . the "internal suspect body" addresses diverse ways that suspectification operates depending on how the body is read by other Muslims' (M.-S. Abbas 2019, p. 266). In other words, and reflecting the stereotypical characterization of 'suspect Muslims', in terms of visible and supposedly excessive religiosity (Mansouri et al. 2015), certain members of the Muslim community face intra-community discrimination based on specific ethnic, religious and gendered grounds.

Alongside the ideological and discursive problems within which Muslims in the West find themselves trapped, there are also ontological and epistemological conundrums for researchers to consider. Such consideration requires questioning the philosophical assumptions researchers hold, explicitly or implicitly, about what constitutes social reality; that is, the ontological foundations of their research, which, perhaps, has never been more problematic than in the present situation for Islam and

Muslims in the West. Consequently, in terms of epistemological framing, the key challenge is deciding what we accept as valid evidence of that social reality. A critical engagement of both our ontological assumptions and epistemological considerations shapes how research agendas and projects can be framed, designed, implemented and communicated.

Together, the ideological, ontological and epistemological conundrums reflect the foundational ambiguities between the discursive framing of research focused on Islam and Muslims in the West and the lived experiences of Muslim people. Researchers must engage with the resulting complexities and unpack how their own research's ontology, epistemologies, methodologies and methods reflect or challenge binaries, such as organized versus non-organized Islam/Muslims; individuals versus collectives; ethnicized versus de-ethnicized Muslim subjectivities; or religious versus non-religious identity signifiers. How one critically understands and engages with categories of analysis in research is a challenge that needs to be grappled with, especially for those engaged with Islam or Muslims in the West, given the conflict between discursive constructions and heterogeneous lived experiences. For non-Muslim researchers, Helen Wilson's (2016) notion of an 'ethics of attunement'—where one is less self-focused, and instead is engaged in challenging normatively enduring asymmetrical power relations—is an essential critical lens through which to consider a possible critical re-framing of categories of analysis and entrenched methodologies.

5. Recent Research on Muslims in the West: Some Illustrative Examples

Although a comprehensive and detailed examination of the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of research on Muslims in the West is lacking, this section seeks to offer some illustrative examples of the framing problems discussed above. As there has been little systematic analysis of published research on Muslims, this section will consider some useful data presented in Ismail and Shah's (2014) study, which analysed 100 abstracts of published research articles across five journals dedicated to the study of Islam and Muslims in the West. By using Swales' (1990) introduction–method–results–discussion (IMRD) model and the Create a Research Space approach[1], Ismail and Shah's aim was to examine the rhetorical features of these articles and the genre orientations adopted across the publications. The journals selected for the analysis were the Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Islam and Science, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, Journal of Islamic Studies and the American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences. These journals were selected because 'they are well established in the academic community and are dedicated to the scholarly study of all aspects of Islam and the Islamic world' (Ismail and Shah 2014, p. 76).

The study found, in respect of the IMRD model, that the abstracts almost exclusively included what Swales would understand as introductory information. That is, the abstracts paid significant attention to providing 'the background, situation of prior studies, introduction of current research and description of main features of the research' (Ismail and Shah 2014, p. 76). They included less information on methods employed, and gave very little attention to the research findings, the results or the broader conceptual discussion of the articles, as illustrated in Figure 1.

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[1] The IMRD model was designed to assist with the construction of the 'rhetorical structure of a research article' and the Create a Research Space model 'accounts for the rhetorical structure of the Introduction' of a research article (Ismail and Shah 2014, p. 76).
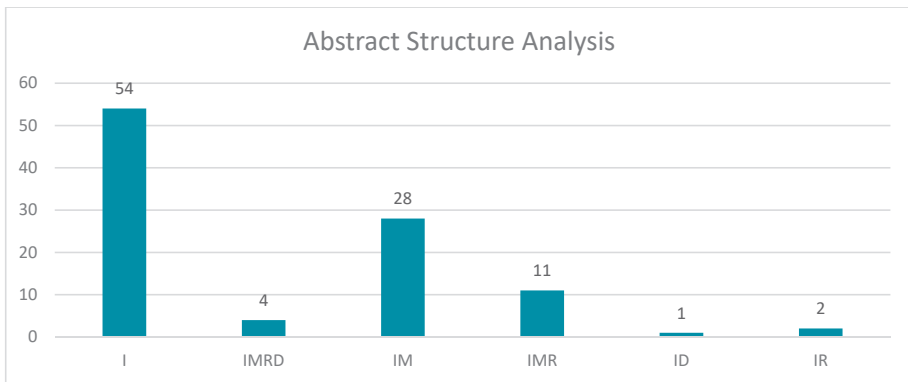
Figure 1. Structural analysis of the article abstracts. I, introduction; IMRD, introduction–method–results–discussion; IM, introduction–methods; IMR, introduction–method–results; ID, introduction–discussion; IR, introduction–results.

What does this kind of rhetorical analysis reveal about research approaches and methodological choices in the context of Muslims in the West? Ismail and Shah's analysis seems to suggest that for the purposes of appealing to reviewers and readers, researchers of Muslims/Islam tend to emphasize discursive framings when communicating their studies and constructing their papers' abstracts. This, in turn, infers a tendency not to prioritise the empirical results of the reported research or the relevant theoretical discussions. The above findings highlight a lacuna in methodological and dissemination approaches that are more explicitly presented in order to engender deeper, more nuanced understandings and reporting of both the rhetorical constructions of the reported research and the epistemological approaches underpinning this body of literature.

Research agendas on Muslims in the West have been predominantly deficit-oriented and in many cases blatantly instrumentalized to fit within certain pre-existing paradigms demanded by political expediency and public agendas. That is, research has often been constructed around ideas of Muslims in the West being problematic. In the context of Muslims in the West being routinely linked to public discourse around terrorism and national security, Lipschutz (1995, p. 9) argues that '[s]ecurity . . . is meaningless without an "other" to help specify the conditions of insecurity'. As Breen-Smith suggests, the 'othering' referred to by Lipschutz 'is the state-level division of society into two ideological camps, with the West characterized by the values of liberty, democracy and freedom, and the "other" camp seen as embodying antithetical values and goals and posing a threat to international security' (2014, p. 226).

This tendency to 'other' and racialize is clearly illustrated by the mobilization of 'Muslims' and 'Islam' as categories of analysis to examine a vast plethora of research questions that often fail to disentangle heterogeneous Muslim identities from Islam as a theology and as a religious basis for group culture. By scanning recently published research on Muslims, it is evident that the thematic focus reflects these problematized agendas, which range from challenges of migrant integration and acculturation to race relations and global religious movements. There is also a growing interest in transnational connections and group solidarity among Muslims, political violence and human security (with a specific focus on Muslim youth) and the enduring debates on the status of Muslim women within Islamic laws and in Muslim majority societies. Even when researchers seem to have positive orientations, they still manage to frame overall methodological choices around discursively driven problems or challenges of Muslims in the West. The following abstract by Inglehart and Norris (2009, p. 1) gives an instructive example. They write:

> To what extent do migrants carry their culture with them, and to what extent do they acquire the culture of their new home? The answer not only has important political implications; it also helps us understand the extent to which basic cultural values are enduring or malleable;

and whether cultural values are traits of individuals or are attributes of a given society. Part I considers theories about the impact of growing social diversity in Western nations. We classify two categories of society: ORIGINS (defined as Islamic Countries of Origin for Muslim migrants, including twenty nations with plurality Muslim populations) and DESTINATIONS (defined as Western Countries of Destination for Muslim migrants, including twenty-two OECD member states with Protestant or Roman Catholic majority populations). Using this framework, we demonstrate that on average, the basic social values of Muslim migrants fall roughly mid-way between those prevailing in their country of origin and their country of destination. We conclude that Muslim migrants do not move to Western countries with rigidly fixed attitudes; instead, they gradually absorb much of the host culture, as assimilation theories suggest.

Specifically, Inglehart and Norris' introductory sentence seems to be underscored by an all too common deficit-oriented premise in migration studies, particularly in relation to some groups. In this example, there appears to be a working assumption that Muslim migrants' culture will be at odds with the hosts' and, as a result, might prove problematic in the desired objective of integration and adaptation. The abstract goes on to question the much invoked assumption that Muslim migrants have 'rigidly fixed attitudes'. However, and somewhat paradoxically, whilst the project's findings dispel such problematizing, the research design itself mimics, and thus, amplifies, a binary construction of the relationship between homogenous 'Muslim' and homogenous 'Western' cultures. This study, as is the case with much social science research on Muslim migrants in the West, seems to be underpinned by an assumption that twenty 'Islamic Countries of Origin' share the same, fixed 'Muslim' culture. This premise is, of course, at odds with the heterogeneity of the cultural practices, Muslim or otherwise, of those diverse countries of origins. Thus, the research method in such studies end up reifying a homogenous understanding of who a 'Muslim' migrant is in ways that obfuscate the internal heterogeneity of these migrants' religious practices and cultures, and as a result, reinforces circulating, essentialist socio-political discourses. Thus, while the reported findings do challenge some discursive framings in relation to cultural adaptation and social integration, they nonetheless leave intact, and indeed might even reify, others that are premised on a predominantly homogenous, fixed and uncritical Islamic culture.

Another more recent study published in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* (Asfari and Askar 2020) examines Muslim migrant integration in American society in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing global war on terrorism. Whilst the reported research seems to be focused on the socio-cultural integration and adaptation of Muslim migrants within a political context, this nevertheless problematizes the religious dimensions of their identities. The full abstract states that:

Immediately following the attacks of 9/11 in New York, mainstream media outlets echoed the notion of Muslims as strangers who are unable to assimilate into American culture. The purported difficulty in the assimilation of Muslims in America was linked with their religious affiliation, an indelible marker of their ideology, and one that supersedes any national identity. Given the paucity of research on the assimilation of Muslims in America, this paper sought to explore if-and-how this group is assimilating into American culture. Utilizing a mixed-method design, we conducted focus groups, followed by a multi-state survey. Using segmented assimilation theory, we found evidence that Muslims with higher educational attainment and household incomes are well-assimilated. We also found that respondents who identify themselves strongly as Muslim are less likely to assimilate, preferring instead to maintain close in-group ties. We discuss the implications of these findings in greater detail.

In addition to similar framing tendencies identified in the previous Inglehart and Norris's example, this study seems premised on two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, that assimilation is a desired outcome in the migrant settlement process, even though such framing is inherently problematic as

it reflects a majoritarian view of migrant integration. Such a view sees this process very much as a one-way, unidirectional process with migrants gradually shedding their heritage culture and in the process adopting the majority's mainstream cultural norms. Secondly, the findings reflect an even more problematic assumption that Islamic religiosity is associated with social fragmentation and in-group bonding, rather than externally oriented bridging social capital. However, much in-depth, sociological research has challenged such assumptions and shown that such oppositional, binary assumptions do not reflect the everyday reality of individual Muslim lives which are internally diverse, unique and less prone to simplistic generalization (Mansouri et al. 2017).

More generally, these examples and other similar research reflect much recent scholarship dealing with 'the Muslim question' that are becoming synonymous with Muslims in the West. Even when the overall aim is to understand settlement processes in cultural terms, the actual assumptions around the nature of heritage culture, religious beliefs and related value systems that non-Muslim researchers carry with them tend to be predominately deficit-oriented. As a result, consequent analyses of cultural, social, religious and even political forms of engagement, are often undertaken in ways that at least in some cases seem to project fixity, rigidity and closeness onto their 'Muslim' interlocutors. It is this kind of framing that is causing the members of various Muslim communities in the West to display a high level of cynicism towards researchers and research institutions. This might help explain the growing resistance to participate in research agendas that Muslims in the West perceive to reinforce and project certain racialized views about their culture and religion and that, as a result, fail to challenge, let alone change, their oppressed, subjugated positions in society. However, there are numerous examples of research that not only strives to avoid essentialist, homogenizing framings but is explicitly oriented towards disrupting such methodological and discursive approaches. A good case in point is the growing body of work around the everyday lived experience of individual migrants, including Muslims, where the emphasis is on the vibrant heterogeneity of Muslim's lives and their normalcy. The following abstract provides such an example:

In current debates, Muslims are often perceived as a homogeneous group of devout persons who one and all have close relations with mosque associations and regularly, for purely religious reasons, turn to such associations. However, such notions clash with the reality. This paper contrasts such generalizing ascriptions with a differentiated image close to actual life. On the basis of a comprehensive mixed-methods study, the spectrum and differentiation of the ties of Muslims to constituted Islam, over and beyond ethnic boundaries, are described. The analysis focuses on everyday experiences, views and activities; it also examines the process-driven character and virtualization through the Internet of religious life. The findings of the present study point up the changes religious authorities are experiencing, and just how ambivalent and diverse the relations of Muslims to religious organizational structures are or can be. (Kolb 2020, p. 1)

Nonetheless, in general terms, and whilst it is almost unavoidable that the categories of analysis employed in research will overlap with discursive categories of practice, there is an urgent need to adopt more critical, reflexive framings that prioritize nuanced analyses rather than reproduce reified representations. Research on Islam and Muslims in the West will not disappear any time soon; rather, it will continue to increase in volume and scope. However, it is crucial that researchers outline and adhere to the strictest epistemological and ethical standards in order to generate a worthwhile scholarship that does not become part of the hegemonic structures within which it is often produced. The analysis above of these two abstracts could be applied to hundreds, indeed thousands, other abstracts, but it should not be interpreted as an outright rejection of research that aims to test particular public perceptions of or attitudes towards the Muslim community or any other minoritized group. This remains a plausible, accepted and indeed desired methodological choice that is driven by discursive, theoretical and other epistemological considerations. What is being discussed here is that such design, in most cases unwittingly, does play a role in reifying negative perceptions of the 'target'

community. This is clearly the case at least from the perspective of those affected most directly by this research, Muslim individuals and their communities.

6. Conclusions: Challenges and Opportunities in Making Steps Forward

A de-ethnicized approach to individual religious identity that privileges reified, reductionist framings of minorities is both pervasive and pernicious, particularly in the context of hyper-securitised socio-political agendas (Mansouri et al. 2015; Gaita 2011). This article does not argue for less emphasis on studying minorities nor on a blind avoidance of testing attitudinal hypotheses, including Muslims in the West. It certainly does not suggest doing away altogether with categories of analysis in the context of minorities in general and Muslims in the West in particular. Rather, it seeks to clarify the requisite epistemological conditions needed for studying complex phenomena in ethical, nuanced, and respectful ways that do not end up reinforcing existing modes of oppression and exclusion (Jensen 2011). Indeed, much of the current research continues to be framed through a deficit-oriented lens that fails to 'empower socially oppressed groups, foster "oppositional consciousness" and above all, challenge the existing forms of research that, wittingly or unwittingly, perpetuate oppression' (Imtoual 2009, p. 169).

In order to address some of the challenges raised in this article, humanities and social science research needs to rethink the assumptions, foundations and implications of much of its conventional approaches to studying ethnic and religious identities in post-migration contexts. Historically,

> . . . social sciences research on Muslims and Islam has tended to be focused on Muslims as ethnic minority groups linked into the broader fields of race relations and migration research. Since the 1980s researchers in the fields of race relations and migration have increasingly mobilized 'Muslims' and 'Islam' as a common denominator. (Jeldtoft and Nielsen 2011, p. 1113)

It is this interchangeable deployment of categories across race, ethnicity, culture, religion and other identity markers that has led to the current confused state of affairs in the emerging scholarship on Muslims and Islam in the West. However, there is hope from within humanities and social sciences, as demonstrated by relational sociology and new perspectives that pay more attention to intersectionality, everyday lived experiences, and researcher positionality in the study of Islam and Muslims in the West. Since the causes of racialized, essentialist depictions have largely been linked to global, political events as well as deeper historical engagements, any attempt to account for, let alone disrupt and replace some of the current framings need to be attentive to these external ideological currents, as they often overshadow funding priorities and by extension research agendas. It is this macro-level awareness of this wider politico-historical process that can guard against instrumentalized approaches to research on Islam and Muslims in the West. Perhaps the inadequacy of many critical approaches to the study of Islam and Muslims in the West can be linked to a lack of appreciation of these historical and political processes with all the power, hegemony and oppression that they can invoke vis-à-vis the 'other'.

Furthermore, we need to focus on understanding agency and religious individualization amongst Muslims in ways that account for the non-linearity of the ongoing contestations and negotiations of what it means to be Muslim in supposedly secular polities and where negotiations of the sacred are an everyday meaning-making exercise that can span the tradition/modernity continuum. This understanding of the individualized, agentic dimension of Muslim identity is of critical importance because it challenges the accepted premise of the need to either 'rescue the victim' or to govern the 'suspect'. This approach to framing has underscored much of the research on Muslims in the West, as has been the case in recent years in relation to efforts to profile, subdue, even de-radicalize the 'Muslim terrorist' (M.-S. Abbas 2019; Breen-Smyth 2014).

Finally, mere compliance with procedural research ethics standards and processes within research institutions does not absolve researchers of their obligation to pursue methodologies and agendas that

do not harm the 'researched' individuals and groups. Researchers must grasp the significant tropes associated with studying Muslims in the West and reflect critically on the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of research agendas that often reflect societal agenda-setting and entrenched stigmatizations. With a view to adopting more explicitly de-colonial and de-orientalising lenses, research with Muslims, not on Muslims, needs to be thought of in terms of genuine co-design and co-ownership in agendas and practices. Research needs to ensure broad and inclusive community input into dissemination and communication strategies, with reciprocal research capacity-building being at the ethical epicentre of all such research endeavours. Such approaches will avoid exacerbating the widening ethnic knowledge gap and the prevailing ethnocentric epistemic bias (Elmessiri 2013). Research production must become diversified to include the people whose lived experiences are being studied to bring multiple perspectives to questions of race, class, gender, sexuality and able-ism (Bilge 2010). Knowledge production in general must not only be led by those that researchers seek to research, but must also involve and be led by researchers from those very groups that are supposed to be the subject of examination, be they indigenous, colonized people or minoritized migrant groups. This broadening of research agendas, both in terms of ownership and framing, can represent more authentically the perspectives of those who live and have lived on the margins of social and racial marginalisation (Bourke 2014; Smith 2012). Nonetheless, we must be careful that while we pursue these important critical, inclusive, and empowering epistemological and methodological re-framings, we do not fall into the very exclusionary trap that we want to overcome—that is, to pursue separate research agendas based on in-group membership along religious and ethnic lines.

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Article

Islam in Australia: A National Survey of Muslim Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents

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Abstract: This article presents the findings of a national survey on Islam in Australia based on responses of 1034 Muslim Australian citizens and permanent residents. Knowing what Muslim Australians think about Islam in relation to Australian society is essential for a more informed understanding about Islam and Muslims needed to address misinformation, Islamophobia, and extremism. The findings presented in this article include typologies of Muslims; sources of influence concerning Islam; interpretations of the Qur'an; perspectives on ethical, social, and theological issues; issues of concern; social connections and sense of belonging; views on various Muslim-majority countries; and perspectives concerning political Islam, including jihad, caliphate, and shariah. While respondents' understandings, interpretations, and expressions of Islam overall align with values and principles of equality, human rights, social cohesion, and social justice, a minority were found to understand and interpret Islam in ways that reflect the influence of late 20th and early 21st century ideas associated with Islamist political ideology, and a smaller sub-group were found to have views that could be considered extreme. This article discusses these findings in relation to the early 21st century time-period factors and the Australian social context.

Keywords: Islam; Muslims; Australia; online survey; national security; social cohesion

1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and the 'War on Terror', Islam and Muslims have been a constant focus of media, political and public attention. The faith and its adherents have been routinely framed within the context of conflict, violence, and terrorism (Rane et al. 2014). In more recent years, social media has become a critical space where, as articulated by one study, "posts stoke deep hatred of Islam across the western world and influence politics in Australia, Canada, UK and US" by blending "distorted news and total fabrication to paint Muslims as sharia-imposing terrorists . . . whose existence poses a threat to white culture and western civilization" (Knaus et al. 2019). Given that Muslims are among the largest non-Christian religious groups in Australia, that over 60 percent of the world's Muslim population resides in the South/South East Asian region, and that Islam is predicted to have more followers than any other religion by the latter half of this century (Pew Research Center 2015), a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in Australia is essential.

In Australia, a number of factors have contributed to a perception that Islam and Muslims threaten peace and security, including: (i) Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level assessment

that identifies the most likely perpetrators as Islamist extremists (Australian National Security 2019); (ii) identification of approximately 150 Muslim Australians joining the ranks of ISIS (Jenkins 2014) in addition to many others whose passports were cancelled for attempting to do so; (iii) the conviction of dozens of Muslim Australians for terrorism offenses (Rane 2019); and (iv) countering violent extremism policy that officially "reinforces many of the core stereotypes of Islam in the West: militancy, fanaticism, intolerance, fundamentalism, misogyny and alienness" (Dunn et al. 2016, p. 282). These factors highlight the need for a more informed understanding about Islam and Muslims in Australia in order to alleviate unwarranted fears and misconceptions, counter stereotypes and misinformation, and identify issues that require further attention and education.

This article presents the findings of a national survey concerning how Muslim Australians understand, interpret, and express Islam as well as their views on various ethical, social, political, and theological issues. The Islam in Australia survey was fielded online in September and October 2019 and was completed by 1034 Muslim Australian citizens and permanent residents. This article begins by providing a background on Islam and Muslims in Australia, including a brief history of settlement, basic demographics, and contemporary issues relating to national security and social cohesion. It then discusses the methodology of the study, design and fielding of the survey, as well as the focus groups that were subsequently conducted with Muslim community representatives. The findings are then presented in relation to: Respondents' demographics and representativeness; typologies of Muslims; sources of influence concerning Islam; interpretations of the Qur'an; perspectives on ethical, social, and theological issues; issues of concern; social connections and sense of belonging; views on various Muslim-majority countries; and perspectives concerning political Islam, including jihad, caliphate, and shariah. These findings are then discussed in relation to the early 21st century time-period and Australian social context, followed by the article's conclusion.

2. Background

Muslims have a long history in Australia. Macassan fishermen from Indonesia are known to have made seasonal expeditions to Australia and traded with Indigenous peoples more than a century before European settlement (Ganter 2008). In the 1800s, the earliest Muslims to settle in Australia included Afghans and Indians who worked as cameleers, farmers, and hawkers, and Malays who worked in the pearl industry, followed by Albanians in the 1920s who made their living in agriculture (Jones 1993). The population of Muslims in Australia increased from 2704 in 1947 to 22,311 in 1971 with the repeal of the Immigration Restriction Act in the late 1960s and the transition to multiculturalism as official policy. Australia's Muslim population experienced an almost 10-fold increase between the early 1970s and mid-1990s when it first exceeded 200,000 people. Between 1986 and 1991, Australia's Muslim population experienced a growth rate of 35 percent primarily due to immigration. During this period, nearly 100,000 Muslims arrived in Australia, mostly from the Middle East (Bouma 1995). This was followed by a further doubling of the Muslim population by 2011. According to the 2016 census, there are 604,200 Muslim Australians (2.6% of total population of approximately 23.4 million[1]). Almost 40 percent are Australian-born and of the approximately 60 percent born overseas, most are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey, while significant numbers of Muslims have also migrated from Bosnia, Egypt, Fiji, Malaysia, Somalia, and over 150 other countries (Hassan 2015). This mix makes Australia's Muslims highly diverse in terms of ethnicities, cultures, and languages as well as in relation to lived experiences concerning Islam.

The survey's findings capture a time-period, some 1400-hundred years in duration, and a world away from the context of 7th-century Arabia, in which the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). This time-period also encompasses the centuries that followed, when Islam

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[1] Figure of 23.4 million reflects the findings of the 2016 census. At the time of writing, the total population of Australia was estimated at approximately 25.6 million.

flourished as a civilization. During this time, Islamic civilization developed social and political structures and institutions as well as theology, philosophy and jurisprudence that influenced what Muslims and non-Muslims today think about Islam. Additionally, we must also consider that the time-period of this survey is marked by the context of European colonization of the Muslim world, post-colonization experiences of modern Muslim nation-states, the emergence of conservative and politicized forms of Islam, increased securitization in relation to Islam and Muslims, and the rise of strong anti-Islam/anti-Muslim sentiments.

With the exception of the four respondents who identified as Aboriginal, the survey respondents are all immigrants or descendants of migrants. This includes those whose family migrated from Europe, as is the case for many converts to Islam, as well as respondents from Muslim-majority nation-states, most of which have been independent for less than a century. Since the latter half of the 20th century, Islam has been interpreted and utilized in response to social, political, and other challenges that have shaped how many Muslims understand the religion. The survey respondents' understandings, interpretations, and expressions must be recognized in relation to such factors as an early 21st century manifestation of Islam that will continue to evolve.

While Muslim communities have been established and peacefully coexisted in Australia for well over a century (Bouma 1994; Duderija and Rane 2019), it was not until the turn of the 21st century that a number of phenomena emerged in relation to Islam and Muslims that have threatened national security and social cohesion. As alluded to above, the past two decades have seen a marked increase in anti-Islam/anti-Muslim sentiments, which various studies and polls have found are harbored by 25 to 50 percent of the Australian population (Markus 2018; Essential Research 2016; Dunn et al. 2007). Moreover, during this time-period, Islamophobia[2] has been on the rise (Iner 2019; Hassan and Martin 2015) and, for the first time in Australia's history, multiple social movements and political parties have emerged with explicit anti-Islam agendas (Dean et al. 2016). These developments are, in part, a response to the spread and fear of Islamist-jihadist ideology that has seen 47 Muslim Australian men imprisoned for terrorism offences over the past 15 years (Rane 2019). Justice Desmond Fagan highlights that "in all of these cases the 'cause' underlying the offence, although described by the courts in a variety of ways, has been that of furthering *Islamic ideology* by force and fear through indiscriminate killing of non-Muslims" (Rane 2019, p. 4).

A central aspect of the time-period of this survey is that over the past two decades, a perception of Islam as a violent, existential threat to non-Muslims has impacted the lived experiences of Muslim Australians. Since the latter half of the 20th century, the notion of an Islamic threat in relation to political Islam has been building (Esposito 1999) as Islamism and Wahhabism have been promoted quite aggressively by their proponents as authentic and true Islam in both Muslim-majority countries and the West. In the context of Southeast Asia, for instance, Means (2009, p. 4) describes the changes to Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s in relation to "the massive campaign mounted by Saudi Arabia to propagate and promote the religious and doctrinal principles of Sunni Islam as practiced in Arabia", noting that "what was conservative for Saudi Arabia became a radical message for Southeast Asia's moderate and eclectic Muslim communities" (2009, p. 5). As Muslim-majority countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran competed for authority and leadership vis-à-vis the global Muslim *ummah* (community), Western countries also became an important battle ground. Laurence (2012, p. 54) describes the scales and influence of Saudi Arabia in the process of spreading its form of Islam in the West, noting that "the boom in Saudi proselytism around the world—through the construction of grand mosques, the circulation of millions of free Wahhabi prayer books, and the dispatching of missionaries and imams—was funded by petrodollars at an estimated expense of more than \$85 billion between 1975 and 2005, reflecting a determined effort

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2   As noted by Duderija and Rane (2019) in their chapter on "Islamophobia", while there is no single agreed-upon definition of the term, it is generally understood in reference to fear, prejudice and/or discrimination of/against Islam and/or Muslims and can manifest in various forms including verbal and physical abuse, hate crimes and social exclusion.

to establish spiritual and political hegemony over Muslim practice". Other studies have identified changes to early Islam and experiences of early Muslim communities in the West after the 1970s. Howell (2014) contends that an American Islam had developed by the 1950s but the continuity of this phenomenon was limited in later decades by new Muslim migrants who imposed alternate perspectives of Islam and helped alter the place of Muslims in American society.

Particularly since the 1970s, Muslim Australians sought funding for mosques from foreign Muslim governments, including Libya, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and UAE. Humphrey (2001, p. 39) notes this funding reflects competition between Muslim states for "global Islamic leadership and patronage in maintaining the Islamic faith of all Believers" as well as "continued influence of Islamic political parties and movements in the diaspora". In part, external influences laid a foundation for Islamist jihadists to exploit in the 21st century, particularly as grievances grew in response to the death and destruction caused by Western military interventions. As anticipated by the UK Joint Intelligence Committee prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Islamist threat would be heightened and anti-Western sentiment within Western Muslim communities would intensify in the event of war (Chilcot 2016).

Currently, Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level is 'probable', with terrorism considered most likely to be perpetrated by "a small number of Islamist extremists" (Australian National Security 2019), while the threat posed by far-right extremists is also present and increasing (ASIO 2020). Brenton Tarrant, the convicted Australian terrorist who killed 51 Muslims at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019, wrote a manifesto depicting Islam as violent and intolerant of non-Muslims, who are in danger of a 'great replacement' by Muslim immigrants. His inspiration, Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway in 2011, depicted the history of Islam in his 1516-page manifesto as a 'jihad' against peoples of other faiths (Berwick 2011). While the concept of jihad been addressed elsewhere (Al-Dawoody 2011; Rane 2009), far-right and Islamist-jihadist narratives have certainly contributed to the insecurity of communities and provided justification for the securitization of society. It should also be noted that, in addition to terrorism concerns, demography has also been identified as a key driver in relation to fear of Islam and/or Muslims, often expressed as a demographic threat or fear of Muslim population growth (Larsson 2012; Essential Research 2016), including a 'great replacement' of non-Muslims by Muslim immigrants (Berwick 2011). Against this background, the Islam in Australia survey findings provide insights on what Muslim Australians actually think about Islam in relation to Australian society, which is essential for a more informed understanding about Islam and Muslims in Australia.

3. Methodology

Over the past two decades, a number of surveys have been conducted to capture the views and opinions of Muslims in the West, including in North America, Europe, and Australia. They have examined religious identity and beliefs, views on political and social issues, as well as experiences of racism, Islamophobia, and integration. Examples of these include multiple national surveys of Muslim Americans conducted by the Pew Research Center (2007, 2011, 2017), which have provided in-depth examinations of various religious, social, and political issues. The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) also conducts polls of Muslim Americans on issues including social relations, racism, and Islamophobia (Mogahed and Mahmood 2019). Perhaps one of the largest studies conducted was the Gallup World Poll, which included tens of thousands of interviews with Muslims in 35 countries with predominantly Muslim populations, as well as Muslim Americans, to gain insight into what Muslims really think about such issues as democracy, radicalism, gender, and Islam-West relations (Esposito and Mogahed 2007). Another study conducted in 2010 in Denmark focused specifically on Muslim youth radicalization and integration (Goli and Rezaei 2011), while a 2016 survey of Canadian Muslims examined religious belief and identity, discrimination and belonging, as well as community and social issues (The Environics Institute for Survey Research 2016). In the Australian context, there have been a number of attempts to survey Muslim Australians, including their views on religion, social issues, identity, and integration. For instance, Rane et al. (2011) conducted a survey of Muslims

in Queensland, which examined participant views on a range of issues including identity and social integration. Dunn et al. (2016) conducted a survey of Muslims in Sydney, which examined participants' views on diversity, equality, and integration. Methodologically, these surveys have primarily been conducted via telephone (Goli and Rezaei 2011), self-administered questionnaires (Rane et al. 2011), face-to-face interviews (Pew Research Center), and a combination of both telephone and face-to-face (Dunn et al. 2016). However, the internet and social media have increasingly been recognized as effective platforms for conducting surveys, particularly for minority groups and diverse communities whose members may be hard to reach in order to capture a representative sample (Johnson et al. 2016).

The Islam in Australia survey was conducted through the Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Griffith University in Australia. It was fielded online and focused specifically on how Muslim Australians understand, interpret, and express Islam as part of their lived experience. The survey was designed in relation to questions arising from the academic literature concerning Islam in the contemporary world, particularly Muslims in the West. It consisted of over 150 questions, including two preliminary eligibility questions, 13 demographic questions, approximately 20 convert-specific questions, and approximately 130 main questions. Depending on responses to certain questions, respondents may have been asked more or fewer questions.[3] The questionnaire used predominantly Likert scales to measure respondents' agreement/disagreement and concern in relation to various statements, as well as several open-ended questions. Most respondents required 30–40 min to complete the survey. The survey was conducted according to the ethical standards required by Griffith University[4] and in close consultation with Muslim Australian religious authorities, community leaders and representatives of various Muslim organizations. Early drafts of the survey instrument were pilot tested with Muslim community representatives in Queensland, refined, and shared with Muslim community representatives in other states for feedback.

The survey instrument was finalized and fielded online using Lime Survey. The survey was conducted in English only[5] and disseminated online with the support of Muslim community organizations, groups, and individuals around Australia who shared the link to the survey through email and across social media platforms, particularly Facebook. Online surveys are effective and efficient for studying minority communities, especially those that may be difficult to recruit (Johnson et al. 2016) as in the case of Muslim Australians who are a small percentage of the Australian population. Utilizing the support of Muslim community organizations, groups, and individuals to disseminate the survey resulted in wide distribution and penetration into diverse communities and groupings of Muslims. The survey was open to all Muslim Australian citizens and permanent residents aged 18 years and over. Secondary school-aged respondents were also able to take the survey with the approval of a parent or guardian. In total, 1034 respondents completed the survey. Respondents who attempted the survey but did not complete up to at least the final section consisting of optional open-ended questions were discarded and not included in the data analysis.

In regard to data analysis, basic frequencies were initially calculated through Lime Survey. Further data analysis, including cross tabulations and other tests, was conducted using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 26). In order to gain a more nuanced, qualitative understanding of the data, seven focus groups were conducted in Brisbane, Logan, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, and Perth, each involving 6–14 participants (72 participants in total). Tables, graphs, and other representations of the findings were presented in a 40-min PowerPoint presentation to the focus group participants who were then engaged by the researchers in an open conversation that covered various aspects of the survey findings. These sessions were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed

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[3] For instance, additional questions were asked of converts to Islam as well as respondents who said they believe Islam advocates a particular political system or that their freedom to practice Islam in Australia is threatened were asked to specify.
[4] Ethics Reference Number: 2019/042.
[5] It is worth noting that 8 in 10 Muslims in Australia have a good or very good level of English language proficiency (Hassan 2015).

by the researchers. This process enriched the researchers' understanding of the data and was useful for gaining insights into the variations in thinking behind certain responses, contexts concerning Muslim community dynamics, and accounts of lived experiences in relation to Islam in Australia.

4. Findings

This section will present the survey findings in relation to the respondents' demographics and representativeness, typologies of Muslims, sources of influence about Islam, interpretation of the Qur'an, perspectives on ethical, social and theological issues, issues of concern, social connections and sense of belonging, views on various Muslim-majority countries, and perspectives concerning political Islam, including jihad, caliphate, and shariah. These questions cover the main issues and debates that have arisen in relation to Islam and Muslims over the past several years (Duderija and Rane 2019). The intention in asking these questions was to enable the voices of Muslim Australians to contribute to these debates so as to provide wider Australian society with a resource to better understand Islam and Muslims from the perspective of those who live it. A list of the survey questions is provided in Appendix A.

4.1. Survey Respondents

The 1034 Muslim Australian citizens and permanent residents who completed the Islam in Australia survey were representative of the Muslim Australian population in relation to a number of demographic indicators, including gender, age, country of birth, ethnic diversity, and employment status. Table 1 shows that the basic demographics of the survey respondents, in relation to gender, age, and place of birth, are closely aligned with the 2016 Australian census data concerning Muslim Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). The survey respondents were 50.8 percent female and 49.0 percent male. In relation to place of birth, 38.7 percent were born in Australia and 61.3 percent were born overseas. It can be observed that the distributions of gender and place of birth of the sample is comparable to the 2016 Census. In terms of age, there is lower prevalence of those aged 10–19 and higher of those in their 40s in the survey sample compared to the 2016 Census. Regarding the former, the survey only allowed secondary-school-aged participants with parental approval, while the census data include ages 10 to 19 in this category.

Table 1. Demographics: Census data and survey respondents.

Demographics	2016 Census	2019 Islam in Australia Survey
Gender		
Male	53.0%	507 (49.0%)
Female	47.0%	525 (50.8%)
Other	-	2 (0.2%)
Place of birth		
Australia	36.4%	400 (38.7%)
Overseas	63.6%	634 (61.3%)
Age *		
19-Oct	19.4%	48 (4.6%) **
20s	18.9%	201 (19.4%)
30s	19.7%	347 (33.6%)
40s	11.7%	250 (24.2%)
50s	7.0%	93 (9.0%)
60s	3.8%	70 (6.8%)
70 and over	2.1%	24 (2.3%)

* Note: One missing value for age. ** Note: The survey only allowed secondary-school-aged participants with parental approval, while the census data include ages 10 to 19 in this category.

While more than half of the survey respondents were raised in Australia (56.9%), others were raised in South Asia (22.8%), Western Asia, including the Middle East (12.2%), South East Asia

(7.2%), Europe (5.2%), Sub-Saharan Africa (4.7%), and Northern Africa (3.5%), among other regions of the world. The survey also recorded the decade that respondents or their first family members arrived in Australia, which reflects the settlement pattern of Muslim Australians, overall. Of those born overseas, 56.7 percent arrived in Australia after the year 2000, 29.1 percent arrived in the 1980s–1990s, 9.3 percent arrived in the 1960s–1970s, and 1 percent arrived in the 1940s–1950s. Of the Australian-born respondents, many have resided in Australia for multiple generations as 23.7 percent had their first family member arrive in Australia before the 1940s, 7.1 percent in the 1940s–1950s, 37.7 percent in the 1960s–1970s, 18.3 percent in the 1980s—1990s, and 1.4 percent after the year 2000. The majority of the survey respondents were employed, including full-time (45.5%), part-time (13.7%), casual (9.0%), students (8.8%), or self-employed (11.7%), while 4.3 percent were volunteers, 4.9 percent retired, and 11.9 percent were unemployed. These data reflect the higher number of unemployed among Muslim Australians relative to the wider Australia population (Hassan 2015).

In relation to education, the survey respondents were more highly educated than the Muslim Australian population overall (Hassan 2015). This is not unexpected as those who are more highly educated are more likely than those who are less educated to participate in surveys (Curtin et al. 2000; Goyder 1986; Goyder et al. 2002; Groves et al. 2000; Kandel et al. 1983; Singer et al. 1999, 2000). Over two-thirds (68.3%) of the survey respondents had a post-secondary school qualification, including a TAFE[6] (college) certificate (7.4%), apprenticeship (1.7%), university undergraduate degree (27.0%), postgraduate degree (26.9%), or PhD (5.3%). Nineteen percent were in university at the time of the survey in an undergraduate (10.1%), postgraduate (6.0%), or PhD (3.1%) program. Six percent of the respondents were in high school and 5 percent had graduated high school, while 1.9 percent were at TAFE (college) and 0.2 percent had commenced an apprenticeship at the time of the survey.

Another important factor in relation to the survey respondents concerns their religiosity and religious affiliation. An overwhelming majority (86.6%) said they "publicly/openly identify as a Muslim" and 6.2 percent said "I consider my identity as a Muslim to be a private, personal matter", while 3.6 percent said they "identify as Muslim within Muslim communities only" and 3.7 percent said "I share my identity as Muslim with friends/family only". A large majority of 77.1 percent said they prayed "daily", while 6.9 percent pray "weekly", 1.2 percent pray "monthly", 12.4 percent pray "only on occasions", and 2.5 percent said they "never pray". Perhaps unsurprising given the topic of the survey, when asked how important Islam is to their identity, 79.9 percent said "very important", 16.1 percent said "important", 2.9 percent said "not very important", and 1.2 percent said "not at all important". This is relevant as it gives the researchers confidence that the survey responses reflect those of committed Muslims, sufficiently engaged with Islam.

Given the diversity among Muslims in relation to Islam, it was also important that the survey respondents reflected the different groupings and schools of thought found among Muslims in general. Overall, when asked with what school of religious thought, group, or Islamic tradition they most identify (permitting multiple responses), a majority said "Sunni" (63.6%), followed by a large plurality that answered "just Muslim" (34.0%). Other responses included Hanafi (18.0%), Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaa (12.6%), Shafi'i (6.7%), Sufi (6.5%), progressive (5.2%), Shiite (4.1%), and Salafi (2.8%). Over one-quarter (27.6%) of the survey respondents were affiliated with a Muslim or Islamic association, council, committee, federation, group, movement, or society, while 72.4 percent said they were not, which also gives the researchers confidence that the survey received wide distribution and penetration into diverse communities and groupings of Muslims beyond those associated with the major representative bodies. Additionally, the survey found that 84.2 percent of respondents were born Muslim, while 15.8 percent converted to Islam. This is significant as there is no prior empirical data on the ratio of born-Muslims to converts to Islam in Australia. As it is beyond the scope of this article to examine the responses of Muslim Australian converts to Islam, this will be the focus of a forthcoming article.

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[6]   Technical and Further Education institute.

4.2. Islamic Typologies

A few academic studies have attempted to categorize Muslims according to various typologies but have not provided insight into the number of Muslims in the various categories (Duderija and Rane 2019; Saeed 2007). The Islam in Australia survey posed 10 statements, phrased according to definitions derived from the scholarly literature across a spectrum of typologies, asking "how well they describe you as a Muslim". It should be noted that respondents were provided with the statements only, not the labels, as the researchers took *label avoidance* into consideration in the design of these questions. Label avoidance is when people refrain from associating with particular categories or groups in order to avoid potential stigma (Ciftci et al. 2013). In Muslim communities, stigma can be associated with labels ranging from liberal, progressive, and secular to political Islamist and militant. Based on the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree" with each statement, the survey found a majority to be liberal[7] (64.6%), followed by progressive[8] (39.4%), secular[9] (28.9%), traditionalist[10] (26.2%), ethical *maqasidi*[11] (25.8%), sufi[12] (17.2%), legalist[13] (14.4%), political Islamist[14] (9.5%), cultural nominalist[15] (7.9%), and militant[16] (3.3%).[17] It should also be noted that these typologies are not mutually exclusive but overlap in various combinations, including: Liberal and progressive; secular and liberal; liberal, ethical *maqasidi* and progressive; liberal, progressive, and traditionalist; ethical *maqasidi* and progressive; liberal and traditionalist; cultural nominalist and secular; sufi and ethical *maqasidi*; traditionalist and legalist; traditionalist and political Islamist; legalist and political Islamist; and political Islamist and militant.

While little comparative data are available, Goli and Rezaei (2011) found that half of the Danish Muslims included in their study adhered to some form of Islamist political thought, including those they categorized as fundamentalists (27%), radical Islamists (18%), and militants (6%), which relates to the Islam in Australia survey findings in respect to traditionalists (26.2%), legalists (14.4%), political Islamists (9.5%), and militants (3.3%). However, although legalist-political and Islamist-jihadist Muslims often loom large in media images and public discourses, they represent a minority of Muslims in reality.

As shown in Table 2, some typologies differ considerably in relation to gender. Females are slightly more likely than males to identify with the liberal, progressive, ethical *maqasidi,* secular, and sufi typologies. Conversely, males were slightly more likely than females to identify with the traditionalist and cultural nominalist typologies but much more likely than females to identify with the legalist (males 50.1%; females 37.1%), political Islamist (males 28.2%; females 14.3%), and militant (males 9.9%; females 5.9%) typologies. A statistically significant difference was found in relation gender within the legalist and political Islamist typologies but not the militant typology.[18]

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7   Statement (liberal): "I believe Islam aligns with human rights, civil liberties and democracy."
8   Statement (progressive): "I am a committed Muslim who believes in the rational, cosmopolitan nature of the Islamic tradition based on principles of social justice, gender justice and religious pluralism."
9   Statement (secular): "For me Islam is a matter of personal faith rather than a public identity."
10 Statement (traditionalist): "I am a devout Muslim who follows a traditional understanding of Islam."
11 Statement (ethical *maqasidi*): "I am a committed, reform-minded Muslim who emphasizes the spirit and ethical principles of Islam over literal interpretations."
12 Statement (sufi): "I am a devout Muslim who follows a more spiritual path rather than formal legal rules."
13 Statement (legalist): "I am a strict Muslim who follows Islam according to the laws of shariah."
14 Statement (political Islamist): "I am a committed Muslim who believes politics is part of Islam and advocates for an Islamic state based on shariah laws."
15 Statement (cultural nominalist): "I am a cultural Muslim for whom Islam is based on my family background rather than my practice."
16 Statement (militant): "I am a committed Muslim who believes an Islamic political order and shariah should be implemented by force if necessary."
17 Note: 15 percent of respondents did not strongly agree with any of the typologies.
18 The odds of a male identifying as a legalist was 2.080 (*OR*) times greater than the odds of a female identifying as legalist, 95% CIs [1.451, 2.983], $p < 0.001$. The odds of a male identifying as a political Islamist was 2.843 (*OR*) times greater than the odds of a female identifying as political Islamist, 95% CIs [1.800, 4.489], $p < 0.001$. The odds of a male identifying as a militant was not significantly different (*OR* = 1.939) to the odds of a female identifying as militant, 95% CIs [0.940, 3.961], $p = 0.069$.

Table 2. Typologies by gender.

Typology	Strongly Agree/Agree (%)		Neither Agree/Disagree and Unsure (%)		Strongly Disagree/Disagree (%)	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
Liberal	64.9 + 23.5 88.4	64.6 + 25.5 90.1	6.1 + 1.4 7.5	6.3 + 0.6 6.9	2.8 + 1.4 4.1	2.1 + 1.0 3.0
	89.2%		7.3%		3.6%	
Progressive	42.0 + 31.0 73.0	36.8 + 39.8 76.6	14.0 + 5.5 19.5	11.8 + 5.7 17.5	3.2 + 4.3 7.5	3.0 + 2.3 5.3
	74.8%		18.9%		6.4%	
Traditionalist	31.0 + 31.8 62.7	21.7 + 37.3 59.0	20.7 + 1.6 22.3	22.1 + 2.3 24.4	9.1 + 5.9 15.0	10.1 + 6.5 16.6
	60.7%		23.4%		15.9%	
Ethical-maqasidi	27.2 + 30.2 57.4	24.4 + 35.2 59.6	21.9 + 3.3 25.2	21.0 + 4.8 25.8	10.3 + 7.1 17.4	10.1 + 4.6 14.7
	58.5%		25.5%		16.0%	
Secular	28.0 + 23.3 51.3	29.7 + 26.5 56.2	15.4 + 0.1 15.5	18.7 + 0.4 19.1	14.2 + 18.1 32.3	15.2 + 9.5 24.8
	53.8%		17.8%		28.4%	
Sufi	17.2 + 25.8 43.0	17.3 + 30.7 48.0	32.0 + 3.0 35.0	27.8 + 2.5 30.3	14.0 + 8.1 22.1	14.7 + 7.0 21.7
	45.5%		32.6%		22.0%	
Legalist	18.9 + 31.2 50.1	10.1 + 27.0 37.1	22.7 + 2.6 25.3	30.5 + 2.5 33.0	14.2 + 10.5 24.7	18.5 + 11.4 29.9
	43.4%		29.2%		27.4%	
Political-Islamist	13.8 + 14.4 28.2	5.3 + 9.0 14.3	23.9 + 3.9 27.8	22.9 + 3.4 26.3	23.3 + 20.7 44.0	24.4 + 35.0 59.4
	21.1%		27.1%		51.8%	
Cultural Nominalist	10.1 + 7.7 17.8	5.9 + 9.5 15.4	11.6 + 1.6 13.2	10.5 + 1.1 11.6	23.1 + 46.0 69.1	25.1 + 47.8 73.0
	16.5%		12.5%		71.0%	
Militant	4.3 + 5.5 9.9	2.3 + 3.6 5.9	11.8 + 1.8 13.6	9.3 + 1.9 11.2	19.9 + 56.6 76.5	20.6 + 62.3 82.9
	7.8%		12.5%		79.7%	

Note: Percentages are of the total male participants (507) and total female participants (525), respectively.

4.2.1. Sources of Influence

Respondents were asked about the influence of different sources of information for their current understanding of Islam. Based on respondents' selection of "very influential", the survey identified the most influential sources to be the Qur'an (82.5%), followed by hadith (66.4%), scholarly books (41.2%), imams, sheikhs and *ulema* (29.9%), family (28.4%), academic scholars (22.2%), mosque and madrassa classes (21.3%), internet (16.7%), friends (12.3%), social media (9.5%), school (8.6%), and university (6.4%). These results differ somewhat from the findings of a survey of Muslims in Canada (The Environics Institute for Survey Research 2016), which reported that the respondents' main sources of guidance were as ranked as: Local mosque/Muslim organization (22%), family (11%), local imam/sheikh (10%), Qur'an/holy book (5%), friends/community members (3%), and self-guidance/research (2%).

This difference could be due to a number of factors pertaining to the respective questionnaire design, wording of the question, and/or the nature, or nurture, of the respective Muslim communities.

Overall, 77 percent of the Islam in Australia survey respondents were "completely confident" (37.2%) or "very confident" (39.9%) that what they have learnt about Islam is true and accurate, while an additional 19.4 percent were "somewhat confident", 2.6 percent were "not very confident", and less than 1 percent were "not at all confident" that what they have learnt about Islam is true and accurate. However, 87.8 percent were "completely" (50.9%) or "very" (36.9%) open to new knowledge about Islam, while 10.4 percent were "somewhat" open to new knowledge, and less than 2 percent were "not very" or "not at all" open to new knowledge about Islam. These results indicate that awareness and education programs in relation to Islam are likely to receive a positive reception among Muslim Australians, with the likelihood of a positive reception increasing if the information is derived from authentic Islamic sources and conveyed by credible, qualified scholars or trusted family members. When presented with an issue pertaining to Islam, the largest segment of respondents said they would first consult the Qur'an and Hadith (39.2%), followed by the Qur'an only (13.8%), contemporary traditional Islamic scholars (12.4%), classical Islamic schools of thought (9.5%), and contemporary progressive Islamic scholars (7.4%). Only 0.7 percent of respondents selected "Hadith only", while 6.2 percent were "unsure", and 10.9 percent chose "other". These data provide a strong indication of the importance of Islam's primary sources, particularly the Qur'an, among Muslims for acquiring their information/knowledge about Islam and highlight the importance of interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith.

4.2.2. Interpreting the Qur'an

Before looking at the Qur'an specifically, it is important to note that most respondents (73.0%) said there is more than one valid interpretation of Islam, including "a few" (32.4%), "many" (27.5%), and "as many valid interpretations as there are Muslims (14.1%), while 17.8 percent said there is "only one valid interpretation", and 8.2 percent said they are "unsure". By comparison, among US Muslims most (64%) also say there is more than one true way to interpret Islam, while 31 percent say there is only one valid interpretation (Pew Research Center 2017). This is almost double the proportion of Muslim Australians who share this view, however, indicating that Muslim Australians are more open to multiple interpretations than their US counterparts. Globally, in 32 of 39 Muslim-majority countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center, half or more of the respondents said there is only one correct way to understand the teachings of Islam (Pew Research Center 2012), which suggests that Muslims in the West are more open to multiple interpretations than those who reside in Muslim-majority countries. This may be due to the relative homogeneity of Islam in many Muslim-majority countries versus the heterogeneity of Islam in the West resulting from the immigration of diverse groupings of Muslim from around the world. Additionally, it is important to note that Muslims in the West live within a social, political, and legal environment that offers open and safe space for discussion and debate, and are exposed to Western education, which encourages critical thinking.

The Qur'an is the primary source of Islam and also the most important source for the Islam in Australia survey respondents. Details of agreement and disagreement with various approaches to interpreting the Qur'an are shown in Table 3. Adding the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree" (SA) or "agree" (A) when asked "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the reading and interpreting of the Qur'an?", 79.5 percent of respondents said "the Qur'an should be read and interpreted contextually in relation to historic and social contexts" (SA 44.5%; A 35.0%), 75.8 percent said "the Qur'an should be read and interpreted in relation to the principles (*maqasid*) of Islam" (SA 37.9%; A 37.9%), 68.5 percent said "some verses of the Qur'an are specific to the Prophet Muhammad's time and circumstances while others are relevant to all time and place" (SA 32.0%; A 36.5%), 54.6 percent "the Qur'an allows for new interpretations in response to changing conditions and realities" (SA 21.9%; 32.7%), 48.6 percent said "all verses of the Qur'an apply to all time, place and circumstances" (SA 30.5%; A 18.1%), 47.5 percent said

"according to the interpretations of classical and contemporary scholars" (SA 10.3%; A 37.2%), 29.8 percent said "the Qur'an should be read and interpreted literally" (SA 15.0%; A 14.8%), and 16 percent said "according to the interpretations of classical scholars only (SA 4.7%; A 11.3%).

Table 3. Interpreting the Qur'an.

Interpreting the Qur'an *	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree and Unsure
The Qur'an should be read and interpreted contextually in relation to historic and social contexts	79.5%	5.2%	15.2%
The Qur'an should be read and interpreted in relation to the principles (*maqasid*) of Islam	75.8%	2.6%	21.5%
Some verses of the Qur'an are specific to the Prophet Muhammad's time and circumstances while others are relevant to all times and places	68.4%	14.1%	17.4%
The Qur'an allows for new interpretations in response to changing conditions and realities	54.6%	20.1%	25.3%
All verses of the Qur'an apply to all time, place and circumstances	48.5%	32.7%	18.6%
The Qur'an should be understood according to the interpretations of classical and contemporary scholars	47.4%	18.5%	33.9%
The Qur'an should be read and interpreted literally	29.8%	43.9%	26.3%
The Qur'an should be understood according to the interpretations of classical scholars only	16.0%	51.8%	32.1%

* Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the reading and interpreting of the Qur'an?".

These findings offer more detailed insights as to how Muslims in the West think the Qur'an should be interpreted and cohere with other studies. For instance, US Muslims also say traditional understandings of Islam need to be reinterpreted in light of modern contexts (52%) rather than saying that traditional understandings are sufficient (38%) (Pew Research Center 2017).

4.3. Ethical, Social and Theological Issues

The survey asked a number of questions pertaining to social and interpersonal relations, human rights, and theology. Adding the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to the statements provided, the survey found that respondents overwhelmingly expressed ethical, liberal, progressive views consistent with the above-mentioned typologies. As shown in Table 4, in relation to spousal relations, 95.2 percent said "marriage should be based on mutual respect rather than the subservience of one spouse to the other". Concerning human equality, 92.6 percent said "people of all religion and no religion should be treated equally", 84.1 percent said "women should be given the same rights and opportunities as men", and 93.9 percent said "indigenous people should be

recognized in Australia's constitution".[19] These findings refute claims that Muslims are opposed to equality between spouses and people in general as a standard within Islam.

Table 4. Ethical, social, and theological issues by gender.

Issue	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Neither Agree/ Disagree and Unsure	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
"Women should be given the same right and opportunities as men"	80.6	87.6	6.5	5.1	12.8	7.2
	84.1%		5.8%		9.9%	
"Marriage should be based on mutual respect rather than the subservience of one spouse to the other"	94.0	96.5	2.1	1.3	3.7	2.0
	95.2%		1.7%		2.9%	
"People of all religions and no religion should be treated equally"	89.9	95.4	4.7	1.3	5.3	3.2
	92.6%		3.0%		4.2%	
"Abiding by Australian laws does not equate to disobedience to Allah"	85.8	88.7	4.3	2.4	9.8	8.7
	87.2%		3.3%		9.3%	
"Taking the citizenship pledge (in the name of God) equates to a religiously-binding oath"	62.9	56.9	10.0	9.9	27.0	33.1
	59.8%		9.9%		30.1%	
"Indigenous people should be recognized in Australia's constitution"	93.4	94.4	1.7	0.3	4.7	5.1
	93.9%		1.0%		4.9%	
"Environmental sustainability should be given higher priority in Islamic discourse"	84.4	81.9	1.9	1.9	13.6	16.2
	83.0%		1.9%		14.9%	
"Halal certifiers should assess the ethical treatment of animals as part of the halal certification process"	90.7	93.1	2.9	0.9	6.3	5.9
	91.8%		1.9%		6.1%	
"There needs to be more emphasis on Islamic ethics rather than jurisprudence when teaching Islam"	76.9	78.2	2.5	3.2	20.5	18.4
	77.5%		2.9%		16.4%	
"Someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr (*shaheed*)"	93.6	93.1	2.5	1.7	3.7	5.1
	93.3%		2.1%		4.5%	

Note: Percentages are of the total male participants (507) and total female participants (525), respectively.

The survey also asked six additional questions concerning matters of theology and ethics to which the overwhelming majority of respondents also expressed ethical, liberal, progressive views. Adding the number of respondents who selected "strongly agree" or "agree" showed that 93.3 percent said "someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr", 91.8 percent said "halal certifiers should assess the ethical treatment of animals as part of the halal certification process", 87.2 percent said "abiding by Australian law does not equate to disobedience to Allah", and 83.0 percent said "environmental sustainability should be given higher priority in Islamic discourse". A large majority strongly agreed or agreed that "there needs to be more emphasis on Islamic ethics rather than jurisprudence when teaching Islam" (77.5%), while a majority also said "taking the citizenship pledge (in the name of God) equates to a religiously-binding oath" (59.8%). The response to the latter

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[19] In comparison, 70% of the general Australian population support or strongly support Indigenous recognition in the Australian Constitution (Essential Research 2019).

question suggests that the Islamic requirement to uphold agreements, contracts, and oaths, addressed in detail by March (2011), has resonance among Muslim Australians. However, that 30.1 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed or were unsure about this question suggests that it requires further discussion within Muslim communities. Overall, these findings refute claims central to anti-Islam/anti-Muslim bigotry that Islam promotes cruelty to animals, violence (including domestic violence), and criminality (Wood 2013; Gleeson and Baird 2017; Rane 2019). Rather, these results show that Muslim Australians align their faith with principles of equality, social justice, human rights, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

4.4. Issues of Concern

The survey asked respondents about their level of concern in regard to 15 global, national, and social issues. By adding the number of respondents who said they are "very concerned" or "concerned", the survey found the highest levels of concern for media reporting on Islam and Muslims (95.6%) and discrimination against Muslims (95.0%), followed by anti-Islam sentiments (94.0%), terrorism by right-wing extremists (93.1%), domestic violence (92.7%), mental health (92.6%), affordable housing (92.1%), treatment of asylum seekers (89.1%), climate change (88.5%), terrorism by Muslim extremists (88.1%), affordable higher education (86.8%), economic inequality (86.7%), Australian military intervention in Muslim-majority countries (85.6%), unemployment (84.7%), and reconciliation with indigenous Australians (81.7%). While these results show that issues specific to the treatment of Muslims are of major concern, other issues that concern society, the economy, and the planet more generally are also among the major concerns of Muslim Australians.

When asked to what extent they agreed that their freedom to practice Islam is threatened in Australia, 34.3 percent of the survey respondents disagreed that it is and 12.4 percent strongly disagreed. However, 21.3 percent agreed and 6.3 percent strongly agreed their freedom to practice Islam is threatened in Australia and were asked to specify as to why they thought so. Short-answer responses from the survey participants provide further insight into these concerns. Echoing the sentiments of others, in the words of one survey participant: "The media is quite unethical and affecting [sic] our image negatively and slowly making it very hard to survive at work, street or anywhere we go, by stigmatizing us". In addition to media bias, political rhetoric was also cited as a cause of diminished freedom of religion. In the words of another survey participant: "politicians and commentators claiming through the media that Islam is not compatible with the Australian way of life or discuss other misconceptions on Islam in order to relate to political issues". These sentiments were echoed by another participant: "politicians are using Islam as a means to gain votes by scaring non-Muslims". Overall, the responses of the 214 respondents that strongly agreed or agreed their freedom to practice Islam is threatened in Australia were examined. They referred to pejorative political discourses and rhetoric (N = 57), media reporting and representation (N = 50), right-wing extremism (N = 30), discrimination against attire including *hijab* and *niqab* (N = 30), Islamophobia (N = 25), public sentiments and verbal insults (N = 20), opposition to the building of mosques or Islamic schools (N = 16), workplace and labor-market discrimination (N = 14), misunderstanding and misinformation about Islam (N = 13), hate crimes including vandalism and attacks on mosques (N = 11), countering violent extremism programs and anti-terror laws (N = 10), social stigma, judgement and negativity (N = 9), racism (N = 8), anti-halal campaigns (N = 6), and anti-Muslim agenda (N = 5). These findings indicate that while a large majority of Muslim Australians are concerned about anti-Islam/anti-Muslim sentiments, rhetoric, discourses, and discrimination, a minority (27.6%) perceive this as threatening to the practice of their faith.

4.5. Social Connections and Sense of Belonging

Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning social connections, engaging with non-Muslims, and levels of trust in social institutions. As shown in Table 5, when asked how "involved, connected and a sense of belonging" they feel in relation to various social groups, networks, and

institutions, the number of respondents who said their sense of connection/belonging was "very strong" or "strong" was found to be highest in relation to family and friends (80.4%), followed by the Muslim community (46.3%), school, university, or workplace (45.5%), local mosque (38.3%), neighborhood (28.6%), wider Australian society (25.3%), sports, recreation, or other clubs (22.0%). and the Australian political system (14.6%). These findings are similar to some reported among the general Australian population. The 2018 Australian Loneliness Report found that Australians were most connected to family, while the level of connection to their neighbors was weakest, with approximately one-third (34%) having "no neighbors they see or hear from on a monthly basis" and close to half (47%) having no neighbors they could call for help. Like the Islam in Australia survey, connections to friends were also strong, with the survey finding that "most Australians (92%) have at least one friend that they see at least once a month, and they can talk to about private matters (88%) or get help from (88%)" (Australian Psychological Society 2018).

Table 5. Social connections and sense of belonging *.

Social Connection and Belonging	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Very Weak	N/A
Family and Friends	51.4%	29.0%	14.6%	2.4%	1.3%	1.1%
Neighborhood	10.5%	18.1%	39.7%	19.5%	10.1%	1.8%
Local Mosque	16.8%	21.5%	13.8%	15.0%	10.9%	3.7%
Muslim Community	16.8%	29.5%	34.7%	12.3%	5.4%	1.0%
School/University/Workplace	16.0%	29.5%	30.0%	9.4%	4.2%	10.6%
Sporting/Social Clubs	6.5%	15.5%	26.6%	18.6%	10.3%	22.2%
Wider Australian Society	6.8%	18.5%	43.4%	17.5%	9.7%	3.8%
Australian Political System	4.6%	10.0%	31.6%	25.5%	20.8%	7.2%

* Question: In relation to the following social groups/contexts, how strongly do you feel involved, connected and a sense of belonging?

In part, gender may be a contributing factor to disconnection in some contexts. For example, the focus group discussions highlighted that women are often excluded or feel excluded from mosques. In the words of one participant in Brisbane (P4): "the reality is most Muslim women don't have a connection with the mosque. They don't feel welcome at all ... you're made to feel that you're not welcome." This view was supported by several other participants, including one in Melbourne (P3) who noted that she was not surprised by lower levels of connection to mosques among women: "women in general have less access to the mosques or involvement in the mosques." These sentiments were echoed in other cities as well: "women don't feel as welcome in the mosque as men do" (Canberra, P8). Others also mentioned insufficient space in mosques to accommodate women: "there are mosques that if a woman wants to go there on a Friday, especially the smaller mosques, there is no room for women" (Sydney, P8).

Engaging with Non-Muslims

When asked what they think about "engaging with non-Muslims as family, friends, colleagues and in general social interaction", 92.2 percent of the survey respondents said this is "normal and good", while 5.7 percent said "engaging with non-Muslims should be primarily done for *da'wah* (proselytizing)" and very few respondents answered that engaging with non-Muslims "is discouraged in Islam" ($N = 9$, 0.9%), "forbidden" ($N = 2$, 0.2%), or were "unsure" ($N = 11$, 1.1%). These findings refute suggestions that ideas propagated by Wahhabis and some Salafis, namely *alwala wal bara* (loyalty to Muslims and disavowal of non-Muslims), and interpretations that claim Islam disfavors, proscribes, or forbids friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims (Shavit 2014), resonate with Muslim Australians. Rather, the survey results show that Muslim Australians overwhelmingly reject notions that engaging with non-Muslims somehow contradicts the teachings of Islam.

4.6. Trust in Social Institutions and Policies

The survey asked respondents how trustworthy they consider a number of social institutions and policies in relation to whether they perform their functions effectively, fairly, and honestly. By adding the number of respondents who said they considered the institution or policy to be "very trustworthy" or "trustworthy", we found the highest level of trust in the judiciary (64.8%) and public schools (64.6%), followed by law-enforcement agencies (58.7%), defense forces (36.6%), security/intelligence agencies (32.1%), and parliament (28.7%). By adding the number of respondents who answered that they considered the institution to be "not very" or "not at all" trustworthy, we found parliament (61.4%) tops the list, followed by security/intelligence agencies (51.4%), the defense forces (45.7%), law-enforcement agencies (31.9%), the judiciary (26.7%), and public schools (21%). The relatively high level of trust in the law-enforcement agencies may be due to the significant engagement of police services with Muslim communities over the past two decades. At the other end of the spectrum, the more secretive nature of security/intelligence agencies and recent concerns of war crimes in Afghanistan committed by Australian defense force personnel (Greene 2019) may have contributed to lower levels of trust in these institutions.

In regard to Muslim community organizations, respondents expressed the most trust for Islamic schools and colleges (52.3%), the national board of imams (48.9%), state board of imams (49.4%), and state Islamic councils (46.1%), followed by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (42.3%). It is noteworthy that only a slight majority expressed trust in Islamic schools, while the other organizations fell short of a majority. The organizations respondents considered to be "not very" or "not at all" trustworthy were the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (33.0%), followed by Islamic schools and colleges (25.1%), state Islamic councils (22.2%), state board of imams (21.3%), and national board of imams (20.3%). The focus groups relayed similar sentiments with participants elaborating that they felt a "lack of transparency" (Perth, P13) was hindering trust. Similarly, another focus group participant from Perth (P1) went on to note their feelings towards these organizations could be surmised by a "lack of honesty, lack of integrity, lack of leadership, lack of adding value to community, ego. It's all about them". Overall, these findings show that Muslim Australians are not uncritical of Muslim organizations. That these organizations (with the marginal exception of Islamic schools) have not gained the trust of a majority of Muslim Australians may be due in part to an unfamiliarity with them among a significant plurality of respondents. However, another a contributing factor seems to be certain failings in the operations or conduct of these organizations, which are known within Muslim communities and have occasionally been reported in mainstream media (Morton 2017).

Concerning trust in policies, the most trust was expressed in Australia's multicultural policy (53.8%), which was the only policy trusted by the majority of respondents. Trust in other policies was far less, including border protection policy (32.4%), counter-terrorism policy (27.0%), and countering violent extremism policy (26.2%). Among the policies considered "not very" or "not at all" trustworthy were counter-terrorism policy (50.4%), followed by border protection policy (47.7%), countering violent extremism policy (43.2%), and multicultural policy (27.6%). These findings are perhaps unsurprising given the positive regard Muslims are generally recorded to have in relation to multiculturalism, their concern with border protection policies, and stigma Muslim Australians have experienced in relation to counterterrorism and countering violent extremism policies (Dunn et al. 2016).

4.7. Views on Muslim-Majority Countries

Respondents were asked about the impact of a number of Muslim-majority countries on the understanding and practice of Islam on Muslims in general over the past few decades. The countries that respondents were asked to rate included Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. These are Muslim-majority countries that are active in education about Islam, with prominent Islamic educational institutions, and influential in respect to the global image of Islam. By adding the number of respondents who said the country has had a "very positive" or "positive" impact, the survey found the most positively regarded countries to be Malaysia (52.3%)

and Turkey (51.6%), followed by Indonesia (36.3%), Qatar (28.0%), Morocco (26.0%), Pakistan (17.7%), Egypt (15.3%), Saudi Arabia (13.0%), and Iran (9.8%). However, by adding the number of respondents who said the country has had a "negative" or "very negative" impact, the survey found the most negatively regarded country to be Saudi Arabia (63.0%), followed by Iran (52.2%), Pakistan (39.7%), Egypt (37.6%), Qatar (18.4%), Indonesia (15.0%), Turkey (12.2%), Malaysia (7.0%), and Morocco (6.3%).

This suggests a preference for countries that are more open, tolerant, and democratic and an aversion for those that are more closed, intolerant, and authoritarian. However, the notably strong negativity towards Saudi Arabia may also be due to its role in promoting Islamist-jihadism and Wahhabism associated with groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, war crimes in Yemen, and brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi among other human rights violations that have received widespread attention in recent years. Akyol (2019) contends that Muslims globally are turning away from political Islam because they are "disillusioned with the ugly things done in the name of their religion", including the "civil wars, authoritarian rule, hate-filled teaching" of Islamic movements, Islamist regimes, and militant groups like ISIS. A follow-up, open-ended question asked the survey respondents "among the various countries in the world, which do you think best upholds the values of Islam as you understand them". This was an optional question, of which 650 respondents answered. The responses given resemble the above-cited with Turkey receiving 132 and Malaysia 123 first mentions. Among the other prominently mentioned Muslim-majority countries were Indonesia (N = 33), Saudi Arabia (N = 32), Iran (N = 21), Pakistan (N = 18), Qatar (N = 12), and Brunei (N = 12). However, it is noteworthy that many Western countries were mentioned including New Zealand (N = 17), Australia (N = 13), and Canada (N = 10). Another 76 respondents said that no country in the world upholds the values of Islam today.

4.8. Political Islam

4.8.1. Jihad

Over the past few decades, issues involving armed conflict, politics, and law, including jihad, caliphate, and shariah, have dominated Western perceptions of Islam. The survey asked respondents questions about each of these issues in order to identify how Muslim Australians understand these contentious terms, how they perceive them in relation to Islamic teachings, and potential implications of these ideas/concepts for relations with non-Muslims and wider society. In relation to jihad, respondents were asked about their understanding of the term according to how it is used in the Qur'an and in the example of the Prophet Muhammad. In response, 68.3 percent said jihad means "to strive/struggle through spiritual, charitable or good deeds, including armed struggle in self-defense only", while 18.8 percent said it also includes "offensive armed struggle", 8.0 percent selected "don't know/unsure", and 4.9 percent chose "other". Many of the survey responses given by those who selected "other" as well as the focus group participants revealed that jihad is understood as an inner, spiritual struggle without the component of armed struggle. Many focus group participants made statements similar to this one in Adelaide (P1): "jihad firstly is an internal struggle ... actual warfare is a small part of it." Another focus group participant suggested that the 18.8 percent who referred to "offensive jihad" did so in relation to "fighting back" against "aggressive" Western military intervention in Muslim countries but that "deep inside I think we all believe jihad is an internal struggle and self-defence only" (Canberra, P2). Other responses also viewed the term "offensive armed struggle" to include defending Muslims overseas who are under attack to repel an aggressor or oppressor, as was suggested at a number of the focus group sessions around the country. In the words of a few respondents, this understanding of jihad includes: "to defend the human rights of others", "to free others from invasion and oppression", and "struggle against the oppression of innocent people". This would imply a defensive rather than an offensive understanding of jihad. Taking this into consideration, it would seem that less than 18.8 percent of Muslim Australians may actually understand jihad to be offensive and that the proportion

who understand it to be defensive only may be higher than the quantitative data suggest. Responses to subsequent questions concerning jihad add weight to this view.

When asked, "In relation to armed conflict, what is your understanding of how Islam regards civilians/non-combatants?", 89.5 percent answered "Islam never permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants", while only 4 percent said "Islam sometimes permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants", less than 1 percent (0.9%) said "Islam generally permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants", and 5.7 percent said "don't know/unsure". These responses increase the researchers' confidence that jihad is overwhelmingly understood as defensive rather offensive by Muslim Australians, which is also the view of the majority of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars (Al-Dawoody 2011; Rane 2009). Additionally, it is worth recalling the above-cited finding that an overwhelming majority of 93.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr".

4.8.2. Caliphate

Respondents were asked a number of questions about the relationship between Islam and politics and the institution of the caliphate. When asked, "Do you believe Islam advocates a particular political system, 24.5 percent selected "yes", while 49.1 percent selected "no", and 26 percent selected "don't know/unsure". Those who said "yes" ($N = 253$) were asked about contemporary Muslim-majority states that self-identify as "Islamic", including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Very few respondents regarded these as "Islamic": Saudi Arabia ($N = 51$, 17%), Iran ($N = 36$, 12%), Pakistan ($N = 28$, 9%), and ISIS ($N = 16$, 5%). Most respondents (60%) selected "other" and then said "none" when asked to name a state or political system they consider to be legitimately Islamic. These findings suggest that a minority of Muslim Australians believe Islam advocates a particular political system, while most do not think so. Moreover, the size of this minority seems to shrink when asked to identify an Islamic state or Islamic political system.

When asked whether the form of government referred to as a *khilafah*/caliphate is a religious obligation, 9.3 percent strongly agreed, 13.9 percent agreed, 20.1 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, 20.1 percent disagreed, 18.2 percent strongly disagreed, and 17.9 percent were unsure. While little comparative data are available, a Pew Research Center survey found that clear majorities of participants in Pakistan (74%), Morocco (71%), and Egypt (67%), as well as slightly less than half (49%) the respondents in Indonesia, supported the notion of unifying "all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or caliphate" (Kull 2007). The Qur'an and statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad do not provide details on implementing a particular political system let alone command one called a *khilafah* or caliphate. Rather, this system of governance was developed by Muslims after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and came to be regarded as a religious obligation by some Islamic scholars in the following centuries (Razek 2013). However, in modern times, following the abolition of the Ottoman empire/caliphate by the Republic of Turkey, there have been sporadic movements to reestablish a caliphate, the most recent of which have included groups such as Hizbut Tahrir, Al Qaeda, and ISIS. Given that over one-fifth of the survey respondents *do* think the caliphate is a religious obligation, while another one-fifth neither agreed nor disagreed, and about 18 percent are unsure, this is another issue about which more awareness and education is needed, especially considering the main proponents of this idea in recent years are associated with violent extremism and use it as part of their recruitment propaganda (Mahood and Rane 2017).

4.8.3. Shariah

When asked about their understanding of the term *shariah*, a slight majority (51.1%) of the Islam of the Australia survey respondents answered that it refers to "Islamic jurists' opinions and interpretations based on the Qur'an and other sources", while 36.4 percent said it is a "divine/revealed law/legal code", 9 percent selected "don't know/unsure", and 3.6 percent selected "other". Among the latter were a few responses that identified the Qur'anic definition of shariah as "path" or a "way" (Quran 45:18;

42:13). It is noteworthy that the idea of shariah as "law" did not exist during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and that the terms *fiqh* and *shariah* were not evidenced in the canonical hadith compendia in reference to jurisprudence or a legal code (Farooq and El-Ghattis 2018; Kamali 2006). The Islamic jurists of the classical era from around the 8th century developed the concept of shariah as an ideal expression of Allah's will, which encompassed the beliefs, ethics, morals, values, and laws of Islam. In modern times, particularly since the latter half of the 20th century, the idea of shariah has evolved further to become closely associated with the idea of a legal code (Hallaq 2009).

In a global context, Muslims today are more likely to say shariah is the revealed word of God rather than a legal code developed by men. A study by the Pew Research Center (2013), found in 17 of the 23 countries surveyed "at least half of Muslims say shariah is the revealed word of God" and "in no country are Muslims significantly more likely to say shariah was developed by men than to say it is the revealed word of God." Given that Islamist and jihadist groups have appropriated the term shariah as central to their cause and the trepidation it evokes among non-Muslims, especially those on the far-right, there is a need for a critical-analytical, evidence-based understanding of this term, including its use in the Qur'an and by the Prophet Muhammad, and the evolution of its meaning from the classical era of Islamic civilization to the modern times through to its appropriation by Islamist and jihadist groups.

Although a large minority of the survey respondents do not seem to recognize the human hand in the historic development of the legal system referred to as shariah and instead consider shariah to be a divine law, this should not be interpreted as detrimental to social relations. The survey asked a number of questions concerning respondents' views on practicing or implementing shariah as well as their agreement and disagreement with a number of questions concerning shariah and society. By adding the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree" or "agree" the survey found that 73.9 percent are "content with the extent to which Muslims are currently able to practice Islam in Australia" and 71.6 percent said "Australia's legal system upholds the principles of justice and I am generally satisfied with it". A slight majority (51.7%) "would like classical shariah laws relating to family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance recognized in Australian law", while 20.4 percent "would like to live in a country where polygamy is legal", 17.9 percent "would like to live in a country where classical shariah punishments are implemented", and only 9.6 percent think that "counties today that implement classical shariah laws are more just and fair than Australia". It is noteworthy that questions related to shariah also differed by gender with males more likely than female respondents to support the implementation of shariah. As shown in Table 6, males are more than twice as likely as females to say they want to live in a country in which classical shariah punishments are implemented.[20] The gender disparity can also be seen in relation to family matters, with males 18 percent more likely than females to agree or strongly agree with having the classical shariah laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, and inheritance recognized in Australian law.[21] Males were also found to be four times more likely than females to want to live in a country where polygamy is legal.[22]

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[20] Expressed differently, the odds of a male wanting to live in a country with shariah punishment was 2.750 (*OR*) times greater than the odds of a female wanting this, 95% CIs [1.955, 3.867], $p < 0.001$.

[21] Expressed differently, the odds of a male wanting family-related shariah laws 2.190 (*OR*) times greater than the odds of a female wanting this, 95% CIs [1.696, 2.823], $p < 0.001$.

[22] Expressed differently, the odds of a male wanting to live in a country with legalised polygamy was 5.163 (*OR*) times greater than the odds of a female wanting this, 95% CIs [3.615, 7.374], $p < 0.001$.

Table 6. Shariah and society by gender.

Statement	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree/Unsure	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
I am content with the extent to which Muslims are currently able to practice Islam in Australia	74.8%	73.1%	12.0%	13.5%	13.2%	13.3%
	73.9%		12.8%		13.4%	
Australia's legal system upholds principles of justice and I am generally satisfied with it	75.0%	68.6%	12.2%	13.9%	12.8%	17.5%
	71.6%		13.2%		15.3%	
I would like classical shariah laws relating to family matters, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, recognized in Australian law	60.9%	42.9%	14.2%	27.0%	24.9%	30.1%
	51.7%		20.7%		27.7%	
I would like to live in a country where polygamy (polygyny: a man marrying multiple women) is legal	32.5%	8.8%	29.8%	63.4%	37.7%	27.8%
	20.4%		46.9%		32.7%	
I would like to live in a country where classical shariah punishments are implemented	25.0%	11.0%	41.6%	60.8%	33.1%	28.2%
	17.9%		51.4%		30.8%	
Countries today that implement classical shariah laws are more just and fair than Australia	11.6%	7.6%	59.8%	60.4%	28.6%	32.0%
	9.6%		60.1%		30.4%	

Note: Percentages are of the total male participants (507) and total female participants (525) respectively.

4.8.4. Democracy

Since the latter half of the 20th century some Islamist, Salafist and jihadist groups have advocated the idea that Islam and democracy are incompatible (Anjum 2016), which has contributed to confusion among a minority of Muslims regarding the religious permissibility of political participation in democratic countries. This view has most prominently been promoted by extremist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS but rejected by other Islamist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood and related parties, which have participated in democratic elections in their respective countries when permitted (Roy 1994; Bayat 2013). The Islam in Australia survey asked respondents "Is Islam compatible with the principles of democracy?", to which over 80 percent agreed that Islam is "completely" (42.5%) or "mostly" (38.5%) compatible with democracy, while only 5.8 percent said it is "not very", 4.1 percent said it's "not at all" compatible and 9.2 percent were "unsure" about Islam's compatibility with democracy. Comparatively, a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center (2017) found that 65 percent of American Muslims felt that there was no conflict between Islam and democracy, while 30 percent believed that there was "an inherent conflict between Islam and democracy".

The survey also inquired about respondents' views on specific principles of democracy. By adding the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree" or "agree", the survey found strong support for the principles of democracy, including: "freedom of religion" (93.4%), "equality of all people under the law" (91.1%), "human rights, civil liberties and political freedoms" (86.9%), "rule of law" (82.5%), "freedom of expression" (80.7%), "elected political representatives" (77.6%), "free and independent media" (77.6%), independent judiciary (76.7%), and "separation of political and religious authorities" (54.0%). These findings indicate a strong rejection among Muslim Australians of views that consider Islam and democracy to be incompatible. It should be noted, however, that among Australians in general, support for democracy has been declining. The Democracy 2025 project reported in 2018 that only 40.6 percent of Australians were satisfied with democracy, down from a high of 85.6% in 2007 (Stoker et al. 2018). According to a 2019 poll conducted by the Lowy Institute (2019), 65 percent of respondents felt that democracy was "preferable to any other form of government", while a study

conducted by the Australian National University found that 59 percent of participants were satisfied "with the way democracy works in Australia" (Cameron and McAllister 2019).

4.9. Education

A final note on education is necessary before moving to the article's discussion. When we compare the survey respondents who possess an undergraduate university degree ($N = 279$)[23] with those who have not attained a university degree ($N = 127$)[24] a number of important differences were observed. In relation to typology, respondents with a university degree closely resembled the overall sample, while respondents without a university degree were slightly less likely to be liberal (although still a majority), less likely to be progressive (overall 39.4%; university degree 38.4%; no university degree 28.3% - although not a significant difference), and more likely to be political Islamist (overall 9.5%; university degree 8.6%; no university degree 17.3%) and militant (overall 3.3%; university degree 2.2%; no university degree 8.7%)[25]. Specifically concerning political Islam, respondents with a university degree closely aligned with the overall sample, while respondents without a university degree were more likely to say that Islam advocates a particular political system (overall 24.5%; university degree 22.2%; no university degree 32.3%) and less likely to say it does not (overall 49.1%; university degree 52.7%; no university degree 33.1%)[26]. Respondents without a university degree were also less likely to strongly agree that one who attacks civilians is not a martyr (overall 84.4%; university degree 85.7%; no university degree 63.1%)[27], although this was not a significant difference. In relation to interpreting the Quran, respondents without a university degree (28.3%) were more than twice as likely than those who have a university degree (12.2%) to strongly agree the Quran should be interpreted literally[28]. This is noteworthy, as the issue of reading the Quran literally has been identified in Australian court cases as a factor among terrorism offenders (Rane 2019). Encouragingly, even among those who have not attained a university degree, 85.8 percent consider engaging with non-Muslims as family and friends is good and normal and 85.0 percent are completely or very open to new knowledge about Islam. As an indication of the positive role of higher education in this regard, it is noteworthy that 100 percent of the 279 university graduates said that engaging with non-Muslims as family and friends is good and normal and 87.8 percent are completely or very open to new knowledge about Islam. This will be the focus of a forthcoming article but here we suggest that higher education may be a contributing factor to a more ethical, liberal, progressive understanding of Islam and/or a protective factor against more literalist, politicized, and militant interpretations.

5. Discussion

The survey findings represent what 1034 Muslim Australians say about Islam in Australia in a specific time-period. Time-periods refer to the role of historic events in influencing thinking and behavior on an individual basis regardless of one's association with a particular generation or life-cycle

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[23] This includes respondents who selected "university graduate" as their highest level of education and excludes respondents with post-graduate and PhD qualification.

[24] This includes respondents who selected "in high school", "high school graduate", "started an apprenticeship" and "finished an apprenticeship", and excludes respondents who started or completed a TAFE (college) qualification or stated they are currently "in university".

[25] The odds of those without a university degree was not significantly different to the odds of those with a university degree identifying as progressive, $OR = 0.640$, 95% CIs [0.403, 1.003], $p = 0.051$. The odds of those without a university degree was 2.226 (OR) times greater than the odds of those with a university degree identifying as political Islamists, 95% CIs [1.196, 4.145], $p = 0.012$. The odds of those without a university degree was 4.315 (OR) times greater than the odds of those with a university degree identifying as militant, 95% CIs [1.556, 1.944], $p = 0.005$.

[26] The odds of those without a university degree was 1.669 (OR) times greater than the odds of those with a university degree believing Islam advocates a particular political system, 95% CIs [1.046, 2.662], $p = 0.032$.

[27] The odds of those without a university degree 0.592 (OR) was not significantly different to the odds of those with a university degree strongly agreeing that those who attack civilians are not martyrs, 95% CIs [.346, 1.013], $p = 0.055$.

[28] The odds of those without a university degree was 2.851 (OR) times greater than the odds of those with a university degree strongly agreeing that the interpretation of the Quran should be literal, 95% CIs [1.683, 4.828], $p < 0.001$.

phase (Nikolayenko 2008) and provide a useful framework for understanding phenomena related to religious thought and behavior (Rane 2019). The survey respondents resemble the broader Muslim Australian population in relation to key demographic indicators including gender, age distribution, ratio of born in Australia to overseas, ethnic diversity, and employment status. However, there is an over representation of respondents with higher educational qualifications, which is not unusual for complex surveys such as this but should be kept in mind when considering the survey results. Importantly, the survey respondents were largely committed, practicing Muslims for whom Islam is important to their identity. Hence, they were well positioned to respond to this survey. We encourage other researchers to further investigate, but this study suggests that higher education may be a contributing factor to the development of a more ethical, constructive, and peaceful understanding of Islam, and/or a protective factor or counter to legalistic, politicized and militant interpretations of Islam that have been propagated over the past several decades.

Post-9/11, Islam has been seen as a religion that promotes violence and intolerance of non-Muslims, although both these narratives are rejected by the overall findings of this survey. However, this time-period has produced a minority of Muslims who have been seemingly influenced by Islamist political ideologies and Salafist/Wahhabist interpretations that have been propagated since the latter half of the 20th century. Unsurprisingly, some respondents seem to understand and express Islam in legalistic, politicized, and even militant ways, particularly those who may be more vulnerable to radicalization due to grievances with Western military interventions,[29] and/or the prevalence of anti-Islam sentiments.[30] This minority of Muslims are represented in this survey, but one should be cautious about making careless assumptions. Even among the 34 respondents who strongly agreed with the statement "I am a committed Muslim who believes an Islamic political order and shariah should be implemented by force if necessary" and were hence classified as "militant", it should not be automatically assumed they pose a threat to others. Almost as many (38.2%) in this category defined jihad as defensive ($N = 13$), as offensive ($N = 15$), or were unsure ($N = 5$) about its meaning. A large majority (73.5%) said "Islam never permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants" ($N = 25$), rather than it being permitted "sometimes" ($N = 6$) or "generally" ($N = 3$). Only 5 of the 34 (14.7%) considered ISIS to be Islamic. Additionally, a large majority strongly agreed (70.6%) that "someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr" (strongly agree $N = 24$; agree $N = 2$; neither agree nor disagree $N = 2$; disagree $N = 2$; strongly disagree $N = 3$; unsure $N = 1$). However, respondents in the militant category were likely to have a politicized understanding of Islam with most believing that Islam advocates a particular political system ($N = 19$, 55.9%) and 73.6 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that establishing a caliphate is a religious obligation (strongly agree $N = 18$; agree $N = 7$; neither agree nor disagree $N = 2$; disagree $N = 2$; strongly disagree N = 2; unsure $N = 3$). Encouragingly, militants were more likely than not to believe that "engaging with non-Muslims as family, friends, colleagues and in general social interaction" is good and normal ($N = 18$, 52.9%) and to be "completely open" ($N = 22$) or "very open" ($N = 7$) to new knowledge about Islam (85.3%). While this indicates the influence of political Islamist and, to a lesser extent, jihadist teachings and propaganda on Muslims in Australia, it also highlights the viable prospects for education about Islam, even among those who might be classified as extreme or militant.

The main rationale of this research is premised on a modest but important idea that wider society's understanding of Islam and Muslims needs to be informed by how Muslim Australians understand, interpret, and express Islam as their lived experience. One of the objectives of the Islam in Australia survey was to address the claims, information, and perceptions that associate Islam and Muslims

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29 Among respondents classified as "political Islamist" and "militant", 73.5 percent and 82.4 percent respectively said they were "very concerned" about Australian military interventions in Muslim-majority countries, while 54.2 percent of respondents overall gave this answer.

30 Among respondents classified as "political Islamist" and "militant", 80.6 percent and 88.2 percent respectively said they were "very concerned" about anti-Muslim sentiments, while 71.5 percent of respondents overall gave this answer.

with militancy, intolerance, misogyny, and alienness so as to contribute to a more objective, informed understanding of Islam and Muslims in Australia. The majority of the survey respondents believe Islam aligns with human rights, civil liberties, and democracy and believe in the rational, cosmopolitan nature of the Islamic tradition based on principles of social justice, gender justice, and religious pluralism. What many seem to mean by this is an understanding of Islam that involves prioritizing the spirit and ethical principles of Islam over heavily textualist, legalistic, and politicized interpretations. Respondents' strongest social connections were found to be with family, which was also an important source of influence in terms of their understanding of Islam (along with imams, sheikh, *ulema,* and academic scholars), while the Qur'an was by far the most important source of influence.

Acts of violent extremism and terrorism have often been conducted in the name of Islam due to inadequate or misleading religious instruction, including misinterpretation of the Qur'an. How the Qur'an is interpreted by Muslims is an important question that has been raised in Australia and elsewhere in media and political discourses as well as in Australian courts in relation to terrorism offenders (Rane 2019). In the case of R v. Khaja in 2018, Justice Desmond Fagan raised a valid question about how Muslims interpret the Qur'an and called for "cogent religious instruction that the verses upon which he [Khaja] relied are cancelled and that killing non-Muslims and destruction of democratic government are not decreed by Allah" (see Rane 2019, p. 5). The Islam in Australia survey results show that respondents prefer contextual and *maqasid*-oriented approaches to interpreting the Qur'an over textualist and literalist approaches. Accordingly, survey findings demonstrate that respondents hold a compassionate, progressive, and tolerant understanding of Islam that prioritizes Islamic values of wellbeing (*maslaha*) and social justice understood as ethically objectivist concepts and values not wedded to a textualist hermeneutic. Furthermore, interpretations of Islam that advocate violence and intolerance towards non-Muslims seem to resonate with only a minute number of individuals according to the survey's findings. The overwhelming majority of Muslim Australians do not read or interpret the Qur'an in ways that condone violent extremism. In this respect, our results indicate that problems with how Muslims interpret the Qur'an exist among a minority rather than the mainstream majority. Moreover, while there is a minority of Muslim Australians who have been influenced by politicized and militant views derived from literalist and/or heavily textualist interpretations, the very high degree of openness to new knowledge among Muslim Australians suggests that education programs have a good chance of succeeding. This finding emphasizes the important role Islamic scholars and teachers, supported by government and community organizations, can play in this space.

Perhaps due to the high level of heterogeneity and diversity of Australia's Muslim communities in multiple respects, the legitimacy of more than one interpretation of Islam was widely acknowledged by the survey respondents. This runs contrary to the monolithic, narrow, and superficial understanding of Islam that we generally find apparent in pejorative media, political, and public discourses on Islam and Muslims (Rane et al. 2014). The survey showed that Muslim Australians overwhelmingly align their faith with principles of equality, social justice, human rights, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability. They express deep concern for a range of social issues that impact society as a whole, including domestic violence, mental health, affordable housing, treatment of asylum seekers, climate change, terrorism by Muslim extremists, affordable higher education, economic inequality, Australian military intervention in Muslim-majority countries, unemployment, and reconciliation with indigenous Australians, as well as issues that have an impact on Muslims in particular, namely media reporting on Islam and Muslims, discrimination against Muslims, anti-Islam sentiments, and terrorism by right-wing extremists. The vast majority of survey respondents are content with the extent to which Muslims are currently able to practice Islam in Australia, agree that Australia's legal system upholds the principles of justice, and do not believe that countries today that implement classical shariah laws are more just and fair than Australia. These views extend to the way Muslim Australians regard Muslim-majority countries and their preference for more democratic, open, and tolerant nations over authoritarian, closed, and intolerant ones, even though countries in the latter category, namely Saudi Arabia and Iran, proclaim themselves as "Islamic" nations. Additionally, in regard to the dominant stereotype that

associates Islam and Muslims with violence and intolerance of non-Muslims, the overwhelming majority of respondents completely reject the notion that violence against innocent civilians is encouraged or condoned by Islam.

The survey also identified important avenues for addressing national security concerns. At the time of writing, national security concerns are shifting toward a focus on the threat of violent extremism from the far-right (ASIO 2020). As the cases of Brenton Tarrant, Anders Breivik, and others confirm, what non-Muslims think about Islam also matters. Their acts of terrorism targeted Muslims out of a fear that the presence of Muslims in Western countries poses an existential threat to non-Muslims (Ebner 2017). The Islam in Australia survey addressed fundamental questions about Islam and Muslims in Australia and its findings should also be incorporated into programs aiming to counter violent extremism among the far-right. More generally, it is hoped that these findings will contribute to an understanding—contrary to sensational media reporting, Islamist-jihadist propaganda, and uninformed commentary—that an authentic, ethical, progressive, and peaceful Islam that teaches respectful coexistence with non-Muslims is not only theoretically possible but that it is generally exemplified in the lived experiences of Muslims in 21st century Australia.

Part of overcoming prejudice, racism, and Islamophobia is for society to develop more objective, informed, and authentic insights into the communities and groups in question. Muslims have been part of Australia's story prior to British settlement and have peacefully coexisted and contributed to Australia's success as a multicultural country. While Muslims began to appear on the media and public radar in the late 1980s as a group inclined towards religious fanaticism, the framing of Islam and Muslims as a threat to national security did not become dominant until after 11 September 2001 (Rane et al. 2014). Around the time Australia appeared to be moving on from 9/11 (Ewart and Rane 2011), national and international attention became captivated by uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa calling for freedom and democracy (Rane and Salem 2012). Hopes for the region were overshadowed, however, by the rise of militant groups, particularly ISIS, which actively recruited Muslims from around the world, including Australia, to join its ranks and conduct acts of terrorism. Although relatively small in number and unrepresentative of Islam and Muslim populations more broadly, ISIS and its supporters confirmed fears of an Islamic threat (Esposito 1999), an inevitable clash of Islamic and Western civilizations (Huntington 1993), and even a great replacement of non-Muslims by Muslims (Berwick 2011). This survey's findings show that the vast majority of Muslim Australians believe Islam teaches peaceful, respectful coexistence with non-Muslims. For this to be recognized by wider Australian society is important given the threat posed by the far-right to social cohesion and national security (ASIO 2020). The most challenging form of Islamophobia, which hopefully this research will help address, is that which refuses to acknowledge an ethical, peaceful, progressive Islam as authentic Islam (Duderija 2017).

This study has several strengths and limitations. It utilized the far-reaching potential of sampling online, including through social media, augmented by the assistance of Australian Muslim organizations, groups, and representatives to sample Australia's diverse Muslim communities. While a potentially large number of Muslims became aware of this study, it is inevitable that some did not, despite this sampling strategy. These could include individuals who are disconnected from other Muslims and/or internet communications technology. Participation in this research was based on self-selection with no incentives. Combined with the assurance of anonymity, this fosters greater confidence that responses were genuine. However, because participants opted to complete the survey voluntarily, views may not be completely representative of the entirety of Australia's diverse Muslim communities. There may be a greater representation of Muslims strongly connected to their Muslim identity or with views they wish to share. Conversely, there would likely be Muslim Australians who declined to participate because they found the questions too complex, intrusive, or confronting, or were otherwise unwilling to share their views, which they may perceive to be at odds with other Muslim Australians and/or wider society. Further, notwithstanding that 8 in 10 Muslim Australians are proficient in the English language (Hassan 2015), those not proficient in English would not have participated.

Also, being a lengthy survey, the potential that participants experienced fatigue toward the end of its duration is possible. However, the final segment of the survey posed optional open-ended questions, suggesting the preceding quantitative questions may not have been greatly affected by fatigue. These considerations suggest findings stemming from the survey are valid. In saying this, we encourage other researchers to utilize the survey questions (Appendix A) to conduct further research on Islam in Australia and the West more generally.

6. Conclusions

This article has outlined key findings from the 2019 Islam in Australia survey, which has provided considerable insight into the beliefs, identities, and experiences of Muslim Australians. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that stereotypical constructions of Islam and Muslims that have proliferated in mass media and political discourse over the past two decades are not consistent with the beliefs and lived realities of the vast majority of Muslim Australians. Rather, Muslim Australians, while highly diverse, overwhelmingly display an understanding and identify with interpretations of Islam that value equality, human rights, social cohesion, and social justice and reject violence and intolerance. However, a minority of respondents seemingly understand and interpret Islam in ways that reflect the influence of late 20th and early 21st century ideas associated with Islamist political ideology. While a much smaller group was found to hold views classified as militant, these do not necessarily translate into acceptance of violence against civilians. Even among this latter group, most also believe that Islam never permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants and the overwhelming majority believe that someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr. While they are more likely than other Muslim Australians to believe the Qur'an should be interpreted literally and on the basis of a highly textualist hermeneutic, many are also open to contextual and *maqasid*-oriented interpretations and recognize that some verses of the Qur'an are specific to the time and circumstances of the Prophet Muhammad. Their main points of difference with the majority of Muslim Australians is their higher than average adoption of Islamist political ideology, including a belief that Islam advocates a particular political system and that establishing a caliphate is a religious obligation. However, within this group as well as the respondents overall, the survey found considerable uncertainty in relation to questions pertaining to political Islam, as expressed through respondents' selection "unsure/I don't know". This highlights the need for further information and education, particularly concerning the principles and values of Islam, its teachings concerning social relations, and the modern history of idea associated with political Islam. It is also evident that Muslim Australians continue to be concerned about acceptance and their place within broader Australian society, with negative media representation and discrimination against Muslims remaining as significant points of unease. During a time-period in which misinformation about Islam and Muslims continues to abound, it is hoped that this research will contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of how Islam is actually understood, experienced, and expressed by Muslim Australians today.

Appendix A. Survey Questions

Appendix A.1. Section A: Preliminary

This survey is intended for Muslim participants who are either Australian citizens or permanent residents.

A1. For participants over 18 years of age, please check the box below to indicate your consent to participate.

For participants under 18 years of age, you and your parent or guardian will need to check the relevant boxes below to participate.

Expression of consent

I have read the information on the consent form or someone has read it to me. I agree to take part in this survey and give my consent freely. I understand that whether or not I decide to participate is my decision. I understand that I can withdraw from the survey at any time and that I do not have to give any reasons for doing this.

I understand the risks involved; I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty; I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team; I understand that my name and other personal information that could identify me will be removed or de-identified in publications or presentations resulting from this research; I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research; I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research (Ethics Reference Number: 2019/042).

I agree to participate in the survey

If applicable, I agree as a parent or guardian for my dependant to participate

A2. Do you identify as a Muslim?

Yes/No

A3. Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?

Yes/No

Appendix A.2. Section B: Demographic

These questions will allow us to check that this survey is representative of the Australian Muslim population in regards to age, gender, geographical location, country of origin, education level and employment status of participants.

B1. What is your current age?

B2. What is your gender?

Female/Male/Other

B3. What is your postcode?

B4. In which country or countries were you raised?

B5. Were you born in Australia or overseas?

Born in Australia/Born overseas

B6. When did your first family members arrive in Australia?

After the year 2000
1980s–1990s
1960s–1970s
1940s–1950s
Before the 1940s
 Unsure

B7. When did you arrive in Australia?

After the year 2000
1980s–1990s
1960s–1970s
1940s–1950s
Before the 1940s

B8. What ethnicity, nationality or cultural group do you most identify with?

B9. What is your highest level of education?

In High School
High School Graduate
At TAFE
TAFE Graduate
Started Apprenticeship
Finished Apprenticeship
In University
University Graduate
In Post-Graduate Study
Post-Graduate
In a PhD Program
PhD Graduate

B10. As a high school student, which of the following fields of education are/were you most interested in?

Fine Art (music, painting, drama, etc.)
Arts and Humanities (philosophy, history, literature, communications, languages, etc.)
Islamic Studies
Social Science (anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc.)
Law/Legal studies
Education/Teaching
Business/Economics (commerce, accounting, etc.)
Engineering
Health/Medicine
Science (astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, etc.)
Mathematics
Information Technology (IT)
 Other

B11. If you have a TAFE diploma, in what field did you receive your diploma?

B12. If you have an apprenticeship or trade, what are you currently in training for or qualified in?

B13. If you are currently at university or completed a university degree, in what field of study are you currently enrolled or have completed a degree?

Fine Art (music, painting, drama etc.)
Arts and Humanities (philosophy, history, literature, communications, languages, etc.)
Islamic Studies
Social Science (anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc.)
Law/Legal studies
Education/Teaching
Business/Economics (commerce, accounting, etc.)
Engineering
Health/Medicine
Science (astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, etc.)
Mathematics
Information Technology (IT)
 Other

B14. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

Full-time
Part-time
Casual
Student
Self-employed
Volunteer
Not currently employed
Retired
 Other

Appendix A.3. Section C: Conversion

These questions will allow us to have a better understanding of the number of participants who are born Muslims and those who have converted/reverted to Islam.

C1. Were you born/raised a Muslim or did you convert/revert to Islam?

Born/Raised Muslim
Converted/Reverted to Islam

C2. At what age did you become Muslim?

C3. What were the most important factors in your life, or aspects of Islam, that led you to convert/revert to Islam?

Personal hardship
Death of a relative or friend
Spiritual awakening
Answers to questions concerning the purpose of life
Message of the Qur'an

Example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
Personal connection with a Muslim
Marriage to a Muslim
Disaffection or disillusion with a previous faith
Sense of community/belonging
 Other

C4. When you were considering converting/reverting, which teachings or aspects of Islam, if any, did you have reservations about or find problematic?

No issues or problems
Views about non-Muslims
Views about women
Views about homosexuals
Views about violent jihad
Mixing religion with politics
Terrorism in the name of Islam
Gender segregation
Dietary requirements
 Other

C5. Which Islamic tradition, school of thought or group, if any, did you most identify with when you first converted/reverted to Islam?

C6. How has your understanding or practice of Islam evolved since you converted/reverted?

C7. Since converting/reverting to Islam, to what extent have you experienced difficulties with the following?

[A great deal of difficulty/Some difficulty/Very little/No difficulty/Not applicable]
Gaining authentic knowledge about Islam
Reactions or attitudes of family and friends
Reactions from the general Australian public
Making Muslim friends
Acceptance from the local Muslim community
Locating support networks for converts/reverts
Attitudes towards the opposite sex
Gender segregation
Understanding the Qur'an
Understanding the hadith
Learning how to perform acts of worship
Muslim cultural beliefs or practices
Dietary requirements

Appendix A.4. Section D: Identity

These questions are about your identity as a Muslim.

D1. How important is Islam to your identity?

Very important
Important

Not very important
Not at all important

D2. With which Islamic tradition, school of thought or group do you most identify?

Just Muslim
Sunni
Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaa
Shia/Shiite
Ibadi
Sufi
Hanafi
Maliki
Shafi'i
Hanbali
Ja'fari
Ismaili
Zaydi
Ahl-Qur'an
Ahl-Hadith
Salafi
Muwahhidun (Wahhabi)
Tabligh Jamaat
Hizb ut-Tahrir
Progressive
 Other

D3. Which of the following best describes how you identify as a Muslim?

I publicly/openly identify as a Muslim
I identify as Muslim within Muslim communities only
I share my identity as Muslim with friends/family only
I consider my identity as a Muslim to be a private, personal matter

D4. How frequently do you pray (perform *salat/namaz*)?

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Only on occasions
 Never

D5. Please rate the following statements according to how well they describe you as a Muslim.

[Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Unsure]
I am a cultural Muslim for whom Islam is based on my family background rather than my practice
For me Islam is a matter of personal faith rather than a public identity
I believe Islam aligns with human rights, civil liberties and democracy
I am a devout Muslim who follows a more spiritual path rather than formal legal rules
I am a committed, reform-minded Muslim who emphasizes the spirit and ethical principles of Islam over literal interpretations

I am a committed Muslim who believes in the rational, cosmopolitan nature of the Islamic tradition based on principles of social justice, gender justice and religious pluralism

I am a devout Muslim who follows a traditional understanding of Islam

I am a strict Muslim who follows Islam according to the laws of shariah

I am a committed Muslim who believes politics is part of Islam and advocates for an Islamic state based on shariah laws

I am a committed Muslim who believes an Islamic political order and shariah should be implemented by force if necessary

D6. To what extent do you feel judged by other Muslims in relation to your understanding and practice of Islam?

All the time
A lot
Sometimes
Rarely
 Never

Appendix A.5. Section E: Sources of Information

These questions are about your sources of information for understanding Islam.

E1. How influential are the following sources for your current understanding of Islam?

[Very influential/Somewhat influential/Not very influential/Not at all influential/N/A]
Family
Friends
Imams/Sheikhs/Ulema
Mosque/Madrassa classes
School
University
Academic scholars
The Qur'an
Hadith
Scholarly books
Internet (websites, forums, YouTube, etc.)
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

E2. If you were to recommend one source of information to someone wanting to understand Islam, what would that be? For example, a person, group, book, or website, etc.

E3. Which of the following best describes your confidence that what you have learnt about Islam is true and accurate?

Completely confident
Very confident
Somewhat confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident

E4. Which of the following best describes your views on receiving new knowledge about Islam?

Completely open to new knowledge

Very open to new knowledge
Somewhat open to new knowledge
Not very open to new knowledge
Not at all open to new knowledge

Appendix A.6. Section F: Understanding and Interpreting

These questions concern your views on how Islam should be understood and interpreted.

F1. In general, when you have a question that relates to Islam, which of the following sources are you most likely to consult for guidance?

The Qur'an
Hadith
Qur'an and Hadith
Classical Islamic schools of thought (madhahib) (e.g., Hanafi, Hanbali, Jafari, Maliki, Shafi'i, Zaydi, etc.)
Contemporary traditional Islamic scholars (e.g., Hamza Yusuf, Nasir al-Albani, Taqi Uthmani, Yusuf Qaradawi, etc.)
Contemporary progressive Islamic scholars (e.g., Abdullah Saeed, Amina Wadud, Khaled Abou El-Fadl, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, etc.)
Unsure
 Other

F2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Unsure]
Women should be given the same rights and opportunities as men
Marriage should be based on mutual respect rather than the subservience of one spouse to the other
People of all religions and no religion should be treated equally
Abiding by Australian laws does not equate to disobedience to Allah
Taking the citizenship pledge (in the name of God) equates to a religiously-binding oath
Indigenous people should be recognized in Australia's constitution
Environmental sustainability should be given higher priority in Islamic discourse
Halal certifiers should assess the ethical treatment of animals as part of the halal certification process
There needs to be more emphasis on Islamic ethics rather than jurisprudence when teaching Islam
Someone who dies attacking innocent civilians is not a martyr (*shaheed*)

F3. Which of the following best describes your view on how Islam should be understood?

There is only one valid interpretation
There are few valid interpretations
There are many valid interpretations
There are potentially as many valid interpretations as there are Muslims
 Unsure

F4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the reading and interpreting of the Qur'an?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Unsure]
The Qur'an should be read and interpreted literally
All verses of the Qur'an apply to all time, place and circumstances

Some verses of the Qur'an are specific to the Prophet Muhammad's time and circumstances while others are relevant to all times and places

The Qur'an should be read and interpreted contextually in relation to historic and social contexts

The Qur'an should be read and interpreted in relation to the principles (*maqasid*) of Islam

The Qur'an should be understood according to the interpretations of classical scholars only

The Qur'an should be understood according to the interpretations of classical and contemporary scholars

The Qur'an allows for new interpretations in response to changing conditions and realities

Appendix A.7. Section G: Issues

These questions concern your views on legal and political issues in relation to Islam.

G1. What is your understanding of the term *jihad* according to how it is used in the Qur'an and in the example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)?

To strive/struggle through spiritual, charitable or good deeds, including armed struggle in self-defence only

To strive/struggle through spiritual, charitable or good deeds, including defensive and offensive armed struggle

Don't know/Unsure

 Other

G2.   In relation to armed conflict, what is your understanding of how Islam regards civilians/non-combatants?

Islam never permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants

Islam sometimes permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants

Islam generally permits armed conflict against civilians/non-combatants

Don't know/Unsure

G3. Do you believe that Islam advocates a particular political system?

Yes/No

Don't know/Unsure

G4. Which of the following do you consider to be legitimate Islamic states? You may also give another example of a state or political system you consider to be legitimately Islamic.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Islamic Republic of Iran

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, ISIL, Daesh)

 Other

G5. Is Islam compatible with the principles of democracy?

Yes, completely

Mostly

Not very

No, not at all

Don't know/unsure

G6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following principles of democracy?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Unsure]

The rule of law
Equality of all people under the law
Elected political representatives
Independent judiciary
Separation of political and religious authorities
Human rights, civil liberties, and political freedoms
Freedom of religion
Freedom of expression
Free and independent media

G7.   To what extent do you agree or disagree that the form of government referred to as a *khilafah*/caliphate is an Islamic religious obligation?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Unsure]

G8. Which of the following is closest to your understanding of the term *shariah*?

The divine/revealed law/legal code
Islamic jurists' opinions and interpretations based on the Qur'an and other sources
Don't know/unsure
Other
 Other

G9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Islam and classical *shariah* laws in relation to Australian laws and legal system?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Unsure]
I am content with the extent to which Muslims are currently able to practice Islam in Australia
Australia's legal system upholds principles of justice and I am generally satisfied with it
I would like classical shariah laws relating to family matters, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, recognized in Australian law
I would like to live in a country where polygamy (polygyny: a man marrying multiple women) is legal
I would like to live in a country where classical shariah punishments are implemented
Countries today that implement classical shariah laws are more just and fair than Australia

Appendix A.8. Section H: Social Connection

These questions ask about your feelings of acceptance, sense of belonging and social connections.

H1.   In relation to the following social groups/contexts, how strongly do you feel involved, connected and a sense of belonging?

[Very strong/Strong/Moderate/Weak/Very weak/Unsure/Not applicable]
Family and friends
Neighborhood
Local mosque
Muslim community
School, university or workplace
Sports, recreation or other clubs
Wider Australian society
Australian political system

H2.   Are you affiliated with any Islamic/Muslim organization such as an association, council, committee, federation, group, movement, society, etc.?

Yes/No

H3. With which Islamic/Muslim organization, association, council, committee, federation, group, movement or society are you affiliated?

H4. Which of the following statements is closest to what you think about engaging with non-Muslims as family, friends, colleagues and in general social interactions?

Engaging with non-Muslims is normal and good

Engaging with non-Muslims should be primarily done for da'wah (to spread Islam)

Engaging with non-Muslims is discouraged in Islam and should be kept to a minimum

Engaging with non-Muslims is forbidden in Islam and should be avoided

Don't know/unsure

H5. To what extent do you agree that your freedom to practice Islam is threatened in Australia?

[Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/]

H6. If you think your freedom to practice Islam is threatened in Australia, please specify why you think so:

H7. How concerned are you about the following issues?

[Very concerned/Concerned/Not very concerned/Not at all concerned/Unsure]

Climate change

Reconciliation with indigenous Australians

Treatment of asylum seekers

Economic inequality

Unemployment

Affordable higher education

Affordable housing

Domestic violence

Mental health

Anti-Islam sentiments

Discrimination against Muslims

Media reporting on Islam and Muslims

Terrorism by right-wing extremists

Terrorism by Muslim extremists

Australian military intervention in Muslim-majority countries

H8. How trustworthy do you consider the following social institutions and policies in performing their functions effectively, fairly and honestly?

[Very trustworthy/Somewhat Trustworthy/Not very trustworthy/Not at all Trustworthy/Unsure]

Parliament

Judiciary (courts)

Defence forces (military)

Security/Intelligence agencies

Law-enforcement agencies (police)

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

State Islamic Council

State board of Imams

National board of Imams

Islamic schools/colleges
Public schools
Multicultural policy
Counter-terrorism policy
Countering violent extremism policy (CVE)
Border protection policy

Appendix A.9. Section I: Representation

These questions concern your views about how Islam is represented.

I1. In your opinion, what impact have the following countries had on the understanding and practice of Islam among Muslims in general over the past few decades?

[Very Positive/Positive/Neutral/Negative/Very Negative/Unsure]
Egypt
Indonesia
Iran
Malaysia
Morocco
Pakistan
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
 Turkey

I2. Among the various countries, groups and individuals in the world, which/who do you think best upholds the values of Islam as you understand them?

Country
Group
Individual (person)

I3. Briefly, in your own words, which verse of the Qur'an, Hadith or story from Islamic tradition best represents your understanding of what it means to be a Muslim?

I4. How would you describe the main teachings of Islam to a non-Muslim?

I5. Do you have any additional comments or feedback about this survey?

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Article

Islamic Studies in Australia's Universities

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Abstract: Islamic studies is an in-demand discipline area in Australia, including both classical Islamic studies and contemporary Islamic studies. While the field of classical Islamic studies has evolved over the centuries alongside the needs of the societies it serves, it has, nevertheless, remained within a well-established Islamic framework. This type of knowledge is sought by many, especially Muslims. Contemporary Islamic studies also plays a critical role in understanding Islam and Muslims in the contemporary context. The higher education sector in Australia contributes to this knowledge base via the Islamic studies courses it offers. This article discusses the positioning of the higher education sector in fulfilling Islamic educational needs, especially in the presence of other non-accredited education institutions such as mosques and madrasas. Despite the presence of other educational institutions, the higher educational sector appeals to a large pool of students, as evidenced by the number of Islamic studies courses offered by fourteen Australian universities. The teaching of classical Islamic studies in the higher education sector is not without its challenges. These challenges can be overcome and have been overcome to a large degree by the Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation (CISAC), Charles Sturt University (CSU). CISAC was used as a case study, as it is the largest Islamic studies department offering the greatest number of classical Islamic studies focused courses with the highest number of Islamic studies students in Australia. This article, overall, demonstrates that there is an ongoing need for Islamic studies to be taught, both in a classical and contemporary capacity, in the higher education sector.

Keywords: Islamic studies; Islamic higher education; Muslim students; Islam in university; Islam in Australia; classical Islamic studies; contemporary Islamic studies; CSU; ISRA; CISAC

1. Introduction

Islamic studies in the higher education sector is an evolving phenomenon in Australia. Not surprisingly, the field of Islamic studies has existed for 14 centuries in different forms since the era of Prophet Muhammad. It has evolved over the centuries based on the needs of the societies it has served. Classical Islamic studies has remained within an Islamic framework founded on the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and analytic methods established in the formative three centuries of Islam. Contemporary Islamic studies has emerged as an additional Islamic studies area and continues to grow, where the focus is on Islam and Muslims and how they impact society, as well as their interplay with other disciplines. Over the last few decades, the demand for both classical Islamic studies and contemporary Islamic studies has increased in Australia with the increase in the Muslim population. There is also a demand amongst Muslims to learn about their religion in a systematic way while also receiving a university qualification.

The growing demand for classical Islamic studies has been met in various ways. Mosques and non-accredited education institutions have predominantly taken on the responsibility of teaching classical Islamic studies, while universities have generally focused on contemporary Islamic studies. This is not absolute, as the Centre for Islamic Studies (CISAC) at Charles Sturt University (CSU) offers the largest number of courses in classical

Islamic studies amongst the universities in Australia. It must be noted that other universities in Australia also offer classical Islamic studies and, therefore, these courses are not exclusive to CISAC.

First, this article discusses the definition of classical and contemporary Islamic studies. It then turns to the current and emerging needs of Islamic studies, particularly by the Muslim population in Australia. The focus then shifts to what is actually available in the Islamic studies space within the community as well as within the higher education sector and how demand has driven the development of certain Islamic studies programmes currently available. The prime interest of this article is the teaching of classical Islamic studies within the higher education sector, the challenges faced in this space and how these challenges have been addressed, especially by CISAC.

The data for this article rely heavily on two main sources:

The first is a published report by Rane et al. (2021). It is the most comprehensive report written on Islamic studies in Australia's higher education sector and provides valuable data on the programmes, minors/majors and courses offered by Australian universities. The data for this research were collected in 2015 and 2016, and the research was completed in 2017. The 14 Australian universities that offer some type of Islamic studies are discussed in detail. The seven universities that offer programmes, minor or majors are discussed in greater depth. The report offers information such as the number of students studying Islamic studies courses at each university; the number of courses, minors/majors and programmes offered in each university; and the breakdown of Muslim to non-Muslim students studying Islamic studies at each university[1].

The second source involves data collected from alumni of CISAC, CSU (CISAC n.d.a). An online survey consisting of 40 questions was emailed to 160 CISAC graduates[2] from the Bachelor of Islamic Studies and Master of Islamic Studies programmes; 50 surveys were returned. The purpose of the survey was to gauge a better understanding of the demographics of the students who completed an Islamic studies programme at CISAC, their learning and teaching experience while studying, the motivating factors for them to enrol in the programmes in the first place and what they hope to do with their qualifications now that they have graduated.

Since a significant amount of the data in this article come from CISAC alumni and since the CISAC courses and programmes are discussed in detail, it would be appropriate to provide some background information on CISAC from the start.

CISAC is a product of a partnership between the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) and CSU (ISRA n.d.a). That is, ISRA and CSU signed a partnership agreement which led to the founding of CISAC in 2010. Some key aspects of the agreement between ISRA and CSU include:

> "ISRA Australia was to have control over course content while Charles Sturt University was to provide quality assurance; ISRA Australia was to select its management and teaching staff in accordance with the university's qualification criteria; and ISRA Australia would raise and manage its own budget while the university would only provide funding based on student load. In this way, ISRA Australia ensured the Islamic integrity of what was taught while meeting the university's quality standards." (Ozalp and Daqiq 2016, p. 515)

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[1] This article uses the same terminology used in the report produced by Rane, Duderija and Mamone for courses, minors, majors and programmes: Programme: A programme is an approved course of study leading to a university qualification. A student is admitted to a programme, undertakes study while enrolled in that programme and on successful completion of all programme requirements is awarded the qualification to which the programme relates (inclusive of any degree, diploma or graduate certificate). Major/Minor: Majors and Minors are a sequence of courses that develop a coherent academic theme culminating in advanced level courses. Course: A course is a component of a qualification, normally undertaken over a single semester in which the student enrols and on completion of which the student is awarded a grade, with such grades appearing on a student's academic record. Learning outcomes, assessment tasks and achievement standards are specified for each course appropriate to a level and qualification type (also called subjects/units).

[2] There are a total of 307 graduates of CISAC programmes; however, the survey was sent to Bachelor of Islamic Studies and Master of Islamic Studies graduates only.

ISRA, who sources the content and teaching staff as per agreement with CSU, was established in 2009. Its educational philosophy is to provide "Islamic education from within the Islamic scholarly tradition and sciences in a model of education that fosters critical thinking, intellectual enquiry and investigation—education that is compatible with tradition and conducive to context" (ISRA n.d.b).

ISRA has a strong community focus in addition to the university programmes it offers through CSU. It runs community events, community courses, workshops, seminars and various other types of initiatives which aim to develop Islamic knowledge and nurture community spirit at the grassroots level. Through the community focus, ISRA has completed 1383 community events and projects since it was established in 2009. During this time, the staff and volunteers of ISRA have also given 1008 talks to schools and the community. As can be seen, there is a strong grassroots focus within the organisation. ISRA has two centres: the main centre is located in Sydney, which was established in 2009, and the second centre is located in Melbourne, which was established in 2015.

The university programmes are a key part of ISRA's focus. The programmes offered at CSU sit under CISAC. Currently, there are 471 students enrolled in one of the programmes. Of these, 241 are enrolled in the Bachelor of Islamic Studies, making it the most popular programme. There are 102 students enrolled in the Master of Islamic Studies and 61 students enrolled in the Master of Classical Arabic. The rest of the students are spread out amongst the Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma of the Islamic Studies and Arabic programmes as well as the Honours and Master of Contemporary Islamic Studies programmes. CISAC also has 12 research students who are either enrolled in Masters courses via Research or PhD. In total, CISAC offers 13 programmes as of 2021. It does not offer any minors or majors. There are 22 staff who service these 13 programmes; 14 of them are academic staff and 8 of them are professional support staff.

Before further analyses of the Islamic studies courses offered in Australia, it is important to expound the differences between classical Islamic studies and contemporary Islamic studies. This shall help to better understand the Islamic studies landscape with its nuance differences.

2. Distinction between Classic and Contemporary Islamic Studies

While it is tempting to consider Islamic studies as a monolithic discipline, it is anything but that. There are multiple ways to categorise Islamic studies into various sub-disciplines. One category system that is commonly used is classical Islamic studies and contemporary Islamic studies.

Classical Islamic studies has also been referred to as the basic Islamic disciplines, the Islamic tradition and the Islamic sciences ('ulum), while they all have very similar, if not identical, meanings[3]. The eleventh century scholar Al-Ghazali's classification of classical Islamic studies continues to be of influence today. According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge that has been acquired from the prophets and not through other means such as reason (Bakar 1992, p. 205), is what constitutes classical Islamic studies. In the context of Islam, this would include knowledge that is transmitted by Prophet Muhammad, whether as revelation from God (Qur'an), his own words (Hadith and Sunnah) or his life (seerah). Other disciplines that would "stem" from Prophet Muhammad would include the Arabic language, theology, Sufism/tasawwuf and jurisprudence. Methodology (usul) subjects/courses that relate to any of these areas such as Usul al-Hadith (methodology of Hadith) and Usul al-Tafsir (Methodology of Qur'anic Exegesis) would also be included. A number of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah have highlighted that making a distinction between knowledge that stems from the Prophet and knowledge that does not is not that straightforward, in that the human mind needs to prove the truth of and apprehend all types of knowledge (Khir 2007, p. 261).

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[3] For the purpose of this article, classical Islamic studies will be used when referring to "basic Islamic disciplines", "Islamic traditional" and "Islamic sciences".

As can be seen, there are nuanced differences in what is considered classical Islamic studies. Nevertheless, some types of boundaries can be set around what is meant by the term classical Islamic studies. The definition used by Kamali and Nalla is in line with al-Ghazali's definition: "Alongside Arabic, the basic Islamic disciplines such as Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence, scholastic theology and Sufism should be included" (Kamali and Nalla 2014, p. 65).

Khir (2007, p. 261) consolidated the views of various scholars to list the "traditional fields" included in classical Islamic studies and developed the following list:

1. The sciences of the Qur'an: its readings, recitation, miraculous nature, exegesis and juristic interpretations;
2. The sciences of the hadith and its methodologies including its transmission, collection, commentaries and juristic interpretations;
3. Jurisprudence, comprising its methodologies and various branches that regulate every aspect of human life from worship to politics;
4. Creed and theology including the study of various Muslim sects and the study of other religions (milal);
5. Sufism;
6. History in its various forms such as biographies, chronologies and annals;
7. The science of Arabic language including its grammar, literature and lexicology, which is seen as instrumental in understanding the religious textual sources;
8. Logic and philosophy, though strictly not part of religious sciences but included in many religious curricula.

Thus, the definition of *classical Islamic studies* used in this article is "knowledge acquired from Prophet Muhammad" as explained above. This knowledge is noted and accepted as listed by Khir.

The "other" category of Islamic studies, in addition to classical Islamic studies, shall be referred to as *contemporary Islamic studies*. According to Waardenburg, it is not easy to define Islamic studies in the contemporary context. He states, "there is no generally accepted definition of the discipline of Islamic studies, that its boundaries are not clearly fixed, and that there are no uniform and generally accepted programmes . . . It constitutes a field of studies employing various disciplines" (Waardenburg 1997, p. 15). This approach is much more liberal to how Kamali and Nalla would define non-classical Islamic studies; "the study of the history of Muslim societies, contemporary as well as across the 14 centuries of the Islamic experience of Muslim communities" (Kamali and Nalla 2014, p. 65). Waadenburg's deliberation and consideration of other disciplines is important, considering the growing cross-disciplinary study areas that are emerging in relation to Islamic studies.

Siddiqui echoes the words of Waadenburg as he highlights that Islamic studies are dispersed in politics and economy, sociology and anthropology, gender studies, etc., within universities (Siddiqui 2007, p. 22). Inevitably, Islamic studies has entered other disciplines, rendering them cross-disciplinary. Nasr seeks to take Islamic studies' engagement with other disciplines to the next level by stating that Muslims need to "create their own science by incorporating what is positive in modern science into a worldview where God reigns supreme..." (Nasr 2010, p. 73), which is a very ambitious vision.

Based on these considerations, contemporary Islamic studies can be defined as studies of Islam and Muslims impacted by the contemporary world. This includes cross-disciplinary studies such as the study of Islam and Muslims alongside politics, culture, society, gender, psychology, finance, art, etc. It is also possible to say that classical Islamic studies forms the core of Islamic disciplines, while contemporary Islamic studies forms a thick outer layer around the core.

Thus far, the distinction between classical and contemporary Islamic studies has been explored. Next, we look at the current and emerging needs of students in Australia who want to study Islamic studies.

3. Current and Emerging Needs for Islamic Studies in Australia

Islamic studies in Australia continues to grow with a number of universities offering courses and programmes in Islamic studies. "The most well-established programs in Islamic studies, such as at the University of Melbourne, have only been offered since the latter half of the 20th century. Many other Islamic studies programs in Australia were only established in the past decade or so" (Rane et al. 2021, pp. 1–2). Most courses and programmes, however, reflect Western security concerns over Middle Eastern politics, radicalisation of Muslims and the need to understand extreme versions of Islam and extremist Muslims. This is evident by the number of courses offered on contemporary Islamic studies covering Muslim societies, communities and politics (Rane et al. 2021).

A large percentage of students studying some type of Islamic Studies are non-Muslims, and this demand will most likely continue. For instance, Griffith University's Islamic studies students are 95% non-Muslims and University of New England's is 96% (Rane et al. 2021). However, there is also a large percentage of Muslim students studying Islamic studies in Australian universities. A total of 98% of Western Sydney University's Islamic studies students are Muslim compared to 90% at CSU and 70% at University of Melbourne (Rane et al. 2021).

Not surprisingly, some Muslims in Australia have different expectations from Islamic studies, where their preference is to study classical Islamic studies. The number of classical Islamic studies courses available through the Australian universities demonstrates this. According to Rane et al. (2021), a total of 46 classical Islamic studies courses are available in Australian universities, 30.5[4] of these offered by CISAC. That is, CISAC offers 66% of the classical Islamic studies courses offered in all of the Australian universities. The study of Islamic studies stems from needs. Based on CISAC alumni surveys and based on the literature, there are three areas of need for Islamic studies students from a Muslim background.

3.1. Islamic Studies Experts

The need for Islamic studies experts, such as imams and Muslim scholars, continues to be an important part of Muslims' presence in Australia. These experts need classical Islamic studies qualifications to be at a par with clerics and experts from other faith traditions.

Imams, in particular, have an important place in the fabric of Muslim societies. They lead the five daily prayers at mosques as the most basic aspect of their role. This role is generally complemented with counselling and pastoral care provided to members of their congregations. Often imams are consulted on the moral and ethical issues individuals face in their everyday life. In such cases, sound Islamic knowledge becomes a key point of reference. Imams also give weekly sermons to hundreds if not thousands of Muslims attending Friday prayers.

According to a 2014 report on the mosques of Sydney and New South Wales in Australia, 60% of mosques have full-time imams and most of them had received one form of Islamic higher learning. The report mentions, "Typically, the qualifications of the imam are from an institution located in the country of their own ethnic background or from countries and institutions that are famous for their Islamic studies programs, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey" (Underabi 2014, p. 11). In 2014, almost none of the imams serving in mosques were educated in Australia (Underabi 2014).

To this day, there are no recognised courses or training for individuals who would like to become an imam in Australia. Many of the imams, who have received their qualifications from overseas, are members of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), a peak body that represents many of the imams of Australia. However, this membership has no influence on the employment of an imam by a mosque. There actually is no official register of individuals who qualify to be imams in Australia. Such a register is envisioned to have

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4   0.5 is allocated to a course where only half the course has a classical Islamic studies focus.

eligibility criteria and a code of practice, which are enforceable by the peak body, ANIC. As of 2021, ANIC has more than 200 imams as members (ANIC n.d.).

Each of the large mosques in Australia have their own recruitment process for imams. For example, the imams at Preston Mosque in Melbourne are usually from Lebanon and other Arab countries, who are brought to Australia by the mosque's committee. "The Broadmeadows Mosque, with its largely Turkish congregation, has an imam who is assigned by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. These imams are normally assigned for a period of about four years, after which the serving imam is replaced" (Albayrak 2012, p. 31). In other words, there is no centralised way of assigning imams to mosques in Australia.

Furthermore, there are currently no Australian-based programmes that are recognised for producing qualified imams (Musharraf et al. 2019). Thus, there is the continuing problem of not having home-grown imams. The National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies (NCEIS) is worth mentioning at this point due to the governmental expectations from it in this context. NCEIS was established in 2007 by the Australian government in a post-9/11 world and in the wake of the London bombings in 2005. After a stocktake of all universities by the government, it became evident that Australian universities had a wide range of Islamic studies programmes and courses and a focus on research (Saeed 2014, p. 88). This has fostered significant intellectual and religious development on Islam and Muslims in Australia (Ozalp and Keskin 2015, p. 218). However, there were "no Australian based study programs available to prepare Australians for Islamic religious leadership and teaching" (Saeed 2014, p. 88). This led to a collaborative arrangement between the University of Melbourne, Griffith University (QLD) and the University of Western Sydney (NSW) (NCCIS n.d.). The NCEIS made important contributions such as offering minors and majors in Islamic and Arabic studies and furthering excelling in Islamic studies research; however, the goal of a university in Australia that trains imams was not achieved through NCEIS. Professor Abdullah Saeed, the founder and director of NCEIS made it clear that the goal of training imams was not a goal which he believed would be possible in a secular university:

> " . . . although when the idea of a national center for Islamic studies was originally floated, the government's emphasis was on training future religious leaders and providing professional development for existing imams, the consortium partners made it clear from the very beginning that training imams in the way it is done at traditional Muslim seminaries (a program focusing on traditional Islamic disciplines for Muslims) cannot be undertaken at secular Australian universities." (Saeed 2014, pp. 93–94)

Another initiative worth mentioning in the context of home-grown imams is the Bachelor of Islamic Studies offered by CISAC, CSU; it is arguably the most appropriate program to achieve the possibility of training imams in Australia due to the fact of its comprehensive classical Islamic studies content. On this point, Musharraf et al. (2019) states,

> "Core Islamic sciences (such as Tafsir, Usul Al-Din, Usul al-Fiqh, Adaab, Usul al-Hadith and others) are adequately represented in their (CISAC, CSU's) bachelors and masters courses in combination with units that aim to develop cultural integration of religious leaders and Imams with Australian values—a unique combination that we have not found in any other course." (p. 82)

Training imams in Australia is certainly an area that needs to be explored. One of the challenges is the lack of serious attempts by the ANIC to evaluate the Bachelor of Islamic studies offered by CISAC for the purpose of qualifying imams. As it currently stands, there is no information available on ANIC's website on what qualifies an individual to become a member. Although the website mentions that one must be an "imam" to be a member, the specifics of qualifications needed for one to be defined as an imam are not provided (ANIC n.d.).

Religious studies in the higher education sector for the purpose of training religious leaders is not new in the Australian context. The Bachelor of Theology, a program that focuses on Christian studies, is offered by CSU and is designed to equip students "for Christian ministry or leadership." (CSU n.d.a). As a professional pathway, "the course can lead to ordained ministry in either the Anglican or Uniting Church" (CSU n.d.a). This programme was first offered in 2005 through CSU and continues to provide graduates who enter into the ministry role, the Christian equivalent of an imam. Bachelor of (Christian) Theology is offered at numerous other Australian universities including Flinders University, The University of Notre Dame Australia, Australian Catholic University and University of Divinity. Therefore, it is only natural that Australian universities also offer Islamic studies with the purpose of equipping students for Islamic leadership, including the role of imam. In due course, this may become a reality.

3.2. Islamic Studies to Complement Professional Training and Career

Historically, Islam has been part of Muslim societies at many levels. In modern times, Islamic perspectives and cross-disciplinary approaches in finance, economics, medicine, psychology, law, social work and chaplaincy have increased. Given that employment opportunities as imams and academics are limited in Australia, Muslim high school graduates pursue careers in a professional sector which can then land them with employment. Having said that, many religious Muslims feel the need to study Islam to cover the gap in knowledge or better understand and serve a large Muslim clientele as part of their existing profession.

For example, the discipline of Islamic finance covers areas such as dealing with interest, superannuation, shares, assets and banking. Religious Muslims want to make their financial decisions consistent with Islamic ethical norms without compromising their faith. This produces a need for financial experts to be familiar with Islamic economics, finance and banking. Islamic psychotherapy is another cross-disciplinary area that is gaining some traction. This encompasses qualified psychologists who also have qualifications in Islamic psychology. This necessitates foundational knowledge in classical Islamic studies, especially Islamic spirituality. Currently, no Islamic psychology programmes are offered in the Australian higher education sector. Furthermore, a growing number of Muslims are entering the legal profession in Australia. Lawyers with a Muslim background deal with Muslim clients in many instances in relation to marriage and divorce. Lawyers understanding Islamic law and how it relates to Muslim culture and thinking are important to complement their standard legal training, making this cross-disciplinary area pertinent. Similar needs and opportunities are present for other professions as well.

In the survey of CSU alumni, 12% of the graduates mentioned that they studied Islamic studies to enhance their profession, and 30.8% of graduates said the programme enhanced their profession "a lot" (26.5%) or "extremely" (14.3%). This suggests that Muslim professionals are seeking Islamic studies to enhance their profession. It could be said that the Islamic studies programmes are attracting professionals.

3.3. Muslim Student to Personally Benefit from Islamic Education and Teach Others

There is a strong culture among Muslims to study their religion for personal reasons and not for career purposes. This was evident in the survey with CSU alumni; 60% of students completing an Islamic studies programme stated that their main purpose was to learn about their religion for self-development purposes.

While keen students of classical Islamic studies are divided between the various education institutions, such as mosques, madrasas and non-accredited education institutions, some Muslims prefer to study classical Islamic studies in the higher education sector. For example, 86% of CISAC alumni surveyed said that the offering of a university degree by CISAC had a "strong" to "extreme" influence on their choice to study at the institute. Interestingly, 76% of them also stated that the fact that the programmes were taught from within the tradition (classical Islamic studies focus) had a "strong" to "extreme"

influence on their choice to study at CISAC. Therefore, there is clearly interest within the Muslim community to study classical Islamic studies at the higher education level for self-development purposes.

4. Islamic Studies Currently Available in Australia

Despite the significant changes to the Muslim world, classical Islamic studies has not been abandoned and, if anything, it continues to be considered an important part of scholarship in the Muslim world, and now for Muslims living in the West, including Australia. Islamic studies in Australia has taken on various shapes and forms, being taught by a range of institutions from local mosques to universities.

4.1. Classical Islamic Studies

Classical Islamic studies, also known as the Shari'ah sciences (Saeed 1999), is based on knowledge that covers 14 centuries of scholarship and began with Prophet Muhammad. It comprises knowledge that has developed throughout the centuries in a systematic manner with a large body of literature and is a reference point for many Muslims of today. Classical Islamic studies is an established system of knowledge in various sub-discipline areas such as fiqh (jurisprudence), kalam (theology), sirah (life of Prophet Muhammad), Hadith studies, tafsir (exegesis) studies and usul (methodologies) related to these sub-disciplines. These subject areas are considered an essential part of Islamic scholarship for the majority of Muslims as they lay the foundation of the Islamic sources, beliefs and practices. They also maintain a connection to the 14 centuries of scholarship within the Muslim world, a key aspect that is fundamental to classical Islamic studies.

The study of these disciplines has become the accepted norm for most universities that teach Islamic studies in Muslim-majority countries. In Muslim countries, the purpose of a Bachelor of Islamic Studies (Bachelor of Divinity or Bachelor of Theology) is to prepare students for religious leadership roles, mainly as an imam or mufti within that country (Abu Dardaa et al. 2008). Such programmes comprise three to four years' study of Islamic studies with classical Islamic courses making up a large portion of the programme design.

With the secularisation and colonisation of many Muslim countries, teaching classical Islamic studies on a larger scale has been taken up by madrasa-style institutions. Madrasas have existed since the turn of the 9th century and spread throughout the Muslim world. The innovation of the Nizamiya madrasa system in the 11th century played an important role in the Muslim world for centuries (Marshallsay 2012). As Berkey highlights, however, the medieval madrasas had nothing close to an advanced or well-designed curriculum. Where one studied did not matter; what mattered was who one studied with. Qualification was not certified by an institutional degree but by a personal licence (ijaza), and this was issued by a teacher to their pupil (Berkey 2007). To some extent, in the classic Islamic madrasa education, students designed their own education pathway by selecting what books to study and with whom. This distinction is important and explains why madrasa education struggles to adapt to the modern university framework.

Madrasas significantly vary in their quality of teaching. In the modern era, some madrasa systems founded in the 19th century have developed a curriculum to ensure classical Islamic content is learnt through structured courses and the learning is measured through assessments. Darul Uloom education institutions, established by the Deobandi Movement, are a prime example of such institutions. Having originated in India in 1866, Darul Uloom had 30 institutions, which grew to nearly 9000 institutions worldwide by 1967 (Sikand 2005). Darul Uloom affiliated madrasas have spread worldwide with institutions present in many non-Muslim countries such as the UK, South Africa and Australia. In total, 17 of the 26 Islamic seminaries in the UK follow the Deobandi curriculum (Neyazi 2014). The Darul Ulum College in Australia is a similar education institution following the madrasa curriculum. The college, which is found in Melbourne, was established in 1997 and currently has 950 students (Darul Ulum College of Victoria n.d.). While it is a registered school that teaches the Victorian school curriculum, it offers an optional six-year

add-on madrasa style Shariah course. The course has no accreditation with any higher education institution.

Hence, a major limitation of these madrasa-style institutions is that they have no higher education recognition within the countries they function in. As a result, graduates from these institutions need to undertake a university degree in addition to their madrasa studies for their studies to be officially recognised.

Most mosques in Australia and other Islamic institutions also offer Qur'an reading classes and some form of Islamic studies courses, for which there is a demand. "In the early history of Islam, the mosque was the central place for the transmission of Islamic religious sciences" (Berkey 2007, p. 42). Many of the madrasas were also part of a mosque. This legacy of a mosque's role is reflected in the mosques of Australia. The classes offered are often short courses without assessments and delivered in a lecture style. While these types of courses are popular for a certain Muslim audience, their limitations make them less attractive for individuals seeking more structured, curriculum-based learning where their studies will be recognised with a qualification from a university.

There are implications for offering non-accredited courses that have not gone through the rigorous process of being scrutinised by an accredited education institution's policies and regulations. Lack of accreditation removes the checks and balances needed to ensure quality content, qualification of the lecturers/teachers and proper assessment design to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Although there is an evident need for classical Islamic studies in Australia, the number of courses offered in the higher education sector covering classical Islamic studies is limited. In the report produced by Rane et al. (2021), 14 universities offer courses that fall under the category of Islamic studies. The report further categorises the courses offered by these universities into classical Islamic studies, history, language and culture, contemporary politics, Muslim societies and communities, security and conflict and other (Rane et al. 2021). Based on the two categories used in this article, other than the classical Islamic studies category, the rest of the categories within the report fall under contemporary Islamic studies.

CISAC offers the largest number of classical Islamic studies courses, offering 30.5 such courses. These courses are undertaken within programmes, Bachelor of Islamic studies, Master of Islamic studies and Master of Classical Arabic. The University of Melbourne offers the second highest number of classical Islamic studies courses with the offering of 6 courses, Western Sydney University offers 4.5, Australian National University offers 2.5, Monash University offers 2, Griffith University offers 1 and University of New England offers 0.5 (Rane et al. 2021, p. 12).

It is difficult to know from this report how many students have taken classical Islamic studies courses. According to the report, however, there were 3517 annual course enrolments in some type of Islamic studies (Rane et al. 2021); 1200 of those were enrolled in CISAC, CSU. That is, 34% of students studying Islamic studies in Australia, are studying at CISAC, CSU.

The question of why more universities do not offer programmes with a greater classical Islamic studies focus is worth discussing, as there are several reasons. As per the definition of classical Islamic studies provided earlier, a programme with a comprehensive classical Islamic studies component would include courses from the various disciplines of Islamic studies: usul al-tafsir, tafsir studies, usul al-hadith, hadith studies, fiqh, usul al-fiqh, sirah, theology, Sufism/tasawwuf, Arabic and logic.

The reason CISAC is able to offer programmes with a strong classical Islamic studies focus, despite the challenges posed, shall also be explained. Before discussing the challenges, some insight into the courses offered by CISAC shall be provided. This shall help to better understand the response to challenges that will be listed.

The Bachelor of Islamic studies offered by CISAC (CSU n.d.b) is the most comprehensive programme on Islamic studies in Australia where students need to complete 24 courses as part of the programme. Students complete 10 core courses, 4 Arabic courses and

10 Islamic studies elective courses. All 10 core courses fall under the category of classical Islamic studies and include:

Islamic Worldview and Faith Essentials
Fiqh (Islamic Law) of the Five Pillars
Ihsan (Spirituality) Essentials
Sirah (Life of Prophet Muhammad)
Usul al-Din (Foundational Islamic Theology)
Usul al-Fiqh (Methodology of Islamic Law)
Usul al-Tafsir (Methodology of Qurʾanic Exegesis)
Usul al-Hadith (Methodology of Prophetic Traditions)
Advanced Study of Tafsir (Qurʾanic Exegesis) Literature
Advanced Study of Hadith Literature

Students choose four Arabic courses from the 9 options available. The courses they choose depends on the level of Arabic they have before they commence the course:

Arabic Skills 1
Arabic Skills 2
Arabic Skills 3
Introduction to Arabic Reading
Beginner Arabic Language 1
Beginner Arabic Language 2
Intermediate Arabic Grammar 1
Intermediate Arabic Grammar 2
Advanced Arabic Grammar

Students also choose 10 elective courses as part of the programme; 5.5 of the electives course options fall under classical Islamic studies, while 6.5 of them fall under contemporary Islamic studies:

Classical Islamic studies electives:
Mantiq (Logic) and Critical Reasoning
Akhlaq (Morality) and Adab (Manners) in Islam
Purification of the Heart
History of Prophets: Adam to Jesus
Islamic Family Law
Religious Service and Community Leadership (0.5 classical and 0.5 contemporary)

Contemporary Islamic studies electives:

Islam in the Modern World
Women in Islam and Islamic Cultures
Islamic History and Civilisations
Guided Research
Muslims in Australia: Past and Present
Modern History of Islamic Societies

Master of Islamic Studies (CSU n.d.c) is the second most comprehensive programme with a classical Islamic studies focus, offered by CISAC. The 4 core courses fall under the category of classical Islamic studies:

Islamic Worldview and Theology
Methodology of Islamic Law (Usul al-Fiqh)
Methodology of Qurʾanic Exegesis (Usul al-Tafsir)
Methodology of Prophetic Traditions (Usul al-Hadith)

Students also complete 4 Islamic studies elective courses and 4 research-style courses, which can be classical or contemporary Islamic studies courses.

There are numerous challenges to offering complete programmes which have a strong classical Islamic studies focus:

Challenge 1: Studying classical Islamic studies appeals to many Muslims. However, not all Muslims are inclined to study classical Islamic studies over contemporary Islamic studies. Since Muslims are a significant minority in Australia, the potential pool of students is even further reduced.

Response 1: While Muslims are a significant minority in Australia, making up 2.6% of the population, that still equates to 604,200 Muslims (ABS 2017). CISAC is currently appealing to an Australian base of Muslim students with 471 active students where at least 90% of the students are Muslims. Therefore, there is a demand in this niche area.

Challenge 2: Other options are available to study classical Islamic studies, other than at university. The courses offered by non-accredited educational institutions, such as mosques and madrasas, are usually a much cheaper option for students. They also do not require students to undertake a heavy study load or to complete assessments. Completing a "lighter" course and not having to do assessments appeals to many.

Response 2: While some students of classical Islamic studies are choosing mosques or madrasas for their Islamic studies, there are students who would like to study classical Islamic studies and receive a university qualification at the end of their studies. Based on the CISAC alumni survey, 50% of the alumni stated that getting a university qualification at the end of their studies strongly influenced them to study at CISAC, while 38% said it was of strong influence. Overall, 6% stated that it was of moderate influence and 6% stated that it was of no influence. In other words, 94% of the surveyed students were influenced by the offering of a university qualification when deciding to study at CISAC, where its courses are known to have a heavy classical Islamic studies load.

Challenge 3: Few lecturers have sufficient qualifications in classical Islamic studies in addition to having a PhD qualification which is recognised by Australia. While such academics do exist in various Australian universities, a whole department of Islamic studies staff is needed in order to be able to teach a programme that is composed of 24 courses, which is the number of courses in a Bachelor of Islamic Studies programme. One or two staff cannot teach a whole programme as each course requires specialised knowledge.

Response 3: Four of the staff at CISAC have completed 6–10 years of classical Islamic studies in a Muslim country after which they completed their PhD in Australia or USA. Six staff have completed PhDs in contemporary Islamic studies or on a topic that combines classical and contemporary Islamic studies, while four staff are Arabic teachers with expertise in Arabic. Currently, there are 14 academic staff at CISAC. Putting together a department of 14 academic staff where more than half of them have classical Islamic studies expertise in the Australian context is not easy. Furthermore, the differing expertise of the various staff at CISAC ensures a 24-course undergraduate programme and a 12-course postgraduate programme can be taught.

Challenge 4: A high cost is associated with establishing and administering a higher education institution which offers programmes that have a strong classical Islamic studies focus: a niche market. Even though many Muslims want to study, the numbers are still limited, making these institutions a financial liability. With finite student numbers, and hence income, the cost of investment becomes a deterrent to aspiring leaders who would like to teach a whole programme on Islamic studies.

Response 4: CISAC currently has 14 academic staff and 8 professional staff. Some staff work part-time or as sessional staff. Developing a faculty of this size has required significant financial support from the community. Without the community support, it would have been very difficult to establish a faculty of this size for Islamic studies courses in the Australian context for the niche market that exists.

Challenge 5: The challenge of teaching classical Islamic studies in a secular university where the methodologies used in classical Islamic studies are different from methodologies used in a secular university.

Response 5: The methodologies of the classical Islamic studies courses offered by CISAC in a secular university (CSU) were significant considerations when the courses were being developed. As discussed previously, the content of a classical course is often

set. Memorising content and understanding concepts that have been established over the centuries is an important part of studying classical Islam. More often than not, such content is traditionally not critiqued. On the other hand, studying in the higher education sector requires critiquing, analysis and the development of new content/ideas, especially towards the end of a bachelor's degree and, most importantly, at the master's degree level. The CISAC classical Islamic studies courses have found a way to ensure students learn the content of a discipline as established throughout the centuries, while developing skills needed at university level such as writing, referencing, analytical skills and research.

The sirah (life of Prophet Muhammad) course offered by CISAC shall be looked at as a case study. The course discusses the significant events that took place during the time of Prophet Muhammad. That is, students are expected to know the sirah as established in the classical sources. However, students are provided with a wide range of readings, classical and contemporary, about the sirah to demonstrate that differing views exist on the sirah. Thus, exposure to the different views is an essential component of the course. Furthermore, the sirah is contextualised for today's world so that the events that took place during the time of Prophet Muhammad can be applied to the current times. Students are encouraged to do this through their own analyses to ensure they are able to apply the knowledge they have gained. The sirah is also discussed in the contemporary context by addressing the many misconceptions that exist about the life and character of Prophet Muhammad.

Sirah students are expected to develop their writing and research skills through the writing of an essay where they need to use a wide range of sources, including classical and contemporary sources. Below are some examples of essay questions that are included for this course:

- Discuss and analyse the marriage of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to Aisha focusing on the deliberations related to her age;
- Analyse Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a role model: elaborate on his methodology of problem solving in the modern context;
- Analyse the Last Sermon in regard to human rights, race and gender relations;
- Discuss Prophet Muhammad's conflict resolution and peace-making methodology and how this can be implemented in modern days.

Assessments are an important part of a course. The sirah course is composed of 5 assessments:

- Participation and engagement 10%: students are expected to attend weekly online tutorials;
- Research and referencing quiz 5%: being a first-year course, the development of research and referencing skills has been incorporated into the course;
- Submission of a first version of essay 25%: being a first-year course, students submit a 1000-word draft essay which they receive feedback on before they finalise their essay;
- Submission of final version of essay 20%: students are expected to incorporate the feedback they have received from their lecturer to finalise their essay;
- Exam 40%: students are asked questions from the lecture content in a closed-book exam.

As can be seen from the assessment breakdown, knowledge about the sirah is important and is assessed mainly through the exam. Writing, analytical and critical skills are also important and are mainly assessed through the writing of the essay. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide all the details about the learning and teaching strategies used in this course. However, it is hoped that the brief insight provided helps to understand how a classical Islamic studies course is taught at the university level. Each classical Islamic studies course is evaluated individually and offered in a way that established knowledge related to the course is taught, while fulfilling the standards of a university course. A whole range of CSU policies are taken into consideration, such as Course Outline Policy, Assessment Policy, Moderation Policy and Graduate Learning Outcome mapping.

Through the above discussions, it can be seen that there are numerous challenges confronting a university that seeks to teach a complete programme where the prime focus

is classical Islamic studies. Despite these challenges, CISAC has been able to achieve this as explained above.

4.2. Contemporary Islamic Studies

The place of Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world is just as important, with many questions demanding answers, particularly in relation to understanding Islam and Muslims in the Western context (Kurzman and Ernst 2012). With the growing population of Muslims in Australia and as a result of world events, the need for contemporary Islamic studies became even more apparent. This type of study has generated a lot of interest among Muslims and non-Muslims to better understand the role of Islam, the religion followed by more than 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide.

Half a century ago, the study of Islam and Muslims appeared more as Orientalist studies, where Muslims were often the object of study. Since the influential criticism of Orientalism by Edward Said, the inadequacy of Orientalist framework in understanding Muslims and Islam has shifted the approach to contemporary Islamic studies. The greater presence of Muslim academics in Australia since the 1970s has also been of great influence. In the post-11 September world, the change has become even more apparent with a desire to genuinely understand and represent Islam and its adherents. These forces produced new approaches to contemporary Islamic studies.

It is important to note that there have been a significant number of Muslims students in Australian since the 1950s, but their affiliation was not always based on religious grounds (Ansari 2018, p. 105). That is, they were studying in disciplines other than Islamic studies as Muslim students, whereas the focus here is Islamic studies in Australian universities.

As part of the NCEIS initiative, Melbourne University, Western Sydney University and Griffith University developed a suite of courses, minors/majors that sit well under contemporary Islamic studies. While their programmes have elements of classical Islamic studies, their main focus is contemporary Islamic studies. As of 2016, the mentioned universities offer a minor and major in Islamic studies (Rane et al. 2021). Other universities with a major in Islamic studies include Monash University and University of New England. Deakin University also offers a minor in Islamic studies (Rane et al. 2021).

At the postgraduate level, Melbourne University offers an Islamic studies specialisation (four courses) in its Graduate Certificate in Arts and Graduate Diploma in Arts. Other than Melbourne University, CSU is the only other university that offers postgraduate programmes. It is also the only university that offers a master's programme in Islamic studies, with two of them falling under classical Islamic studies—Master of Islamic Studies and Master of Classical Arabic—and one course falling under contemporary Islamic studies—Master of Contemporary Islamic Studies (CISAC n.d.b). Continuation of these courses suggests a demand for contemporary Islamic studies in the higher education sector, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Overall, it seems that contemporary Islamic studies is almost always offered by Australian universities, whereas classical Islamic studies is offered primarily by non-accredited education institutions as well as some universities. This means contemporary Islamic studies courses have been developed on the foundation of university standards, where universities ensure academic staff are sufficiently qualified and provide the framework needed to develop the courses in line with the university's policies and guidelines stipulated by the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) (AQF n.d.) and Tertiary Education and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (TEQSA n.d.).

The methodology of study of the courses in contemporary Islamic studies programmes uses theories and methods from other disciplines such as sociology, political science and cultural studies. Such theories and methods have a strong focus on analysis, evaluation and critical thinking. Consequently, the methodology of contemporary Islamic studies is different from the methodology of classical Islamic studies, whose methodologies (usul) are often considered by Muslims to have been perfected by classical Muslim scholars, leaving no room for new development (Saeed 1999). CISAC has, however, found a way to integrate

the contemporary and classical methodologies in their courses, as demonstrated through the example of the sirah course.

5. Conclusions

There is a growing need to provide Islamic studies programmes in Australia. This growth is spearheaded by the growing prominence of Islam and Muslims in the post-11 September world. This prominence has also highlighted the different needs of Islamic studies students. The distinction between classical and contemporary Islamic studies has become more significant as a result. Classical Islamic studies is more identifiable and limited to core Islamic disciplines that trace their origin to classical Islamic scholarship. Contemporary Islamic studies is used to indicate all other studies of Islam and Muslims, particularly in the contemporary world. This includes cross-disciplinary studies such as the study of Islam and Muslims alongside politics, culture, society, gender, psychology, finance, etc. It is possible to ascertain that classical Islamic studies forms the core of Islamic disciplines, with contemporary Islamic studies forming a thick outer layer around the core.

In the Australian context, there is a growing need for Islamic studies to fulfil specific educational and training needs, namely the need for Islamic studies experts, including imams and other religious leaders; the need for Islamic studies to complement various professional sectors such as finance, law and psychology; and the need that Muslims feel to study their religion in a systematic manner. All three of these needs require classical Islamic studies to be part of the knowledge base. While some of these needs are fulfilled by educational institutions that are not part of the higher education sector, the higher education sector is still playing a significant role in this space.

Overall, the higher education sector in Australia has played an important role in educating Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam, with 14 universities offering some type of Islamic studies. The focus of each of the universities varies significantly; while some have a strong focus on contemporary Islamic studies, others have a stronger focus on classical Islamic studies. CISAC, CSU has the greatest focus on classical Islamic studies.

Despite the demand for classical Islamic studies in the higher education sector, there are various challenges for universities to offer these courses, especially in the form of a programme. This may explain why there is a limited number of university programmes which have a strong classical Islamic focus. Classical Islam is a niche study area. It can also be offered by other educational institutes such as mosques and madrasas, which further thins out this niche market. Moreover, offering a classical Islam programme in the higher education sector requires a pool of lecturers who have qualifications in both classical Islamic studies and a PhD. While such lecturers exist in various Australian universities, getting a pool of such lecturers together who can teach 24 courses to make up a programme is not easy; a whole Islamic studies department is needed to teach a complete programme. This has huge financial implications. Finally, there are challenges around teaching classical Islamic studies in a secular university, especially in relation to the methodologies used in teaching such courses. CISAC has been able address all of these challenges. Not only is it the leading university centre to offer the greatest number of Islamic studies programmes, the largest number of Islamic studies courses with the highest number of Islamic studies students, but it also has the strongest classical Islam focus out of all the Australian universities.

Islamic studies, including classical Islamic studies, is here to stay in Australia. This article sought to provide a better understanding of what is available in this space, especially in the higher education sector. Given that the Muslim population in Australia is increasing, teaching classical Islamic studies complemented by contemporary Islamic studies in universities is crucial to fulfil various needs.

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Negotiating Gendered Religious Space: Australian Muslim Women and the Mosque

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Abstract: Women's presence and role in contemporary mosques in Western countries is contested within and outside Muslim communities, but research on this topic is limited and only a few studies consider women's roles inside mosques in Australia. There is a complex intersection of gender and religion in public sacred spaces in all religious communities, including Muslim communities. Women's role in these spaces has often been restricted. They are largely invisible in both public sacred spaces and in public rituals such as congregational prayers. Applying a feminist lens to religion and gender, this article explores how a mosque as a socially constructed space can both enable and restrict Australian Muslim women's religious identity, participation, belonging and activism. Based on written online qualitative interviews with twenty Muslim women members of three Australian Muslim online Facebook groups, this article analyses the women's experiences with their local mosques as well as their views on gender segregation.

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1. Introduction

One of the most disputed practices associated with gender issues in Islamic societies is gender segregation or the public/private or inside/outside divide. This idea of a Muslim public/private spatial dichotomy has long been used to publicise images of isolated Muslim women who are separated from public life. This polarity is often reflected as a distinct feature of Muslim communities that many scholars consider as a central, cross-cultural component of Muslim social life (Fewkes 2019). In Muslim societies, this division is depicted in the mosques where there is strict separation between women and men, and the gender segregation is ingrained in women's child-bearing role and a perceived need to control women's sexuality (Ahmed 1992; Hammer 2012b; Mernissi 1975). Strict gender segregation in mosques, in the form of separate rooms and entrances, is also a common practice among Muslim communities in Europe and other Western countries (Auda 2017; Nyhagen and Halsaa 2016). Australian Muslim communities are no exception. Most mosques practice gender segregation. Despite growing scholarship on mosques as gendered spaces in Australian contexts, there is still little research on women's views and experiences of attending their local mosques. Currently, the inclusion of women in mosque activities is a contested issue (Nyhagen 2019). Although some research indicates Muslim women in Australia are participating in mosques (Hussain 2009; Woodlock 2010a), the practice of gender segregation is still happening and women are often not involved in decision making (Rane et al. 2020; Sohrabi 2016). Therefore, the mosque space remains overwhelmingly male-centred. The cultural practice of gender segregation in many mosques leads to a general lack of women's participation in public events and restrictions on their role in places of worship. It is noteworthy that the segregation in the mosques is not merely based on gender. Particularly in countries where Muslims are a minority, there is often a social segregation based on theological views or ethnicity (Kamil and Darojat 2019).

By 2016, there were over 340 mosques in Australia, most of which were built after the late 1970s.

The earliest mosque in Australia was built in Maree, South Australia, likely in the 1860s (Bowker 2016). In Australia, similar to other Western countries, mosques have mostly been founded by immigrant communities and culturally situated in their Islamic traditions and interpretations of religion (Woodlock 2010b). Predictably, these mosques reproduced the culture of the mosques in their home countries which were mainly conservative in terms of women's role and participation in the mosque (Hussain 2009). Mosques in Australia are generally run by men. Men also hold the positions of religious leaders or Imams, who lead the prayers. Attending Friday prayer is only a religious obligation for men, while women are encouraged to pray at home. These first Muslim communities provided little opportunity for the participation of women in mosques, relying heavily on the cultural practices of their home countries, which encouraged gender segregation and were mainly exclusionary towards women (Woodlock 2010a). The exclusion of women and having their own religious space has functioned as a shelter for women from the public (male) gaze through the shield provided by curtains, walls, and closed gates (Jaschok 2012). Women's attendance is dependent on the availability of a gender segregated place separated entirely from the main prayer room and a separate entrance (Shannahan 2014). Mosques that are open to women usually allocate women worse physical spaces compared to those provided for men which reveals "an overall prioritization of male space and needs" (2014, p. 15). When women go to mosques, they are peripheral, separate, and invisible.

On the other hand, the importance of religious institutions in the reception and resettlement of immigrants in Western host countries is not limited to Muslims (Karimshah et al. 2014). Some studies (Foley and Hoge 2007; Wilson 2011) found that for immigrants, membership in a place of worship not only serves religious needs but plays an important role in providing social connections in an unfamiliar environment. Therefore, the ability to access the religious space is vital for community belonging. However, in recent years, Muslim women, mainly in North America and Europe, have challenged the gender segregation and absence of Muslim women in the mosques. They have developed alternative pathways where traditional hierarchical religious discourses were replaced by more inclusive, integrated, and egalitarian perspectives (Hoel 2013). They established inclusive mosques and led prayers in mixed gender congregations. Regrettably, in Australia, the current patriarchal structure of mosques has not often been questioned by Muslim communities. This research tries to open the discussion for progressive Muslim women to express their views on gender segregation. This paper seeks to address the identified research gap by examining the mosque as a gendered space via a qualitative study of twenty Muslim women and their experiences, expectations and challenges with regard to accessing mosques.

2. Background

2.1. Muslim Women's Status in the Mosque

The mosque has always been central to the communal lives of Muslims. The first mosque in the world was established by prophet Muhammad in Medina (Saudi Arabia) in 610 C.E. It was filled with the presence of women, who joined congregational prayers, prayed individually or were involved in group discussions (Mattson 2006). All Muslims regardless of sex or race have the right to access the mosque (Woodlock 2010a). Auda (2017) explores the role of women in the mosques based on Quran, Hadith and the prophet's tradition thoroughly. He argues that some Quranic verses about mosques urge all believers, men and women, who seek guidance and knowledge to attend mosques. Moreover, the tradition of the prophet comprises many authentic narrations about women's presence in the mosques on all occasions and all times (Auda 2017). There are many examples of equality between men and women in leadership roles in mosques and women who became famous preachers (Krausen 2013). Kalmbach (2012) states that before the sixteenth century, there were a number of female religious figures in Islamic sources who had roles as prophet's companions, transmitters of Hadith and scholars. These historical examples legitimise contemporary Muslim women's claim to gender equality in religious institutions. Women activists and Muslim feminists (as some Muslims call

themselves) have based their argument about gender quality on this historic evidence (Nyhagen 2019). Muslim women scholars (Wadud (2006); Barlas (2006); Hassan (1999); Mernissi (1991); Badran (2011); Mir Hosseini (2011)) have attempted to unpack dominant patriarchal interpretations of Islam in an attempt to produce a re-interpretation of Islam based on gender equality and justice (Al-Sharmani 2014). This multifaceted practice of resistance to traditional gender norms is rooted in Muslim women's invoking of "authentic Islam" as a gender-equal religion. In particular, Amina Wadud is well known as the first Muslim woman who led Friday prayer for a mixed gender congregation in New York on 18 March 2005. Since then, there have been other female leaders who have led mixed gender prayers or women only prayers. In North America, five other Muslim women have since been prompted to lead mixed gender public prayers (Sharify-Funk and Kassam Haddad 2012). In Scandinavia, at least four women have openly demanded the title of Imam since 2001, and others have either been granted the title or claimed it in their local communities. Similarly, in Germany, at least three women utilise the Imam title (Petersen 2019). Globally, however, some women deliver the khutbah[1] and lead Friday prayer without claiming the Imam title (2019). Therefore, despite the current increasing segregation of the sexes in the Muslim community, there has been a surge of Muslim women's activism in different arenas, particularly in women's claims to religious authority. There are indications that Muslim women are rapidly developing religious knowledge and authority (Kalmbach 2012).

2.2. Gender, Religion and Space

Gender is a prominent feature of religion. All around the world many religious beliefs and traditions determine gendered and sexual practices and routines (Avishai et al. 2015). Applying a feminist lens to study the intersection of gender and religion means studying how religions "produce and reproduce gendered identities and institutions, as well as how men and women live their lives and negotiate with dominant ideas and identities" (2015, p. 13). Historically, studies of gender and religion were dedicated to women's religious experiences and interpreting oppressive religious traditions. The discussion of gender and religion began in the 1970s and 1980s with feminist critiques of religion such as Nason-Clark (1997) and Braude (1987). Following the history of gender studies, much of this scholarship was produced by women sociologists who were active in the women's movement and who excoriated women's experiences within different religious traditions (Avishai and Irby 2013). More recently, studies have focused on critical feminist scholarship such as the meaning and impact of the participation of women and men in conservative religions (Avishai et al. 2015).

Furthermore, the ways people understand, organise and communicate about the spaces around them play an important role in the development of social relations. Successively, social relations, impact on how environments are defined and experienced (Massey 1994). Religions have a strong impact on the making of space and reproducing the power relations (Knott 2005). Often religion is used to create space into binaries such as male/female, public/private, and sacred/ordinary. In contrast, some people utilise their faith to challenge existing hierarchies and power relations (Prickett 2015). As Kong (2010) affirms, everyday spaces are associated with religious meaning making, maintaining and also challenging religious beliefs and practices. On the other hand, feminist theorists and geographers argue that any social space is always gendered (Massey 1994). They have highlighted the important and complex ways in which space and place are created and experienced in gendered ways. Gender as a social construction influences the life chances and spatial experiences of women and men in a range of different localities (Hopkins 2009). Kong (2001) also explains that religious places are socially structured spaces therefore, both religion and space are experienced in different ways by men and women. Regarding gender inequality in religious spaces, the hegemonic patriarchal views and attitudes which exclude women can be contested. Therefore, religious spaces are complicated and the intersection between religion and gender result in a conflicting argument that religion can both reinforce oppression of women and

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[1]   prayer and sermon delivered in the mosques.

empower them to achieve gender justice (Wang 2017). Here, the intersection of religion (Islam), gender and space (mosque) will be explored through Muslim women's views and experiences of attending their local mosques.

3. Method

This study comprises online qualitative research based on a thematic analysis of written online interviews with twenty Muslim women members of three Australian Muslim online Facebook groups: Progressive Muslim women of Australia, Muslim collective (Sydney group) and Islamic Community Academic Network (ICAN), as well as some other Muslim women active on Facebook, who were referred by the first group of women in the sample (snowball sampling). Snowball sampling is a strategy to find respondents, whereby the researcher asks participants if they might know of other potential participants who would be willing to participate in the research. This recruitment approach tends to be effective when existing interviewees are likely to know others who may fit the research criteria (Patton 2002).

The inclusion criteria for the study are women who are:

- A member of Facebook;
- Muslim (convert or non- convert);
- Aged 18 years and above;
- Live in Australia;
- Attend their local mosque.

After obtaining research ethics approval from the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC no H-2020-0255), I initially shared a post to the three above-mentioned Facebook groups. After approval of the post by group administration, the participant information sheet (PIS) and research flyers were posted to the groups. The women who were interested sent a message to the researcher through Facebook and provided their email addresses. The questionnaire and consent form were emailed to each participant and the completed questionnaire and signed consent form were emailed directly back to the researcher.

Data analysis methods employed thematic analysis whereby specific themes were first identified, then these small-scale categories were merged into the main themes. All data categories and coding were developed using NVivo 12 software.

4. Findings: Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Profile

The sample includes a culturally diverse population comprising 20 Muslim women from 9 different ethnic backgrounds: ten women born in Australia, two from Bosnia, two from Afghanistan and one each from Malaysia, Sudan, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and New Zealand. The average age of the sample was 41 with a range of 19–69 years. Of the 20 women, 16 had a university education. Eighteen women were working in professional positions. Seven women were Muslim converts and 13 non-converts. Eighteen were Sunni and two were Shia Muslims. In order to maintain the women's privacy, pseudonyms were chosen for each participant.

Five prominent themes emerged from the analysis of the research participants' reflections on their experiences of attending the mosque: (1) motivations for attendance; (2) frequency of attendance; (3) views on gender segregation; (4) experiences of gender discrimination and insulting lectures and Khutbahs. The women's contributions are broken up into illustrative quotes that indicate particular themes. The aim in presenting their detailed narratives is to ensure that these women are not de-personalised in the process of being objects of study.

4.2. Motivation for Mosque Attendance

Current scholarship has found that mosques are significant places for Muslim women in Western contexts to gain knowledge about Islam, worship, improve their spirituality, engage with the Muslim community and gain a sense of belonging (Nyhagen 2019; Rane et al. 2020; Shannahan 2014). For most of the women in the study, the main motivation and reason for attending the mosque were for worship and spirituality, as well as connecting with and belonging to the Muslim community.

> Attending the local mosque allows me to stay connected with the Muslim community and praying in a mosque helps to keep my Iman[2] strong. I find I concentrate more on worship in the mosque and leave feeling accomplished. Attending my local mosque makes me feel positive and I like to think of the blessings we receive for praying together. (Jane, 28)

> There are many reasons. One of the most important reasons is for the spiritual dimension associated with engaging in congregational prayer at a mosque. Acknowledging that praying in the mosque is not compulsory for women, attending the mosque sometimes is spiritually lifting. (Huda, 50)

For some women attending special events such as Tarawih[3] during Ramadan and celebrating Eid[4] are particularly important in terms of connecting with Allah and the Muslim community.

> During Ramadan for Tarawih, being at the mosque fulfils both community engagement and spiritual congregational prayers. Sometimes my attendance is linked to community events such as weddings, funerals or dropping children for religious classes. (Huda, 50)

Similar to findings of previous research (Nyhagen 2019; Shannahan 2014; Woodlock 2010a), gaining religious knowledge for some women, particularly convert women, was very essential, with some women saying that, by attending the mosque, they hoped to be able to ask questions and discuss issues with knowledgeable Muslims. For a few converts, being accepted into the Muslim community was among the reasons for their attending the mosque. It is noteworthy that none of the women attended their mosque for any non-religious social gatherings or community education or for any women only gatherings. This could be due to the male dominated nature of the mosques and the indication that gender relations are not changing or that the women themselves do not see the necessity or the need to create social groups in the mosques and rather, pursue these needs outside the religious space.

4.3. Frequency of Mosque Attendance

Most women did not attend their local mosque regularly and went to the mosque mostly for special religious occasions and events such as Ramadan[5] and Eid. The reasons proffered were mainly the belief that attending the mosque is not compulsory for women, childcare responsibilities, working full time and living far from the mosque:

> As I work full time and as women are not required to pray in a mosque, I take one Friday off each month to attend Friday prayer. During Ramadan, I try to attend the mosque at least two to three times a week. (Jane, 28)

> I do not attend mosque regularly as I do not live near a mosque. (Huda, 50)

The belief that attending the mosque is not compulsory for women is mainly based on conservative interpretation of Quran and Hadith. It relies on the cultural practices of some Muslim countries

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[2] Believer's faith in the metaphysical aspects of Islam.
[3] Additional ritual prayers performed by Muslims at night during the holy month of Ramadan.
[4] Festival or feast.
[5] Month of fasting.

(Woodlock 2010a). Although Quran and tradition of the prophet clearly do not prevent anyone, male or female, from attending the mosques (Auda 2017).

For some, feeling uncomfortable in the mosque due to gender segregation or a feeling that the mosque was an unwelcoming space were the reasons cited for not currently attending the mosque, despite going in the past.

> I was prevented to pray in front of curtain. I hated to pray in a smelly and dark room at the back of the mosque which is the reason I stopped going to mosque. (Nadia, 43)

> I don't attend my local mosque anymore. I don't believe it offers me anything—certainly the facilities are not conducive to be a spiritually aware space. (Noor, 57)

> The women's space is so small and dirty. I feel it is very unwelcoming place for women. That's why I stopped going to mosque. (Aziza, 33)

After asking the women how often they attend the mosque, they were asked if they think women should attend the mosque or not. Most of the women believe that Muslim women should attend the mosque for the same reasons they attend the mosque: empowerment, engaging in the community and belonging. Two women strongly argued that women should not attend the mosque unless some changes happen regarding gender roles:

> No I don't—there is nothing for women there . . . Imams don't know anything to be able to advise women anything—apart from religious questions—and then they are slanted anyway—so if a woman wants to just pray, she can do that anywhere—and if she wants advice or community support, there are organisations that offer that outside the mosque setting, with qualified people. (Noor, 57)

> No, when it humiliates women and excludes them from decision making, they should not attend, but if it is women friendly and empower women, why not? (Nadia, 43)

Another woman expressed her view about why women do not attend the mosque regularly:

> The majority of Muslim women are not regular attendees at the mosque: a main reason is busyness. Women juggle multiple roles, especially if they work or have young children or are carers. Another reason is accessibility. Most mosques are difficult to access by public transport. And the third and most important reason is that mosques generally are not a welcoming environment for women. Women entrances are usually small, at the back of the building and women's prayer areas are small. If the microphone is not on as a woman in a back room, you don't know what is happening. Generally, the experience is not inspiring or spiritual. Also, the strict adherence to segregation within the grounds of the mosque makes women feel unwelcome. (Huda, 50)

One woman was not sure, but compared the mosque with the church in terms of spirituality and learning:

> I don't know if women 'should', but I wish the mosque was more welcoming to women. My understanding is that Friday prayers are an obligation for men, but not for women. I don't understand this. Having experienced attending various churches as a child and teen, my understanding of the place of a mosque is very Christian in nature. I believe a place of worship should be a place of prayer and learning as well as a place for believers to socialise and encourage each other, regardless of their age or gender. If that isn't what a mosque is, then what IS a mosque for? (Lilli, 42)

Generally, the majority of women believe in equal access to mosques for both genders and find attending the mosque positive and empowering, even though they may not be able to attend regularly.

Some were eager to attend if some changes happened in terms of the quality of the women's space and the easing of gender segregation. This finding supports previous scholarship which highlights Muslim women are eager to participate in the mosque in order to gain religious knowledge, community engagement and spirituality (Hussain 2009; Nyhagen 2019; Woodlock 2010b).

4.4. Views on Gender Segregation

Most of the women (12/20) were against gender segregation and saw it as a discriminative and misogynistic practice which humiliates women. They believed through this practice women are othered, sexualised and considered second class. These themes were evident in several answers:

> Gender segregation heightens the sense that women are 'othered' in the house of God. It makes me feel unnecessarily sexualised and second class to the men. (Aziza, 33)

> I personally would prefer to have men on one side and women on the other at the very least. However, during the vigil at one mosque, we weren't segregated at all and it was lovely. I am single, but I see my married friends sitting away from their husbands. I feel it tears families apart in some ways. I also don't like husbands and wives not being able to pray together in the mosque. What message is this for the children; that men and women can't be trusted to be together, that they can't even pray together? It seems that men get the best spaces; this isn't just true of mosques, but in a holy place, this isn't a good message for anyone. (Lilli, 44)

> Segregation makes me feel like a second-class citizen. Segregation is gender-based discrimination. I've never experienced gender-based discrimination anywhere else on this level in my life. It makes me feel like I'm less worthy than the men in the community. I feel excluded from what is happening in the main hall. Even if I can watch the proceedings in the back room on TV it's not the same as being in the main hall. I might as well stay at home and watch it on the TV at home. (Maria,42)

Interestingly one woman stated gender segregation is an un-Islamic practice and made a comparison of the mosque with other institutions where there is no gender segregation and questioned the current gender roles in religious institutions. This point has emerged as a theme in previous studies. For example, Woodlock (2010a, p. 277) states "patterns of segregation and exclusion of women that have been enforced in the mosque environment are most likely not experienced anywhere else by Muslims in the wider Australian community".

> I disagree 100%; it is very humiliating, and un-Islamic. At the time of Prophet, men and women were praying together. It reduces women as objects and causes troubles. It is patriarchal and misogynist act. When men and women are equally participating in society and mix in different institutions such as health, education, politics, why need to be segregated in mosque? (Nadia, 45)

Another woman compared praying in mosques with praying in Mecca, which is not gender segregated.

> I hate it immensely. I just don't see the need for gender segregation to the extent that our mosques do it . . . every other religious congregation sits with their families and we have to be separated . . . I can go to Mecca and have prayers standing with my husband, but I can't at any other mosques!. (Noor, 57)

Noor's argument is based on the fact that even conservative interpretations of Islam acknowledge that gender segregation did not exist in the Prophet Mohammad's time. This gender separation is still not observed in the central mosque in Mecca (Hammer 2012a). Another woman believed that gender segregation makes women feel very self-conscious about their gender and how they are dressed. She also mentioned that women are often automatically assigned the role of childcare, so children in women's prayer spaces can also be distracting and disruptive. Some women specifically viewed

gender segregation as a tradition or culture rather than Islamic practice and mentioned that women at the time of prophet Mohammad prayed side by side with men. They believed culture plays a great part in shaping patterns of gender relations at mosques. As mentioned earlier, this is in line with some Muslim feminists' interpretations of Islam based on gender equality (Al-Sharmani 2014). For these participants, conflicts between what culture and tradition prescribe for women and what Islam demands, are problematic to negotiate. However, the intersection of culture and religion, particularly in the area of women's rights, has been well addressed in current scholarship (Carland 2017; Ghafournia 2019) and it is of great interest that women in the study spoke about it.

> I started to learn about Islam from friends in Pakistan. They told me 'women may not go to the Mosque because this what the Holy Quran says'. But my understanding is that in the time of our Prophet Mohammad, women did pray side by side with their men. (Nina, 58)

> Gender segregation is more of a tradition, rather than adopting Islamic rulings. Although women should have an option of having a private space away from men, it is not necessary for men and women to be completely separate. In fact, it actually can cause further issues. (Sofia, 31)

Among this group of women, for some, the main reason for disagreeing with gender segregation was the quality of women's spaces in the mosques:

> When I visited our local mosque in my city and walked to the ladies' room at the back of the mosque, I used to feel suffocated, not much room for everyone to sit, very crowded with kids and mums, old ladies can't sit on the floor comfortably. Furthermore, I could not hear the Imam's speech (khutbah), which was delivered via the big screen in the room, because of the crowd in the very small space. In addition, when I was there, I got worried about my kids all the time, they used to go out and in for the whole time, which is not safe because the mosque is located on the main road and has no fence to be closed. (Donya, 50)

> I do hold reservations about the quality of the space offered to women at times, though mosque authorities, I have noticed, they are generally beginning to address this issue. I also have issues with gender segregation when it is taken to the extent that women cannot see the Imam except through a televised projection. Men and women should have equal access to knowledge and gender segregation can be a hindrance at times. (Jamila, 37)

> Don't start me about social settings. I do have major problems when women are relegated to dark, dingy, dirty rooms, no facilities or comfort, no ability to hear anything, etc. (Noor, 57)

> It would be fair to have one entrance and one prayer room for both women and men sitting side by side, not in separate rooms where usually women's room is at the back somewhere. It is smelly and you can suffocate. It is very degrading. (Badra, 69)

Few of the women were accepting of gender segregation, if the quality of the space is similar to the men's space. They claimed equality with men in this regard:

> Segregation within the grounds of the mosque makes women feel uncomfortable. Segregation inside the mosque is ok if the spaces are welcoming and not an afterthought. It seems that all mosques have been designed with men in mind and the spaces for women are decided on later, as an afterthought, which makes women's experience of the mosques one of frustration, rather than inspiration and spiritual. (Huda, 50)

> I'm not actually against segregation as long as both genders are provided equal facilities and ease. Instead, women's sections are heavily neglected in care and consideration, making it a hostile place to be. (Sofia, 31)

Among the sample, eight women approved of gender segregation. The most common reasons for their beliefs were feeling relaxed and comfortable, being more spiritual, not being distracted by the opposite sex and bonding with other women:

> I prefer gender segregation as women tend to feel more comfortable and 'let go'. They are also given the opportunity to have closed or open discussions with their fellow sisters in such spaces—without feeling like they are being monitored or watched. For women with children—they tend to feel more relaxed in segregated spaces. I prefer the segregation, especially whilst conducting study circles, as it is a safe space where open discussions can be had without judgment. (Shakufa, 36)

> I am fine with it. Because the mosque is a spiritual place, I feel the gender segregation helps with the focus and comfort for both genders of all ages. (Sakina, 45)

> I agree with gender segregation during prayers and sermons. Men and women are privy by nature to desire each other—especially during teenage years. This becomes a distraction from what going to the mosque is actually about. (Aliya, 32)

> I believe it is a positive attribute of the mosque and allows men and woman to focus on worship rather than being distracted by the other sex. Especially for single men and women. I also feel with the genders separated, the women have the opportunity to bond with other women in the community and form relationships, exactly the same as men. I don't have any issues with gender segregation in mosques and feel it is fine. (Jane, 28)

One woman was not sure about gender segregation, but believed it is what the Quran advises. Among this group, a few women preferred gender segregation just for praying but not for other activities and were not happy about the quality of the women's space in the mosque:

> I think that for worshipping purposes, segregation is important but there is no immediate need for physical separation during classes or lessons. For example, some mosques or Islamic learning centres teach men and women in the same room (men on one side, women on the other). I think this is appropriate as it still creates segregation but does not restrict women by placing them in another room or behind men. I think that men and women should have equal access to mosques and the way that mosques are built should take segregation into consideration more. Often women's entrances are at the back of the mosque and women only areas are small and have restricted viewing/hearing of the Imam. In these cases, proper audio/visual equipment should be set up. Ideally, mosques should have two entrances at the front, for men and women respectively. Women's sections should be private but allow for women to see and hear the Imams at the front of the mosque. For example, some mosques have women's sections on the upper floor allowing women to look down onto the men's section and see/hear the Imam. (Therese, 23)

Overall, the women's view on gender segregation was not uniform, which returns us to the diversity of Muslim women's views in negotiating gender roles in religious institutions. However, the majority of the women in the study questioned the existing gender norms and structures in the mosque. They perceived the practice as a barrier to women's inclusion in religious activities, causing them to be considered as a second-class human and, for some, was a reason to stop attending the mosque. This is in line with Auda's (2017, p. 127) research which states internationally if Muslim women are allowed to attend the mosques, they are treated as "second class citizen". Notably, when it comes to the issue of space for women in the mosque, even women who approve of gender segregation believed in equality to access the mosque and expressed their wish for improvements in the women's space in the mosque. They were overwhelmingly supportive of the necessity for changes in the quality of women's spaces in the mosque. The poor quality of women's space in the mosque is well supported by current

scholarship (Rane et al. 2020; Shannahan 2014; Woodlock 2010b). Mosques that are open to women usually only offer them physical spaces which are poorer in quality and size compared to men's space. This clear inequality shows "an overall prioritization of male space and needs" (Shannahan 2014, p. 15). Moreover, mosques are usually run by men and they have the leadership role. Mosques management committees and boards are mainly occupied by men (Hammer 2012a; Kalmbach 2012). Subsequently, the decision about any changes in women's space are made by men and it can lead to a big disparity between the quality and size of women and men's space in most mosques. Moreover, the notions of sexual attraction and desire, distraction from worship in mixed gender congregations and being watched by the opposite sex have been mentioned by a few women who approve of gender segregation. This notion goes back to the medieval concept of "*Fitnah*" (temptation). Historically, in the dominant conservative interpretation of Islam, women are considered as a source of *Fitnah* (Saktanber 2002). The ability of women to provoke temptation in men, has been used to justify their exclusion from the official domain of religious authority (Mernissi 1975) including in the mosque. Understandably, this patriarchal interpretation of the "female" body and character has begun to be challenged by the Muslim community (Bano and Kalmbach 2012).

4.5. Experience of Gender Discrimination

When the women were asked if they have ever been discriminated against in the mosques, based on their gender, 12 women had experienced different kinds of discrimination. The forms of discrimination were diverse according to the women's narratives. However, there were common patterns described by the women such as: dress code, equal access to Imam, not a welcoming atmosphere, quality of space, gender segregation and insulting lectures or Khutbah. One woman was asked to leave the mosque as her dress was not approved by men and women in the mosque. Her experience implies that the mosque is still a space that enables the control of women's dress, their voices and communications with men (Karim 2009).

> Before I was not a practising Muslim and when I attempted to attend [name of the mosque] Mosque, I was not covered, and I was unsure of where to go. A man was very rude and shoo'd me away. (Maria, 42)

Two women could not gain access to the Imam to ask their questions:

> I haven't experienced any direct discrimination. However, I have wanted to talk with the Imam and felt that I couldn't as he was surrounded by men in a men's space. (Lilli, 44)

Three women found the atmosphere in the mosques not welcoming and felt uncomfortable. One woman believed that it is not only men but also women who make the atmosphere in the mosque unwelcoming. The unwelcoming atmosphere of the mosque has been one of the findings of the recent National Survey of Muslim Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents (Rane et al. 2020).

> I always feel uncomfortable if I attend the mosque for any reason. (Badra, 69)

> It felt as if I was not wanted and it was not for women. But it was not said. Simply cold and not welcoming. (Nina, 58)

> Women are made to feel unseen, unheard, unworthy distractions which is very unfortunate. There is not a welcoming vibe for women in mosques. This is not only perpetuated by men but also by women, unfortunately. (Sofia, 31)

One woman talked about men's different attitudes towards her, inside and outside the mosque and felt very uncomfortable:

> When I used to go to the mosque, I didn't feel comfortable physically (crowded place) and emotionally because the way the Imam of the mosque and the other men deal with me and

women in general there. Many times when I went there, I tried to greet male friends from the community normally, however, they ran away and didn't look at me, or sometimes they tried to avoid me, which left me uncomfortable, especially those males/men behaved completely different outside the mosque, and always I asked myself, if the mosque changes people, they should change and be better human beings, not be rude and unfriendly. (Donya, 50)

This point was highlighted in Auda's (2017) research as a problematic issue of the excessive and strict banning of normal interaction between men and women inside the mosque. While the same women and men interact normally in other social contexts; this is in contrast to the Prophet tradition in which interaction between men and women in the mosques did exist.

Again, the concept of women's space was highlighted by some women. For them, the poor quality of the space was a kind of discrimination in itself:

The horrible spaces that women pray get crammed into is a form of discrimination. Out of the way, out of sight, crowded and noisy. I also don't like feeling uncomfortable when occupying a non-segregated communal space and feel like the men look at me like I'm not supposed to be there. (Aziza, 33)

I often felt as second class human being there, a piece of "meat" who should hide her body and voice and go and sit quietly at the back in a room which was once use as a garage, her only responsibility to keep the kids quiet and listen and not participate in the discussion in the main room. It was a discrimination. (Donya, 50)

The fact that women's spaces are not of the same standard as men, and the entrance to women's space is not welcoming, is a form of design discrimination. While there is no specific incident, there is a general feel of not being welcome when I go to the mosque. Having to be on guard, stay away from men spaces and not feel comfortable to just hang around and talk to people in the same way that men do, is akin to gender-based discrimination. (Huda, 50)

Similarly, some women found the practice of gender segregation itself to be a kind of discrimination:

I wasn't allowed in the men's section to pray, even though it was Fajr[6] time and no other women were around, the speakers weren't set up, the women's area wasn't open and I was going to stand at the back of the hall for my prayer—got stopped on the stairs . . . eventually got up there, had my prayers on the veranda, and then got told by someone in authority that they had opened the area for women, and I told them that I had finished anyway! Wrote some obscure post about it on FB, without identifying the mosque, and got a phone call a few hours later from the mosque committee telling me to take it down . . . my regret was that I did . . . they thought that I had changed and been a bit more community focussed and were disappointed that I was up to my old tricks of calling out bullshit when I see it—it disappointed them, even though I didn't name them—guilty conscience! So, it seemed I wasn't a team player . . . so they bullied me into taking it down! I gave in (Noor, 57)

Because of the segregation of spaces, I felt I couldn't, as a woman, go into the male space and speak with the Imam. In my opinion, the atmosphere of segregated spaces doesn't encourage women and girls to speak up, rather, like in my case, it can be a barrier. It is a discrimination (Lilli, 44)

I was asked to give a speech from the back of the mosque as it was deemed inappropriate for a woman to speak from down the front of the mosque. I have been prevented from entering

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6   dawn prayer.

into the main hall of mosques and instead directed to women's sections which are much more cramped and confined than the men's sections. Some women's sections are converted storerooms at the back of the hall. One was a run-down dilapidated house next door to the men's multimillion-dollar marble structures. There is no equity in the design or size of the two facilities. (Maria, 42)

I attended our local mosque and I didn't like white sheet hanging in the middle of the prayer room to separate males and females. That was in 2010. I have never returned there. I did not attend other mosques at my city. I felt excluded and discriminated. (Sarah, 35)

On the other hand, eight women had never experienced any kind of discrimination. They believed the mosque to be very welcoming and a place they always felt comfortable:

I have never felt discrimination in a mosque for being a woman; this includes mosques in Australia, Makkah, Madinah and small Masjids[7] on the side of the road in Saudi. (Jane, 28)

Not that I have personally experienced. And this is despite being a traveller (with my family) and often stopping at mosques to pray. My husband also makes a conscious effort to ensure that my daughters and I enter the mosque (wherever it is—and even if it does not have specific female facilities for prayer) and pray in congregation. This may have helped my positive experiences. (Shakufa, 36)

No discrimination! In fact, I have always found men to be respectful and considerate in the Muslim community, more than Aussie/western men at least. (Aliya, 32)

4.6. Insulting Lectures or Khutbahs

As part of the question about experiencing any gender discrimination, another question asked women about whether they had experienced any insulting or disrespectful lectures or Khutbahs. Surprisingly, there is more consensus on this topic as nearly all women had witnessed some insulting Khutbahs. Some women, however, did not consider it discrimination, rather they just found it offensive. These Khutbahs could have been invited Khutbahs in the mosque or online Khutbahs;

I heard some insulting khutbah but can't recall the exact one. It has been so long since I went to a mosque—it would be an Eid khutbah. (Aziza, 33)

One woman talked about a particular Khutbah delivered by a well-known Imam who was invited to her local mosque. The context of the lecture was addressing newly arrived refugees in her city. The encouragement by the Imam for the men in the congregation to share their wives like objects was shocking for this woman:

Most of the time, I didn't feel emotionally comfortable with the Khutbah, which contains violence, hatred, discrimination against women and against others (non-Muslims . . .). In the past, I used to leave the mosque with headaches and stress, because of the Imam's loud voice, yelling and screaming in anger. His Khutbah, instead of giving me good knowledge of Islam, made me feel sick, physically and emotionally. I used to get worried about my kids listening to his speech, which is not really suitable for them. One day, I was listening to one of popular Imams in Australia; he was invited by the mosque to give a Khutbah. He said that "in the time of Prophet Muhammed, and when the Muslims migrated to Al Medina, the people of Al Medina offered their wives to the migrant Muslims to marry them!! He said to migrants "you left your wives in Mecca and you need new wives here, and every man has more than

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[7]   Mosques.

one wife, can divorce the second and give her to his Muslim brother" . . . . . . from that day, I have not been to the mosque. Thanks God, my son was playing outside and didn't pay attention to that Khutbah. (Donya, 50)

Other insulting Khutbahs portrayed women as passive obedient wives, over emphasising women's dress code and undermining women's religious equality before Allah, which are all implications of strict patriarchal gender roles:

This has happened a couple of times during weddings at the mosque. When reference is made to women's responsibilities in marriage and the importance of obedience to husbands without reference to men's responsibilities and roles. Is frustrating, disappointing and is a reflection of the medieval views that some of our Imams hold. This is common among Imams who are new to Australia. I have not been to the mosque in a long time, so I am not sure what the state of affairs is now. I hope it has changed, but I am not holding my breath. (Huda, 50)

I personally haven't but friends have and were in shock afterwards. I have heard one particular Imam speak and give advice as well as answering questions when I was deeply offended by what he said. It wasn't because I was a woman, however, but because to my mind he lacked cultural sensitivity. Unfortunately, that particular Imam seems to see things in very black and white terms. I feel this is unhelpful in this society. (Lilli, 44)

I have heard lots of Khutbahs that promote stereotypes such as women being soft and submissive and men being strong and impactful. Women having the role of being a mother whereas men's role is to earn the living. Men as the leaders of the family, etc. I have also heard lots of emphasis on women covering themselves with long loose clothing and headscarves and women made to feel ashamed about dressing differently to that, in see-through or shorter length clothing. (Maria, 42)

I often heard very misogynistic Khutbahs, which is the reason I stopped going to mosque.

One in Eid Khutbah, that Imam said according to Prophet, women comprise majority of Hell, so they need to work harder to please God!! Another time men and women's role are completely based on private and public. Women's place is at home encouraging polygamy. (Nadia, 43)

One woman mentioned the distinction between Shia and Sunni's mosques but did not go into details:

I heard insulting Khutbahs only when I attended Sunni masjids; Khutbahs in Shia masjids seem to be more respectful due to the divine feminine aspect of Fatima Zahra[8].

Few women have not heard any insulting lectures or Khutbahs:

When I was younger, I enjoyed listening to the talks offered and had a very romantic view of religion. I looked forward to being the 'ideal' Muslim woman, getting married and supporting my husband with his leadership roles, etc. The problem is that I never got married and I have struggled to understand my role and value in a system that gives much importance to women as wives and mothers. I don't feel insulted, but I feel a bit left out and under-valued at times. (Jamila, 37)

I have never heard a lecture or Khutbah that made me feel uncomfortable as a woman. I feel as though speakers, in this day, are considerate of all people, aiming to make lectures and Khutbahs to inspire and educate Muslims, rather than deter them. (Jane, 28)

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[8]   Prophet Mohammad's daughter.

> I don't attend Friday prayers, so I have not. In the two or three occasions that I did attend,
> there was nothing offensive against women. (Sakina, 45)

In general, while most of the women experienced some sort of discrimination based on their gender, still there are a number of women who did not have any experiences of this kind. However, nearly all the participants for the current study noted problems with the quality of women's spaces in the mosque, either in terms of access, size, cleanliness or visibility and ability to hear the Khutbah. They questioned the current gender norms practiced in the mosque. This can be interpreted as an indication that Muslim women in Australia are fully aware of these strict gender roles and this contest can be viewed as a positive step forward for women's equal participation in the religious space and their inclusion in religious institutions. In particular, most women in this study are strongly against strict gender roles in the religious space. This can be due to high levels of education amongst the sample as most of the women have university degrees and work in professional positions. Another pattern in the women's narratives is the difference between converts and non-converts. It appears that convert women, in particular new converts, are supportive of current gender segregation and even approve the notion of women's body as a temptation. This traditional notion of gender and femininity appeals to women converts. Some studies (Van Nieuwekerk 2006) highlight that convert women's decisions to convert is mainly due to a desire to pursue more family-oriented and traditional values. Yet, these interpretations can serve to subordinate women. Furthermore, most of the women had experienced insulting Khutbahs, either at their mosques or online. They expressed critical sentiments about Imams who promote misogynistic and patriarchal views. It is worrying that Imams focus their Khutbahs on discriminative attitudes towards women, rather than promoting gender equality and harmony among Muslim families. As Woodlock (2010a, p. 274) explains, the reason for the existence of these rigid gender roles might be that "the mosque becomes iconic in representing Islam for Muslims living as minorities. Strict segregation in the mosque takes on symbolic importance in representing idealised gender roles, which are virtually unachievable anywhere else in the wider non-Muslim society in which the Muslims live".

5. Conclusions

This paper discusses the experiences of a sample of Muslim women attending the mosque. It explores the women's views on gender segregation as well as any experiences of gender discrimination in the mosque. The notion of the mosque as gendered space and women's embodiment in this space appeared as a noticeable common theme in the personal narratives. Most of the women in this study highlighted the relationships between gender, religion and power. The majority of the women challenged the male dominated structure as well as the current practice of gender segregation in Australian mosques. Some women found the practice of gender segregation damaging to the dignity of Muslim women, sexualising and othering towards them. These women claimed their own belonging and participation in the mosque, as well as their rights to have equal access to the mosque. They expressed the need for urgent change in the male dominated structure of the mosque and the attitudes of Imams and religious leaders to accommodate Muslim women's requests for gender equality. At the same time, some women in the study accepted gender segregation based on the religious teachings or Islamic traditions. It seems they reconciled "gender-normative religious practices" (Darwin 2018) which support gender inequality. This view reflects the dominant understandings among some Muslims in Australia who remain loyal to more conservative interpretations of gender roles. However, the findings of this study indicate that new voices among Muslim women are emerging which are looking for more inclusive religious institutions. Hopefully, there will be more reformist voices in Australian Muslim communities which will be allied with Muslim women for more progressive changes in the structure of the mosque and consequently more involvement of Muslim women in leadership.

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Religion, Belonging, and Active Citizenship: A Systematic Review of Literature on Muslim Youth in Australia

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Abstract: Muslim youth have been under scrutiny over the last two decades from a radicalisation and countering violent extremism lens. This bias has largely carried itself to research conducted on Muslim youth in the West. This article undertakes a systematic review and analysis of literature conducted on Muslim youth in the West and in Australia in the last two decades since 11 September 2001. The body of literature in this field can be grouped under three main themes: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens. An important conclusion of this review is that most of the research is dated. There have been significant changes in the development of youth as they quickly evolve and adapt. The systematic review of literature exposed a number of gaps in the research: the current literature ignores generic adolescent factors and external social factors other than Islam that also influence Muslim youth; studies that examine both online and traditional activism and volunteering space are needed to understand the dynamics of change and shift; research needs to focus on Muslim youth who were born and raised in Australia rather than focus only on migrant youth; the ways some Muslim youth use their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action is not known; how Muslim youth use avenues other than their faith to express themselves in civic engagement and their commitment to society is underexplored; it is not known the degree to which bonding networks influence the identity formation and transformation of Muslim youth; there is no research done to examine how adult–youth partnership is managed in organisations that successfully integrate youth in their leadership; there is a need to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship; there is a need to understand the process of positive Muslim youth transformations as a complement to the current focus on the radicalisation process. Addressing these gaps will allow a more complete understanding of Muslim youth in the West and inform educational and social policies in a more effective manner.

Keywords: Muslim youth; Muslim youth identity; Australian Muslim youth; disengaged identities; active citizenship; youth radicalisation; Muslim youth deradicalisation; civic engagement; Muslim civic engagement; youth civic engagement; Muslim youth in the west

1. Introduction

Muslim minority communities have been under scrutiny in the last two decades from the security lens of government and have been the subject of academic research. In this respect, the way Muslim communities evolve and integrate within Western societies is seen as a vital aspect of social cohesion. Within the broader research field on Muslims in the West, very little is known about Muslim youth active and engaged involvement—a trajectory that moves away from the radicalisation paradigm that has dominated public discourse and research in the post-9/11 world. The research output is even narrower when it comes to active participation of Australian Muslim youth. A focus on *engaged* Muslim youth identities as upstanding citizens and how their identities have evolved is much needed.

97

Research in the United States has highlighted that there is a strong correlation between religious identity and civic engagement, and individuals who have a strong commitment to religion are more likely to actively "give back" and engage with the social and political life of Western countries (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). The main problem that arises with Muslim youth in Australia is that Muslim youth believe the wider Australian community do not understand who they are and what they believe in, with some maintaining that they are not accepted by the non-Muslim community and do not know if they could do enough to change the negative perceptions towards Muslims in general (Omar 2016).

This article critically evaluates existing literature on issues affecting Muslim youth in Western countries and specifically Muslim youth in Australia, focusing on three main themes repeatedly emerging throughout the literature reviewed: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens in Australia. Although the literature presents these themes in a variety of contexts, the article primarily focuses on their application to the factors that contributed to the development of Muslim youth. The article refers to a variety of current scholarship on Muslim youth in Australia and elsewhere that has been published within the last two decades.

2. Methodology

Literature on Muslim youth in Australia (and the West) is scarce. The literature that does exist is largely focused on Muslim youth radicalisation and conflict of identity. Our aim was to see if the literature on Muslim youth extended beyond this focus—literature that looked into Muslim youth as similar to other youth in Australia and positive transformations where Muslim youth overcame difficult periods in their lives to become successful citizens engaged in positive action as opposed to the radicalisation process that is often the focus of research and policies. We also wanted to see if literature on Muslim youth issues were prevalent, such as issues that explored their adolescent experiences. Three key themes repeatedly emerged throughout the literature reviewed: (1) the impact of terrorism policies and discourse on Muslim youth and their disengaged identities, (2) the relationship between religion (Islam) and civic engagement of Muslim youth, and (3) Muslim youth as active citizens in Australia. Grouping the literature into these themes allowed us to identify any gaps that exist regarding Muslim youth in academia. It also allowed us to see the extent to which the current literature explored Muslim youth issues away from the radicalisation and security lens.[1]

The literature review covers studies published within the last two decades—a very significant period shaped by 11 September 2001. The repercussions of ensuing events, counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism policies, excessive media, and public scrutiny left indelible marks on an entire generation of Muslim youth, and it directly impacted their lives, identity, and place in society. Charles Sturt University library, the University of Sydney library, and the authors' personal library resources were used to select sources. JSTOR, SAGE, ProQuest Central, and online searches using Google Scholar were also used to gather sources. The libraries were selected for their large collections. All sources that were selected are peer-reviewed, academic sources, published by reputable journals and publishing houses. A number of articles were also located through the reference list of relevant articles.

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[1] Another issue that stems from most of the research articles on Muslim youth is the problem of researcher motivations. Neila Miled found that it is easy for the researcher to assume an "emancipatory mission" when researching Muslim youth whereby the researcher either knowingly and unknowingly attempts to solve Muslim youth issues *for* them instead of letting the youth *tell their stories*. This method is usually done with the aim of addressing or unpacking radicalisation amongst Muslim youth. As Miled said, "Doing research with Muslim youth is rather challenging at this time of global terrorism, radicalisation, Islamophobia and racism and at this time of enhanced securitisation and enforced silencing . . . it is hard to map the contours of a research done by a Muslim researcher researching Muslim youth; the boundaries of researcher/researched and the insider/outsider get blurry, fluid and changing as 'the ethnographic life is not separable from the self' . . . " See (Miled 2019).

Descriptive search terms including Muslim youth in Australia, Australian Muslim youth, Muslim youth in the West, Australian-born Muslim youth, Muslim youth issues, Muslim youth transformations, Muslim youth active citizenship, religiosity amongst Muslim youth, Australian youth issues, Australian youth and leadership, religion and youth in Australia were used to retrieve research from library and online databases. Academics from the Centre of Islamic Studies and Civilisation at Charles Sturt University were also consulted to help guide our research.

While this literature review places a focus on Muslim youth, particularly in Australia, due to the scarcity of literature on the topic of Australian Muslim youth, the authors branched out to include literature on Muslim youth in the West and youth in the West more generally. Doing so allowed the authors to see what literature exists on youth and how these literatures can be applied to Australian Muslim youth experiences. It also allowed the authors to identify gaps within the research on Muslim youth and suggest areas where further research and literature is needed. The authors also limited the search to Australian-born or Western-born Muslim youth, as literature on migrant Muslim youth is plentiful due to its currency with policy makers, media, public, and therefore researchers. However, the authors, did include literature on some migrant youth experiences to identify links and differences between Australian-born and Western-born Muslim youth experiences, and by extension, any gaps.

The relevance and credibility of all sources were considered in this literature review. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus. The authors placed a focus on articles that thematically aligned with the research purpose; as such, strong focus was placed on articles that explored and analysed Australian Muslim youth experiences.

3. Disengaged Muslim Identities in the Age of Terrorism

The increase in terrorist threats occurring in Western countries by extremist Islamist groups has spurred an interest in the growth of disengaged identities and radical attitudes among Muslim youth living in Western countries. Among the ethno-religious minorities in Australia, Muslim youth have become the "centre of critical attention and stereotypical depiction in terms of their faithfulness to liberal institutions and modern values" (Hosseini 2013). Such attitudes have also been applied to the global Muslim population. Marie Breen-Smyth argues that the term "suspect community" has emerged to capture the ideological discourses used to define Muslims as the "enemy within".[2] She contends that being a suspect community does not necessarily mean that one is targeted for a particular reason; it also refers to "imagined" perceptions arising from public and official discourses emerging from the paradigms of the "war on terror":

> the community exists in the public suspicious mind, a public organised and created by a space of discourse focussed on security, insecurity, terrorism and threat and reproduced by media, security practitioners and political actors. (Breen-Smyth 2014)

Here, the term "suspect community" not only reinforces the image of Muslims as suspects in the subconscious minds of the public, but it also simultaneously influences the way Muslims perceive *themselves* as a suspect community and affects the types of perceptions Muslims have of their community and how they interact with their faith, others in society, the law, official policies and authorities. Thus, the allocation of suspicion on Muslims, Breen-Smyth (2014) argues, "silences, marginalises and prevents democratic participation of [Muslims]" and undermines "the possibility of peaceful politics [and] participatory democracy".

While Breen-Smyth's theory of the suspect community offers new insight into the way imagined communities are formed as a result of counter-terrorist efforts and are

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[2]   The term "suspect community" was first used by Hillyard to describe how Northern Irish populations became suspects through the implementation of counter-terrorist initiatives during the Northern Irish conflict. See (Hillyard 1993). The term has since been adopted to refer to the Muslim population post 9/11.

thus stigmatised, she does not offer critical evidence to support her claims nor does she refer to literature that explores the way Muslims have integrated in Western societies, where they have become more, rather than less, involved in "electoral politics and public affairs" (Breen-Smyth 2014). Moreover, her focus lies on the counter-terrorist efforts in Britain and its consequences on British Muslims—not specifically on Muslim youth—and she does not provide perspectives from British Muslims themselves who feel as if they are either a part of a suspect community or labelled as such. While a focus on Muslim youth and their feelings on being a suspect community and whether this impacts on their democratic participation would be a valuable contribution to literature on Islam, terrorism, and disengaged identities—a perspective that would have perhaps enriched Breen-Smyth's analysis—Breen-Smyth does point to the way counter-terrorism efforts have a direct effect on Muslim identity in general, whereby such efforts distort Muslim identity, and poses questions on who they are and where they belong.

However, Adrian Cherney and Kristina Murphy (Cherney and Murphy 2016), have used the term suspect community to refer to the impact of terror on Australian Muslims. Unlike Breen-Smyth's analysis, Cherney and Murphy use the term to highlight how the war on terror has contributed to the rise in efforts to counter-terrorist claims and build positive relationships with the Australian community, the law, authorities, and official policies.[3] Even though such counter-terrorism efforts have been criticised for being more focussed on intelligence gathering rather than sincere efforts to build positive relationships with Australian Muslims, which has in turn caused Australian Muslims to suffer a "form of collective attribution"—where they have become "negatively tarnished because of violent extremism and terrorism committed in the name of Islam"—the war on terror has increased Muslims' sense of religious and Australian identity (Cherney and Murphy 2016). However, such heightened feelings of belonging or strengthening of religious and/or national identity is usually in response to them feeling that they are perceived as a suspect community. That is, most of the Australian Muslims interviewed by Cherney and Murphy feel the need to reaffirm their identity against what does *not* define them.

Cherney and Murphy's analysis of Australian Muslims being a suspect community sheds insight into how counter-terrorism efforts and the war on terror has caused Muslims in general to feel as if they do not belong in a society that increasingly sees them as the "other". Their discussion is based on qualitative results stemming from interviews with a hundred or so Australian Muslims (selected from Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane) who have expressed their feelings and reactions to terrorism and counter-terrorism policies. Since their sample is relatively selective and small (they do acknowledge their limitations), it may not be representative of the entire Australian Muslim community. Their notion that the Australian Muslim community sees themselves primarily as a suspect community needs further research to be conclusive. Despite this, their analysis brings attention to the voices and concerns of Australian Muslims on the war on terror, their disdain with the counter-terrorism lens of Australian government's relationship with the Muslim community, and the resulting negative influence it has on their sense of belonging.

The "need" for Australian Muslim youth to belong to society is a trajectory that consumes most political thought. Randa Abdel-Fattah (2020) writes on the assumption that the biggest threat to Muslim youth is "vulnerability to extremism endures as a taken-for-granted, uncontroversial 'truth' in public imagination" (p. 373). Moreover, the discursive "formation about Muslim youth as at-risk become a state of knowledge, a way of thinking and talking about young Muslims, ruling in and ruling out certain ways of talking about Muslim youth" (p. 373). Abdel-Fattah provides a background overview of terrorism and counter-terrorist measures in Australia since September 11, 2001, detailing the way the Muslim population is seen as a "suspect community". She highlights the impact of counter-terrorism measures on minority discourse and the way these measures are framed about and around Muslims:

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[3]   Other studies have also acknowledged this approach. See (Kundnani 2014; Pickering et al. 2008; Sentas 2014; Spalek 2013).

offensively, in wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan against Muslims outside our borders; defensively, in laws and policing/security operations targeting Muslim threats inside our borders; and pre-emptively, in counter-radicalisation 'soft' programs for 'the Muslim community', with a focus on Muslim youth. This is the pool in which the potential future terrorist exists, where future danger lurks. (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 276)

Such trajectories are problematic, according to Abdel-Fattah, because the Muslim community, especially the Muslim youth, are constantly being "incited to speak, provoked to come forward and clarify their truth" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 379)—a practice done by the Muslim youth and their community that subjects them to trajectories of identity, values, and belonging, which, evidently, has been the centre of scholarly literature regarding Muslim youth in Australia and elsewhere. The same conclusions and feelings of justification and unbelonging were expressed by the Australian Muslims who were interviewed by Cherney and Murphy (as discussed above) who felt the need to reaffirm their identity against that which does *not* define them.

Abdel-Fattah's analysis on counter-terrorist measures by the Australian government since September 11, 2001 highlights the negative impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim youth. Her arguments would have been made more cogent if she provided accounts of the way young Australian Muslims *feel* due to these measures. Her analysis remains largely political, discussing the ways in which the government and policy makers shape the trajectories surrounding Australian Muslim identity and, by extension, Australian Muslim youth identity and their ability (or inability) to belong. Although what Abdel-Fattah discusses in her article has been explored by scholars before her, her study is useful, for it provides a concise and deeply informed understanding on how policies affect the way the Muslim community in Australia are perceived—the youth included. Her study also highlights how "years of policy frameworks, political rhetoric and community partnerships have normalised this hypersensitivity and policing of Muslim youth [which has] tainted [the youth] with an incipient potential to 'become terrorist', which is at once dehumanising, unjust, and utterly counter-productive" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, p. 385).

Despite the lack of young Muslim accounts on their thoughts regarding radicalisation and counter-terrorist policies, Abdel-Fattah's study can be complimented by Melissa Bull and Halim Rane's study on the very same issue. Bull and Rane interviewed 38 Australian Muslim youth, living in South East Queensland, to gauge their thoughts on political discourses addressing radicalisation and the prevention of it. They found that these Australian Muslim youth believed if there were instances of radicalisation amongst some Australian Muslim youth, it was either the result of:

An individual choice, not a communal issue,

Lack of socio-economic opportunity,

Feelings of isolation from the Muslim community and wider society,

The "us versus them" discourse alienating Muslim youth,

Familial issues,

A diminished sense of belonging,

Lack of appropriate mentorship and guidance by religious leadership,

Lack of adequate knowledge of Islam by community leaders,

The generational gap between elders of the community and Muslim youth, or

Inability to trust leaders—from the community or otherwise. (Bull and Rane 2019, pp. 278–82)

Bull and Rane further explore Muslim youth feelings, asking the sample of Muslim youth to elaborate on their general experience of being a Muslim young person in Australia. A majority of the responses referred to the problem of identity—the trouble of negotiating their cultural, religious, and Australian traditions or expectations (Bull and Rane 2019,

p. 282). Others spoke of the problem of discrimination, of education, of employment. However, most felt that they did not feel any different to other non-Muslim youth as they still had to tackle similar challenges, such as relationships, study, and employment (Bull and Rane 2019, p. 283). Still, while the participants:

> saw radicalisation as a problem that was frequently linked to individual circumstance and exacerbated by marginalisation and feelings of alienation . . . when they described their own experiences of being young Muslims in Australia, our participants explained that even though they experienced everyday life in positive ways, many of them felt the negative impact of public and political discourses that work to divide the Australian population between non-Muslims or Muslims, or 'us and them'. (Bull and Rane 2019, p. 287)

Bull and Rane's study is one of the very few that explore Muslim youth feelings and experiences, not just in relation to radicalisation but also in relation to their everyday lives as young Australian Muslims.[4] While they touch on the everyday issues of Australian Muslim youth and provide some positive transformative examples (and could have enriched their analysis with a deeper focus on this issue), their study still provides a refreshing insight into young Muslim thoughts, motivations, experiences, and identity negotiations. Bull and Rane successfully illustrated the complexity of Australian Muslim youth identity and showed how they are not limited by their identity as Muslims and by the negative trajectories that surround their Muslim identity. No, Australian Muslim youth are much more than what policy makers and the media want to believe about them; they are youth, first and foremost, who go through and deal with ordinary youth issues, only with the added pressure of being Muslim in a society that continually dismisses them.

However, Bull and Rane's analysis only captures the thoughts of 38 Muslim youth situated in South East Queensland. Had they expanded their participant sample to include Muslim youth from other Australian states, their study would have been much more enriching and comprehensive in regard to Australian Muslim youth experiences. Bull and Rane's study is also limited to the exploration of the impact on radicalisation on Muslim youth, and thus, while they do present other aspects of youth identity, they do so to show how these youth negotiate themselves in light of the "moral panic" that exists against Muslims by the general Australian public, politicians, and the media, which has shaped Muslim youth feelings of belonging.

The issue of belonging has shaped much literature on Muslim youth. Various scholars focus on how Muslim youth navigate their "multiple identities" in a society that may or may not be fundamentally opposed to their connection to Islam (Kabir 2011; Ozalp and Siddiqui 2012; Jakubowicz et al. 2014). Hamad Hosseini (2013, p. 465) argues that Muslim youth in the West, for example, are not only in a constant struggle with their religious beliefs and Western values but are also in constant negotiation between "multiple sources of identification"—their ethnic backgrounds, class, political beliefs, nationality—and find themselves "placed at the very centre of public debates about the management of national space, where intersecting anxieties over race, crimes and international politics are projected onto them." However, he also argues that while this may be the case, there is a need to move away from "top-down, mainstream approach[es]" to understanding Muslim youth identities in the West—that there is a need to acknowledge "common attributes that make the category of 'Muslim youth' [still] meaningful" (Hosseini 2013, p. 465).

Hosseini's article provides a fruitful alternative understanding to Muslim youth feelings of belonging and agency in the West. He outlines the way Muslim youth negotiate themselves as Muslims living in the West via their political identity and how this perspective allows for an understanding of Muslim youth as "actors with a range of opportunities where they can practice their political agency and respond to their situations in multiple ways" despite their "complex status" resulting from "multiple influential forces and factors" such as marginalisation, unemployment, racism, etc. (Hosseini 2013, p. 469). Despite

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4   See also (Rane and Bull 2019; Collins et al. 2011).

his alternative approach to understanding Muslim youth identity, Hosseini's article only provides a limited view on Muslim youth engagement in the West. He focuses largely on the notion of political identity, what it means, and how the concept itself can be applied to Muslim youth living in the West. Although he situates political identity away from Islamism and terrorism to show how Muslim youth have an active understanding of Western political processes, his article still aligns itself within the broader theme of terrorism and Muslim youth disengagement from terrorism that is apparent within the existing literature.

Similarly, Scott Poynting (2009) examined the way young Muslim women negotiated their complex identities while living in Australia, but unlike Hosseini, Poynting did not situate his study away from what Hosseini termed "top–down, mainstream approach[es]" (Hosseini 2013, p. 465) to understand young Muslim women and their identities. Instead, Poynting's analysis situates their experiences within the usual hyphenated identity dilemma. Poynting does this by exploring the identity dilemma of five second-generation Lebanese Muslim women over two different periods: two women were interviewed in 1997 and three were interviewed in 2003—making his sample not only extremely limited and selective but also increasingly distant from the realities of young Muslim women's experiences of identity negotiation. Even so, Poynting does explore issues of identity that still remain true today, delving into the concept of "strategic hybridity" to show how young Muslim women incorporate "elements of parents' homeland culture and the 'dominant culture' in creative and quite fluid ways, shifting according to circumstances" (Poynting 2009, p. 375). However, these "creative and fluid ways" are not as Poynting claims. The trajectory still situates itself along the lines of rebellion and integration. These young Muslim women's negotiation of identity places them at odds, according to Poynting, with their parents who feel as if they are rebelling against their culture, while also placing them at odds with the other, "dominant culture", who will not accept them unless they choose to assimilate unconditionally (Poynting 2009, p. 375).

While this issue is one that all Muslim youth face, for Muslim women, their conflict arises with presumptions by others of what it means to be a Muslim living in Australia, and often, these presumptions centre themselves around their appearance—whether or not they wear the head covering (which, again, is an aspect that is constantly scrutinised by existing literature when it comes to Muslim women). However, the women who were interviewed in 2003 by Poynting, unlike the 1997 sample, felt a stronger connection to their Muslim identity, considering the head covering as a symbolic gesture, something that represents who they are as well as their Muslim identity. As one interviewee said,

> If you're going to respect me, and accept me, then I want you to accept me on my terms, and that is as a Muslim. So, I deliberately created this position of difference, so that people would, hopefully, ultimately respect me for that, and not for something else, not for just being a woman, but for being Muslim as well. (Poynting 2009, p. 383)

Despite these personalised negotiations of identity, one where these Muslim women try to shift the focus on how the "other" perceives them to how *they wish to be perceived*, their identity as Muslim women is still focused on them needing to define themselves based on their dress. Moreover, while the article discusses potent issues that are relevant to the experiences of Muslim women in Australia today, the sample is very small and thus does not show a large example of how young Australian Muslim women negotiate their identities. The article also falls short of examining some of the adolescent experiences of these young women, to delve into how they explore their identity in different aspects of their lives.

Some literature on Australian Muslim youth has placed a focus on the negative perceptions of Muslim youth and their perceived radicalisation or unwillingness to integrate

into Australian society because of their religious affiliation with Islam.[5] Other scholars have argued otherwise. Looking at the effects of Islamophobia on Muslims living in the West, Dunn and Hopkins (2016, p. 257) write that even though "it has been asserted [by the media and/or public policy] that the disaffection borne of Islamophobia could generate violent extremism" among Muslims and particularly Muslim youth, there is no evidence that establishes "an empirical link between disaffection borne of Islamophobia [for example] and a vulnerability to violent extremism".[6] If there was a correlation, the percentage would undoubtedly be marginal, especially as the Australian Muslim community holds a minority status within Australia; the demographic profile of Muslim youth under the age of twenty-five makes up 50% of the 604,000 Muslims living in Australia.[7]

Some studies show that many Muslim youth in the West, and in Australia specifically, feel a sense of connection to their respective Western countries. In one study conducted by Nahid Afrose Kabir (2011), the majority of Australian Muslims living in Melbourne, when responding to the question of what it means to be Australian and un-Australian, said that to be Australian is to respect the law and to be un-Australian is to disobey the law (Kabir 2011). While this shows that Muslims pay attention to being a law-abiding citizen, limiting being Australian to obeying laws indicates an exclusion of social and religious aspects of a person's national identity as Australian. This may be reflective of the Muslim sentiments of not feeling to belong and looking for the most common denominator, obeying laws, as being Australian. It could also suggest that Muslim youth are not sure what it means to be Australian and how Australianness reflects on their identity. Nevertheless, Kabir contends that most Muslims felt a strong affiliation with their Australian identity but did not disconnect themselves from their roots, preferring to adopt hyphenated identities. They also see Australia as an inclusive nation, and any discontent with minority groups by Australians themselves largely stems of media misrepresentations of those groups, such as, in this case, Muslims (Kabir 2011).

Kabir offers an insider perspective on Muslim youth feelings of what it means to be a Muslim living in the West and provides insight into how Muslim youth in Australia do not feel disconnected to Australia and Australian values. The discussion allows for an understanding on Muslim youth feelings of inclusion and how they navigate their multiple identities in a society that sees them, more or less, as disengaged individuals who pose a threat to the Western way of life (Kabir 2011).[8] Had Kabir focused on the way these Australian Muslim individuals used their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action, her analysis would have provided fresh insight on literature on Muslim youth that moves away from current discourse on Muslim youth as disengaged citizens with disengaged identities. While Kabir's article is valuable as a source on Muslim youth for she provides primary accounts from Muslim youth themselves, and more importantly, on Australian Muslim youth, the number of respondents is quite low—with only fourteen Muslim youth interviewed—and her focus remains on Muslim youth in Melbourne, and therefore, it does not capture a wider demographic on Australian Muslim youth feelings of belonging, such as those living in other city states.

Kabir also wrote an article on Muslim youth three years prior to the above study, where she examined perspectives of Old Muslim Australians (aged between sixty and

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[5] Although not focused on Muslim youth's unwillingness to integrate into Australian society, Johns et al. analyse how a sport-focused youth mentoring program in Melbourne was developed as a form of "community-based resilience" to tackle issues of identity, belonging, and cultural isolation and counter "forms of violent extremism" that might be present in some Muslim youth. See (Johns et al. 2014).

[6] See also (Carr and Haynes 2015).

[7] (Phillips 2007).

[8] Rane et al. explores the way Australian Muslims, in general, interact with Australian society amid negative public and media discourse towards them. Although their study is limited to just the views and opinions of the Queensland Muslim community at the 2009 Muslim Eid Festival in Brisbane, their discussion shows Australian Muslim willingness to *positively* interact with, and integrate into, Australian society—much like the responses indicated from Kabir's study. See (Rane et al. 2010). Ryan J. Al-Natour also offers an interesting perspective on how negative perceptions towards Sydney's 'Muslim ghettos' contributed to protests over the building of an Islamic school in Camden because Muslims had "no place in Camden" in the eyes of white Australian protesters. See (Al-Natour 2015).

ninety years old), New Muslim Australians (ages between twenty to seventy years old), and Australian Muslim Youth (aged between fifteen and eighteen years old) from Sydney and Perth. Unlike her later study, Kabir found that young Muslims in Australia felt a stronger affiliation with their ethnic identity rather than their identity as Australians. Of the sixty students interviewed (a much larger sample than the above study), thirty-eight from Sydney said their national identity was their parent's country of origin, while twenty-two from Perth said the same. Only one youth from Sydney strongly identified as Australian, while one from Perth strongly identified with the Muslim nation (Kabir 2008). What Kabir's study revealed, despite it being more than ten years old, is that youth who felt a sense of belonging to Australia did so based on their active citizenship and engagement with Australian society through sporting activities, music, the workplace, inter-school debates, etc. Being exposed to different aspects of Australian society allowed these young Muslims to feel a sense of connection to Australia and thus develop a sense of Australian-ness that other Muslim youth did not identify with because of their conflicted loyalties. Kabir's article highlights what the majority of the current literature fails to do—Muslim youth are varied in their experiences and their personal beliefs, and so their sense of belonging and identity is not only about fitting in within their culture or religious expectations but also about negotiating who they think they are and how they believe they belong.

However, in the post-September 11 climate, no matter how much Muslim youth perceive themselves as belonging to a society that is majorly non-Muslim, they live in a period of "political mis-recognition" (Lam and Mansouri 2020), where there is a "conceptual blindness to the complexities of Muslim identities, aspirations, and civic and political engagement . . . it manifests as a failure to recognise the rights of Muslims within prevailing structures of diversity governance, and the resultant burden placed on Muslims to attain state recognition and social acceptance for their religious needs" (Lam and Mansouri 2020). Through their interviews of forty-nine young Australian Muslims living in Melbourne, Kim Lam and Fethi Mansouri found that a majority of these Muslim youth turned to faith as a form of not only coping with mis-recognition but also fighting back against notions of their incompatibility with Western society: "the notion of using Islamic teachings and practices to facilitate adaptation and social integration into a Western culture challenges the Islam–West cultural incompatibility thesis and indeed speaks to a desire for re-engagement with Western polity, rather than a desire to carve out an alternative space for oneself" (Lam and Mansouri 2020). Their methods of coping or of "fighting back" varied; some youth delved deep into their faith in a way where their faith intertwined with their civic engagement with mainstream society, others used faith as a means of solace outside of Western culture (Lam and Mansouri 2020).

Either way, Lam and Mansouri highlighted the ways in which the complex identities of these young Australian Muslims were negotiated in a climate of political misrecognition of such identities and showed how young Australian Muslims are not bound by Western trajectories of who they are, and how and where they belong, rather, young Muslims are empowered agents who forge their own stories. Lam and Mansouri's study is one of the very few that delve deep into current literature on Muslim youth to offer an informed understanding of their agency rather than their subjugation to Western trajectories. Having said that, their study does have its limitations. Their sample is small and restricted to Muslim youth in Melbourne, and their focus still lies within the broader framework of terror and at-risk youth as they present Muslim youth accounts on the way they negotiate their identities around the political climate of misrecognition.

To understand more thoroughly the way Muslim youth negotiate their "multiple" or "hyphenated" identities in the West, a focus on their educational aspirations and their subsequent cultural and ethnic make-up is needed—Fethi Mansouri and Sally Percival Wood do exactly this in their book *Identity, Education and Belonging: Arab and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Australia*. Although the book was published in 2008 and focuses only on immigrant Arab Muslim youth living in Australia, the themes explored throughout offer an interesting perspective on how Muslim youth may or may not use other avenues, such

as education and schooling, to negotiate their identities. The book provides a thorough historical overview on the relationship between Muslims and Australians prior to September 11 and situates the discussion on how the subsequent war on terror directly impacted Arab Muslim youth aspirations and schooling abilities in Australia. However, what makes their discussion fruitful is the exploration of culture, cultural diversity, and cultural identity among youth and how . . .

> First- and second-generation migrant youth negotiate their cultural identity in the private spaces of family networks and in the public sphere where ethnic, gendered and racial perceptions interact to shape social and behavioural outcomes. (Mansouri and Wood 2008, p. 32)

Situating their argument within the theoretical framework of cultural identity constructions, the authors show how Muslim youth identity formations are not just restricted to "choosing" or "battling" with who they are from a religious or nationalistic perspective (Mansouri and Wood 2008, p. 32). They show that there are various factors outside of the political and religious identifications that influence how Muslim youth navigate themselves in the West. While their study was heavily reliant on the effect terrorism discourse had on the way immigrant Arab Muslim youth excelled in school, the overall background they provide does offer a broader understanding of how Muslim youth, even today, battle with discourse on their faith and identities.

What is also significant about Mansouri and Wood's publication is that by looking into various other factors that inform youth identity formations, such as those influenced by culture and cultural practices, we can better understand how Muslim youth express themselves, interact with others and society, and how they choose to become active citizens engaged in positive action. The binary approach between religious and nationalistic identifications restricts any real understanding of the multiple factors that may shape not only Muslim youth identities but also the decisions they make in everyday life and their participation in wider society. While Mansouri and Wood's 2008 publication sheds light on these important insights, there is a need to research Australian Muslim youth to see how they evolved in the last decade especially with respect to the impact of increased scrutiny on Muslim youth since the emergence of ISIS in 2014 and their social media campaign to recruit Muslims around the world.

Bindi Shah et al. (2010) also focus on educational achievement to examine how education influences the career aspirations of Muslim youth. However, their focus is limited to British Pakistanis and Pierre Bourdieu's theory on family capital. Their aim is to explore "familial or ethnic shared norms and values as contributing to educational achievement among immigrant groups" and how social class positions intersect with ethnicity (Shah et al. 2010, p. 119). Given that Muslim youth are a diverse group with varying ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds, Shah et al.'s study, much like Mansouri and Wood, unpacks the complexities of not only what it means to be a young Muslim living in the West but also of the multitude of factors that helps shape their identities beyond political and religious factors.

Amanda Keddie (2017) also examines education amongst Muslim youth, but her study is focused on the way young Muslim women explore issues of education, identity, and justice against the backdrop of Islamophobia and white-ness in Australian society. The book, *Supporting and Educating Young Muslim Women: Stories from Australia and the UK*, draws on case study research over a period of ten years and, as a result, presents a wide range of young Muslim women's perspectives on education and identity within Australia and the UK. What is unique about Keddie's study is that she looks into the way these young Muslim women use education as a means of agency and empowerment, and how, despite certain experiences of discrimination and racism, these women still strive to pursue their educational aspirations. Similar to Mansouri and Wood as well as Shah et al., Keddie's article situates the experiences of these young Muslim women away from the binary of faith versus culture. Through her case study, she shows how these young Muslim women are not restricted in their choices but rather find support from their family,

friends, and educators. Keddie's study is also very useful to understand how the impacts of Islamophobia can be mitigated through something as simple as education.

Keddie's study greatly compliments a smaller albeit similar study done by Taghreed Jamal Al-deen who examined the way young Muslim women in Australia developed a sense of agency by pursuing higher education (2019). However, unlike Keddie's study, Al-deen's solely focusses on young Australian Muslim women and moves her analysis away from the preoccupation on Muslim women's dress codes and other misconceived topics about women in Islam. Al-deen found that second-generation Muslim women had the desire to socially and economically advance themselves unlike their first-generation mothers, which did cause an inter-generational rift between the two. Even so, these young Muslim women still received significant support from their families to pursue higher education, regardless of their social and economic status. Al-deen also found that the pursuit of higher education brought these young Muslim women closer to their faith identity while also challenging incorrect cultural beliefs, with most using "Islam as a sense of agency and a took for the promotion of the rights of women" (Al-deen 2019, p. 606).

Despite her relatively small sample (only twelve women were interviewed) and despite it not being a representation of young Muslim women in Australia or other Western countries, Al-deen's study highlights Muslim women's agency in action—something that very few existing studies in the literature explore, especially when examining young Muslim women's experiences. In fact, previous studies on the topic of Muslim women's education were divided: one study, for example, found that some academically successful Muslim women moved away from their faith while others gained confidence in their faith and in their culture (Bhopal 1998). Still, these previous studies are not reflective of young Muslim women today who have ample more opportunities and freedoms, and so Al-deen's focus brings this aspect of Muslim women's identity and agency through education to the present day. As such, both Keddie and Al-deen's studies provide insight into the way Muslim women develop agency as young Muslims through education—not as a means of challenging their faith or cultural identities, but because of their desire to advance themselves socially and economically within the Australian and English contexts.

Although not analysing Muslim women in education, Rebecca Meldrum et al. (2014) explore how eleven young Muslim women develop agency in the way they understand sexuality, be it from a culturally or faith-based perspective. The young Australian women who were interviewed for this study were from Melbourne. Their understandings of sexuality differed considerably: some saw sexuality as something deeply sacred, others saw it as something that differentiates them from men, explaining why men and women have different roles as a result (Meldrum et al. 2014). Others saw sexuality as something that needs to be protected through the hijab, considering it to be a blessing as it hinders men from prying on them and safeguards them from potential instances of rape (Meldrum et al. 2014, p. 173). Most expressed the inequality within the Muslim community toward men and women, where men are allowed to freely express their sexuality while women are forced to control it (Meldrum et al. 2014, p. 174). Regardless, the authors found that the young Muslim women felt comfortable in the way they express or do not express their sexuality, despite cultural and religious expectations. While the authors did focus on the dichotomy of culture and religion as the basis of their study, they present the ways in which these young Muslim women navigate their lives as exactly that: young Muslim women. They show how, despite their cultural and religious upbringing, young Muslim women are able to form their own perspectives on what it means to be a Muslim woman living in Australia.[9]

Prior to Meldrum's study—some seven years—Muslim women's sexuality was perceived by the Australian public as something that was restrained and "un-feminist" without regard to the way Muslim women actually perceived their sexuality. These remarks were shaped by the events of 2001—the Sydney Gang Rapes—and of 2005—the Cronulla Riots—

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[9] See also (Meldrum et al. 2016).

a period where great suspicion and racist attitudes toward those of Lebanese or Middle Eastern backgrounds were at a high. Kiran Grewal found that Australian public discourse at the time framed the Muslim man as a "threat" to the Muslim woman and, indeed, the non-Muslim woman. Muslim women's sexuality was seen as being "inferior" by their faith as a consequence of the 2001 and 2005 incidents, and Muslim men were thus condemned for their inability to respect the rights of Muslim women. Grewal found that during this period, anti-racist and anti-feminist discourses pitted against each other, whereby "the selective use of the language of 'women's rights' and gendered nationalist imagery, far from demonstrating a newfound popular feminism in Australia, reflects the highly gendered, sexualised and ethicised construction of Australian national identity" (Grewal 2007, p. 131).

Grewal provided an overview on how discourses on gender, ethnicity, and nationalism in Australia at the time of the Sydney gang rapes and the Cronulla riots were shaped around the "other"—namely, the Muslim male and the oppressed Muslim female. While his study shows how the trajectory on Muslims in Australia is much the same then as it is now, albeit with a deeper focus on radicalisation today, he does not provide insight in Muslim youth experiences of such trajectories during the time such incidents occurred. His study generalises the Australian public feelings toward Australian Muslims in light of such incidents, citing a variety of media sources and political commentaries made by political parties at the time. Although rich in analysis on the way the public perceived Australian Muslims immediately post-September 11, Kiran's study remains limited and does not offer an understanding of how the Muslim community, in general, felt about the skewed gendered, racist, and nationalist attitudes of the wider Australian public at the time, thus limiting his study to a pure examination of media reports and political commentaries.

Writing around the same time as Kiran Grewal, Alia Imtoual discusses the implications of racism on young Muslim women in South Australia. Dismissing the term Islamophobia due to its "theoretical underpinnings" that "appear to be a return to the 'prejudice thesis' whereby racism/discrimination is located as a problem within misguided or 'ignorant' individuals", Imatoual offers an alternative definition: religious racism (Imtoual 2006, p.192). Religious racism "covers not only individualised attitudes and actions, but also acts of disadvantage or discrimination, as well as structural and societal codes that act to advantage some and disadvantage others" and "refers only to these factors where they are associated with religious affiliation" (Imtoual 2006, p. 193). With this definition, Imatoual interviewed young South Australian Muslim women about their "identity formations, what role they saw religion as playing in Australian society, their perceptions of media representations of Muslims and Islam, as well as how they experience life as a Muslim in a majority non-Muslim country", with a large part of her discussions focusing on religious racism. She found that many of these women experienced instances of religious racism in their everyday lives, and at the time in South Australia, no laws had been introduced that protected them from religious racism. Imtoual's analysis does not offer any new insight on the experiences of Australian Muslim youth, aside from her alternative understanding on religious racism—a term that, while comprehensive, does not negate the now more broader meaning of Islamophobia, including its effects on Muslims who experience it directly or indirectly. The article focuses largely on unpacking definitions and identifying gaps in legislature. Her focus on Muslim women's experiences was minimal.

The next section will show how Australian Muslim youth—and Muslim youth in general—use their faith to engage in civic practices in Australia. As noted previously, studies on American Christian youth have shown that there is a strong correlation between religious identity and civic engagement. Similar correlations would be expected with Muslim youth.

4. Islamic Activism and Civic Engagement

Questions about young Muslims and their civic engagement continues to shape much political and scholarly discourse often based around the assumption that "Islam constrains the full possibilities of citizenship in multicultural secular societies and that

Muslims must be actively steered towards participation in civic life" (Roose and Harris 2015, p. 468). Joshua M. Roose and Anita Harris argue that despite their tenuous sense of belonging and awareness of negative political and public attitudes towards Muslims, Australian Muslim youth take advantage of opportunities to engage with others in society. According to their findings, religion was identified as the "key shaper of the everyday civic activities", with Islam contributing "strongly to the development of civic mindedness" in Australian Muslim youth (Roose and Harris 2015, p. 463). What their findings indicate is that religion plays a strong role in Muslim youth civic engagement despite arguments that suggest otherwise.[10] They write that understanding civic engagement cannot be limited to traditional civic practices; instead, there is a need to understand how Australian Muslim youth refer to alternative means of civic practice to showcase active participation in society and how religion informs those practices (Roose and Harris 2015). One of the merits of their study is that they not only provide a comprehensive background discussion of current literature but also rely on accounts from eighty Muslim youth in Australia to inform their perspective—although their sample is only limited to Muslim youth from migrant backgrounds.

Muslim youth do engage in civic practices, but most do so through online platforms, according to Amelia Johns (2014) and her study on Muslim young people's active citizenship online. In her study, Johns found that new online platforms and social media provide Muslim youth with new opportunities to take civic engagement and collective agency. These online platforms play a crucial role for Muslim youth to express their voice and communicate their concerns on citizenship, rights, and how they see the issues regarding the Muslim community in Australia. Similar to Roose and Harris, Johns shows that civic engagement does not necessarily need to be oriented toward formal political membership and participation. Instead, civic engagement means any form of activity oriented toward the "public good" (Johns 2014, p. 73).[11] For Muslim youth, this might mean using online platforms as an "alternative discursive space" where they feel safe and free to assert both their religious and cultural identities as well as engage in democratic dialogue "beyond frequently hostile mainstream media portrayals of their communities" (Johns 2014, p. 76). While this study was very useful, the focus on increased activity online tends to overshadow volunteering and involvement in the traditional organisations that are still very active in large metropolitan cities in Australia.

Online platforms as "alternative discursive spaces" have most certainly been an outlet for some Muslim youth who want to engage with the wider public about their faith. In their study on the impact of online video platforms, Vika Gardner and Salman Hameed (Gardner and Hameed 2018) found that one particular Muslim youth, Kamal Saleh, uses his talent as a "spoken word" artist to make videos online about Islam and science to "frame [his] discourse in ways that unify rather than divide". One of Kamal Saleh's most popular videos on the topic of Islam and science, titled "The Meaning of Life", has attracted over 3 million views on YouTube. The authors found that young Muslims such as Kamal Saleh attempt to bring to light "voices of ordinary people", especially in debates on faith, that are often pushed aside by more seasoned scholars such as Zakir Naik and Hamza Tzortzis (Gardner and Hameed 2018). Instead of delivering understandings of faith in the more traditional, sermon manner, Kamal Saleh—influenced by the aforementioned scholars—attempts to "engage in acts of cultural production" (Gardner and Hameed 2018). What this means, according to Gardner and Hameed, is that Muslim youth are turning to online platforms to "actively shap[e] local and transnational cultures, rather than merely being acted upon by traditional media"—that is, Muslim youth use online platforms as a means to have their voices heard and, by extension, participate in civic activities even if behind a screen (Gardner and Hameed 2018, p. 61).

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[10] See also (Norton 2013; Joppke 2013; Noble 2009).
[11] See also (Collin 2008; Harris et al. 2010; Bennett et al. 2011; Vromen 2011).

Despite their unique study, one that traces the way Muslim youth create "youth cultures" online through creative mediums such as videos, Gardner and Hameed's study does not trace the patterns of Muslim youth engagement online more broadly to show a correlation between active online engagement and the creation of youth cultures. Their study is also limited to Saleh—one individual—and the study of two of his popular spoken word videos, "The Meaning of Life" and "Embryo = Leech", with a brief discussion on the influence of other scholars on Saleh's work. Gardner and Hameed do not provide Saleh's personal statements about his intentions and can only speculate about Saleh's intentions and rise to prominence in an online space.

Examining the correlation between Islamic religiosity and civic engagement of young Muslims in Melbourne, Matteo Vergani et al. (2017) found that organised grassroots civic engagement initiatives allowed Australian Muslim youth to feel as though they were active citizens rather than members of traditional organisations. They found that the main barrier to Muslim active political participation was a lack of trust in public institutions and the negative discourse promoted by "divisive forces" (Vergani et al. 2017, p. 63). For some young Muslims, the political system and therefore political participation does not allow for their voices to be heard, especially in a post-9/11 climate, and they believe that formal means of civic engagement do nothing but divide the local and political communities (Vergani et al. 2017, p. 70). The impact of this on Australian Muslim youth was an ambivalence in political participation. Ultimately, Vergani et al. argue that there is a need to see how Islamic religiosity influences civic engagement, and their analysis, although attempting to bridge this gap in the current literature, only offers a window into the relationship of religion and civic engagement among Australian Muslim youth. However, they do note that while studies on Australian Muslim youth and their civic engagement have been limited, other studies have shown a strong correlation between religion and civic engagement among youth from other faiths and backgrounds—studies that have helped inform their research on Australian Muslim youth.[12]

Although very few studies have shown a positive correlation between religious practices and civic engagement in Australia (Dunn et al. 2015), there have been some studies, such as that conducted by Ameera Karimshah et al., who have shown that religious associations—i.e., mosques—may lead to deeper civic engagement and social participation in the wider society among Australian Muslim youth. Indeed, building on the work of A. Dialmy (2007) and A. Jamal (2005), Karimshah et al. (2014, p. 38) write that contrary to popular public perception, "the role of the mosque in the lives of Muslim youth is multifaceted and serves as the centrepiece from which the majority of socialisation, across [a] variety [of] formal and informal networks, occurs." The mosque is also a place whereby young Australian Muslims can feel at ease with their Muslim identity through socialisation, where they can facilitate and form friendship networks, and where they can actively participate in a number of formal activities, such as youth groups, advocacy groups, charities, and women's groups (Karimshah et al. 2014). The authors also found that the mosque not only plays a role in Australian Muslim youth religious engagement, but it also encourages Muslim youth to join networks in non-religious settings (Karimshah et al. 2014).

However, their study is limited to a few interviews conducted with only a small sample of Australian Muslim youth from Brisbane, three of whom were born in Australia, and the other eight had been living in Australia for more than eight years (Karimshah et al. 2014). What this shows is that there is still a focus on Australian Muslim immigrant youth, whose experiences may differ drastically to those Muslim youth who were born in Australia. Moreover, although Karimshah et al. showed how mosques play a pivotal role in Muslim youth civic engagement, there is a need to consider that these positive outcomes depend on the leadership of the mosque and its resources, as the majority of existing Australian mosques do not have the ability or the means to provide a social civic space for their Muslim youth. Even so, the model of mosques as complexes meeting a

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12   See (Yeung 2004; Kabir 2005; Kniss and Numrich 2007; Read 2015).

variety of needs (including gyms and cafes) is increasing, with large mosque complex projects across large metropolitan cities in Australia.

Outside of the mosque, young Australian Muslims still find ways to not only make sense of who they are with their networking and socialisation opportunities but also how they can use their faith to exercise civic engagement practices. Chole Patton (2014), in her study on young Australian Muslims, their citizenship, and their religiosity post September 11, found that religion plays a pivotal role in Australian Muslim youth in charting a narrative for a more ethical and just society in Australia. This narrative is not a vision to impose Islamic law onto Australian society; rather, "a battle to de-centre the cultural hegemony of Anglo-Australian identities" (Patton 2014, p. 119). What is meant here is that Australian Muslim youth dream of a more culturally egalitarian society. In fact, many expressed unwillingness to label Australia as a "racist or Islamophobic" society—for them, racial or Islamophobic discrimination is a "form of social deviance" (Patton 2014, p. 118). What Patton evidently found was that Muslim youth in Australia approach their Australian citizenship in similar terms as they approach their religiosity: "as a process of becoming" (Patton 2014, p. 120). Although the study is based on two Melbourne Shia Muslim youth groups, a majority of whom were recent immigrants, the study does show that an Islam plays an empowering role in giving young Muslims clarity of identity and the confidence to undertake civic engagement practices despite signs of racism and Islamophobia.

It should be noted that the correlation between religion and civic engagement is not always apparent. General youth programs that assist youth with becoming civically engaged citizens are avenues by which these youth can express themselves outside of their religion and/or religious identity. These programs are especially important for Muslim youth who do not have a strong connection to their faith and who do not have opportunity to engage in civic activities via their faith in meaningful, practical, and contributable ways. For instance, Mary E. Arnold et al. (2012) found that there are eight main domains of youth engagement: (1) Youth service: volunteerism, community service, and service learning; (2) Youth leadership; (3) Youth decision-making: youth in governance; (4) Youth philanthropy; (5) Youth political engagement; (6) Youth organising: community organising and advocacy; (7) Youth media; and (8) Youth evaluation and research in systematic inquiry into issues that affect them and their communities (p. 57). Identifying the various programs and ways in which youth can become civically engaged allows for a better understanding of how youth may reach out to their communities and the broader society in general. For Muslim youth, this may mean finding a suitable platform where they may be able to not only express their identity as Muslims through various civic practices but also how they may incorporate their faith into their daily lives or re-connect with it.

Arnold et al. (2012) also found that youth–adult partnerships are an important key for success in community youth engagement, as youth do not always have the resources, experience, and means for successful civic action. What this means is that in order for youth to successfully engage, they need to acknowledge that they may need some assistance to make meaningful contributions to society. However, likewise, adults also need to acknowledge that youth play an important role in society and need a platform to voice their opinions, concerns, and in some cases, their identities. Arnold et al. argue that for this to be possible, youth and adults need to undertake "training", where they participate in activities designed to help them work together as "teams". While youth may see adults as being "too rigid" or "old-fashioned" and the adults may likewise see youth as being "overcommitted" and "impractical", these training activities will help them "explore the nuances of working together, assessing differences and similarities, and exposing potential problems, such as adultism (adult bias against children)" (Arnold et al. 2012, pp. 60–1). Arnold et al.'s study is important, especially when it comes to understanding Muslim youth and their relationship with community leaders. Studies have found that many Muslim youth, especially in Australia, feel that there is a disconnect between them and the older generation of leaders in their community. Then, this leads to disenfranchisement with not only their community

but also their faith, as many begin to feel isolated, misunderstood, voiceless, and judged—all while not having the means to understand how to better themselves.

The disconnect between youth and their community leaders is not unique to Australian Muslim youth and their experiences with their community. In fact, many youth in Australia feel there is a mismatch between what they see as important in youth leadership development programs and what their teachers and other stakeholders find essential. Nathan Eva and Sen Sendjaya (Eva and Sendjaya 2013) found that youth, especially students, prioritised transforming influence and voluntary subordination over ethics and morality, and they placed priority on cultivating profound, genuine, and trusting relationships as well as championing authentic and secure individuals—matters their teachers and facilitators saw as the least important aspects of leadership training. One student expressed that she felt she excelled when she "needed to be a leader and make important decisions", but when she was a bystander, she felt she tended to become "lazy and unmotivated" (Eva and Sendjaya 2013, p. 592). What her response shows, and Eva and Sendjaya's study suggests overall, is that youth will most likely only engage in civic activities if they feel like they can make a meaningful contribution to their society or community and they are empowered to take leadership roles and given real responsibilities. Hence, leadership development programs and adult–youth relationships are essential in cultivating active citizens, especially within youth communities, regardless of their faith and cultural identities.

Indeed, Paulina Billet (2014) contends that all bonding networks, whether based on social capital or not, deliver youth essential access to resources and relationships for them to cope with the complexities of life and to help them become actively engaged in civic activities. She writes that bonding ties are "an essential part of [youth] identity forming and can be linked to their resilience, with youth of disadvantaged backgrounds often making use of their strong bonding to make their lives work" (p. 848). While certain bonding networks may facilitate negative outcomes, such as creating deviant youth and leading to high crime rates, they still teach youth essential skills that may help them later in their lives, especially as youth rely on their experiences to determine what course they want to take in life and how they may use these experiences—if negative—to positively transform their lives. For some youth, friendship bonding networks "represent[ed] a family of sorts, which can be relied upon in times of need", especially when youth feel as though they are misunderstood by their family members or local community who cannot relate to their immediate problems (Billet 2014, p. 850). Billet ultimately argues that there is a need to:

> . . . understand the differences between youth and adult social capital in order to minimise misconceptions and promote understanding, strive to better comprehend the impacts of bonding and bridging during youth and conceptualise social capital not in terms of perverse or dark, but as a resource of the individual which can be used in order to reach desired aims. (Billet 2014, p. 855)

While Billet's study covered general youth, its findings are relevant for Muslim youth as they are having issues of belonging to wider society and even their own community. For positive civic engagement of Muslim youth, formations of bonding networks need to be explored and understood, particularly as not all Muslim youth find strong connections with their faith or the local Muslim community. Certain bonding networks, whether based on social capital or not, help navigate their lives and teach them valuable lessons that may help them positively transform.

One way that youth find "bonding networks" is through popular culture as explored in Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir's book *Globalised Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific: Popular Culture in Singapore and Sydney* (Nasir 2016). One of the outstanding things about this book is the way Nasir skilfully incorporates a variety of sources to present a compelling argument, weaving together data from cyberspace social networking websites, textual sources, and interviews to produce a comparative transnational study on Muslim youth involvement in a variety of popular culture practices, including tattooing, hip-hop, and cultural consumption. Through these avenues, which cause the blending of popular culture

with religion, Nasir notes that Muslim youth are able to become custodians of religion, reinterpreting their faith in a way that helps them understand who they are and where they belong (Nasir 2016). What makes Nasir's study refreshing is his approach on Muslim youth not as youth who are in conflict with their identity or in trouble of becoming radicalised but rather as youth who are negotiating their identity amidst an increasingly globalised world, where they become the masters of who they are—not their culture, not their faith. He also provides a perspective on Muslim youth as *youth* who know how to actively engage in society through their own means. Even so, Nasir's analysis lacks some development and, in some cases, requires clarification, especially regarding the way Muslim youth use tattoos as a form of reinterpretation of faith. He also does not make it clear on what he considers to be the "danger" of Muslim youth who turn to online sources for religious knowledge, except to say that these platforms may further entrench preconceived notions youth have regarding their beliefs. Despite its limitations, this study is one of the very few that considers youth in light of their identity as, simply, *youth* who are finding their place within popular culture that is not heavily influenced by their religion or their ethnic backgrounds and cultures.

Despite the fact that there is literature available on religiosity and Australian Muslim youth civic engagement, the literature is scarce and tends to rely on comparative examples from youth in other countries, such as the United States, to understand potential Australian Muslim youth motivations.

5. Muslim Youth as Active Citizens

Section 4 focused on literature covering Muslim youth's Islamic activism and civic engagement, that is, how they attempt to address matters of public concern stemming from their place in society as Muslims. This section focusses on Muslim youth as active citizens, that is, how they get involved with their local community and the extent of their involvement. Although active citizenship may produce outcomes one would expect from civic engagement, the main purpose of involvement in active citizenship is not to address matters of public concern but to participate in community as individuals and contribute to social capital. Very few studies in the literature focus on Muslim youth active citizenship, for the bulk of literature is heavily focussed on Muslim youth disengaged identities and the impact of terrorism on Muslim youth civic engagement and action—as highlighted in the previous two sections.

That is not to say there has not been any attempt to address the research gap on Muslim youth as active citizens. Thea Renda Abu El-Haj and Sally Wesley Bonet (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011) offer a fruitful perspective on how Muslim youth in America, from transnational communities, use education and the politics of belonging in the post-September 11 world to become active citizens in the West. Their discussion provides an example of how two siblings, although initially hesitant about their identity as ethnic minority Muslims in the West, began to "approach these identities [Palestinian, American, and Muslim] in new ways" to "fashion forms of cultural, civic, and political participation" (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 30). Embracing their Palestinian origins, they used their active citizenship to raise awareness on the war in Palestine and their Palestinian identity while also consciously working to "challenge and reshape U.S. culture and politics" by asserting their identity as Americans (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 31). Although it may seem that Abu El-Haj and Bonet focus on how Muslim youth negotiate their religious and ethnic identities—as existing literature on Muslim youth has tended to do—they instead shift the focus of research from youth identities to show "how [youth] social identities are intimately bound up with questions of citizenship" in a way that places the focus more on youth self-activity and agency rather than as a response to factors that force them into active citizenship (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 32).

What makes Abu El-Haj and Bonet's analysis unique is their approach to understanding Muslim youth' active citizenship. They frame their research outside of Muslim and hyphenated-Muslim identity—and away from disengaged identities—in order to consider

the experiences of Muslim youth who may have chosen "nonreligious responses to the context of the war on terror", such as how Muslim youth have responded to changing perceptions of them through adolescent activities and methods that illustrate active citizenship rather than placing a focus on issues of belonging and non-belonging as a result of their minority status and Muslim identity (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, pp. 41–42). Through their review of the literature, they offer suggestions on what is needed to address the current gap on literature on Muslim youth—namely, there is a need to focus on how Muslim youth reshape discourses about themselves in the post-September 11 climate, and how they "position themselves, produce cultural forms, [and] engage in civic action . . . " through positive transformations, or positive engagement and civic action (Abu El-Haj and Bonet 2011, p. 54). Although their analysis of the literature limits itself to American Muslim youth despite examining youth transnational identities and is limited to literature before 2010, their analysis provides an opportunity for future Australian research to offer a new perspective by focusing on Muslim youth positive engagement.

On Muslims as active citizens in Australia, Mario Peucker et al. (2014) have shown that although the Muslim community in Australia faces several disadvantages because of their minority status—such as economic hardship hindering their civic and political activism—there is a growing number of Australian Muslims, particularly Australian Muslim youth, who are "economically well-established, educated and articulate, eager to participate in and contribute to society at large, individually or through Muslim community engagement or mainstream organisations" (p. 295) Indeed, the executive director of the Australian Multicultural Foundation stated that he has encountered "a great proportion of young Australian Muslims who are really getting out there and participate and have become quite successful in media, political parties, local councils, and a whole range of other activities" (Peucker et al. 2014, pp. 295–6). Peucker et al. (2014) note that active citizenship increased dramatically post-September 11, with a majority of Australian Muslims engaging in interfaith initiatives, the media, and government consultations. They support their conclusions by examining 2001, 2006, and 2011 Australian census data to show that Australian Muslim youth are more actively engaged than their older counterparts in finding ways to become active citizens despite the growing terrorism and radicalisation discourse.[13] While Peucker et al. do not provide any accounts from the Muslim youth themselves, or from the Muslim community, their analysis can prove useful when contrasted with other literature, such as Joshua M. Roose's analysis of young Muslims in Australia and their multicultural success stories as a result of their membership with the Young Muslims Australia (YMA).

Roose argues that in a time of widespread social exclusion, YMA was "the most effective contributor to the development of Australian multiculturalism and Islam in the nation, and possibly across Western multicultural contexts." (Roose 2012, p. 152) This was because YMA aimed to create a space where Australian Muslim youth felt in touch with their Islamic identity while encouraging them to be active citizens engaged in positive action. Indeed, since being a member of YMA, one Australian Muslim youth, Sherene Hassan, has become "one of the most visible public faces of Muslim women in Australia", having been the Vice President and Secretary of the Islamic Council of Victoria and the former President of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Association (Roose 2012, p. 153). There's also Tasneem Chopra, who is well known for "improving the situation of Australian Muslim women individually and building their capacity collectively", especially women facing domestic violence (Roose 2012, p. 154). Other women mentioned by Roose (2012) include Sarah Sabbagh, Monique Toohey, Manar Etchelebi, and Toltu Tufa. Most of the literature on Muslim women in Australia, and elsewhere, tend to focus on their appearance often being "vulnerable to vilification and media stereotyping" and thus "suffering the triple whammy effect of sexism, racism and religious bigotry" (Posetti 2010, p. 69). By highlighting the active contributions of Australian Muslim women, Roose shatters this

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[13] Mario Peucker also discusses how Muslim community organisations may act as sites of active citizenship for Muslim youth and the Muslim community more generally. See (Peucker and Ceylan 2017).

myth and shows that young Australian Muslim women are highly visible active citizens who "promote mutual respect, dialogue and understanding and . . . have a demonstrable impact" (Roose 2012, p. 156).

Roose also showcases the active positive contributions of young Australian Muslim men, such as Ramzi Elsayed, the co-founder of YMA and the former President of the Islamic Council of Victoria that represented Victoria's Muslims citizens—and Waleed Aly, who has become one of Australia's "most prominent (and youngest) intellectuals", having also been nominated for the "Australia's local hero" award at the 2011 Australia Day awards (Roose 2012, pp. 156–7). Other prominent active citizens mentioned by Roose (2012) include Issam Nabulsi, Ahmed Hassan, and Nazeem Hussain. As with the young Muslim women, these men have challenged the stigmatisation that Muslim men in Australia are largely non-active citizens potential for radicalisation. Roose goes on to explain the collective contributions of the members in YMA and writes that YMA allowed these young Australian Muslims to be engaged citizens while being in touch with their faith. YMA "planted the seed" for these young Muslims to connect with their faith and themselves, even though they might not have been practising adolescent Muslims (Roose 2012, pp. 161–2). For most of these young Muslims, YMA gave them the motivation to step outside their comfort zone and challenge the racism and hostility that many young Muslims face in Australia—then and today.

Roose's analysis of YMA's achievements makes an important contribution to the gap in current literature that often marginalises the achievements of young Muslims to instead focus on issues of identity, belonging and not belonging, radicalisation in youth, and terrorism. However, Roose's study is limited to certain individuals who had once been affiliated with YMA, and most of his interviews were conducted prior to 2012. His study is also limited to Melbourne youth and therefore does not provide a wider scope that includes the achievements and active citizenship of other Muslim youth in Australia. Regardless, his article is one of the very few that examine Australian Muslim youth achievements—a gap that needs to be addressed in a more substantial research.

Similar to the Australian Muslim youth mentioned by Roose, the young Australian Muslims who attended in the National Muslim Youth Summit (NMYS) in 2007 expressed desire to actively engage in community services so as to "educate and create a greater space for dialogue to dispel negative perceptions; take away the feeling of being marginalised, and a lack of belonging to a wider community".[14] The National Muslim Youth Summit aimed to provide a space that brought together over four hundred Australian Muslim youth to explore issues of common concern for youth and what their aspirations were in addressing them to facilitate civic engagement. By writing about the NMYS, B. Hass Dellal (2007) shows that Australian Muslim youth should not be considered as non-active citizens; rather, they aspire to overcome challenges in finding ways to build better relationships between themselves and those around them. Another independent National Muslim Youth Summit was organised by ISRA Australia in 2016 and then again in 2018. A recent report was published that summarised the findings from the 2018 NMYS. These findings also showed that Australian Muslim youth, more than ten years after the 2007 youth summit, were still actively involved in voicing their concerns and aspirations in order to find ways to continue to build levels of civic engagement and become active Australian citizens.[15] Topics that were discussed in the summit focussed on leadership and how leadership opportunities can be accessed by Australian Muslim youth either online, personally, professionally, ethically, politically, in the Muslim community, and when considering issues of gender and issues facing future leaders.

Both sources attempt to fill the gap in current literature on Australian Muslim youth by showing that Australian Muslim youth do actively participate in Australian society even if it is by attending summits to raise their concerns. Even so, there is a need to focus on individual stories from Australian Muslim youth, as reports only show findings and

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[14] (Dellal 2007).
[15] See (Ozturk et al. 2018).

issues raised by the Muslim youth without showing how they, personally, have dealt with these issues and concerns. Some Muslim youth, such as those mentioned by Roose, have undergone a transformative process or found the motivation—through YMA, for example—to become actively engaged citizens. It is the process by which Australian Muslim youth become active citizens that needs more scholarly attention, as this process provides insight into Muslim youth decision-making processes, their choices, the factors that may or may not have influenced their behaviours, and how faith plays a role in their active citizenship and positive transformations.

Aside from the literature mentioned above in this section, no other scholarly literature—that has come to our attention—places a focus on Australian Muslim youth and their active citizenship. There have been media reports on certain young Australian Muslim individuals, such as Waleed Aly, Tasneem Chopra, and Amna Karra-Hassan, but these media reports do not extensively focus on their achievements and often tend to focus on their identity as Muslims and how they have overcome some of the challenges their faith may or may not have placed on them.

Any literature on young Muslim women's active citizenship gravitates to considerations on their dress as in the case of Muslim women; their dressing, particularly the head covering, is seen as a barrier in their active citizenship. For example, Catherine Palmer's study on Muslim women in sport provides insight into the way young Muslim women negotiate their identities through social activities, thus demonstrating their capacity to engage in active citizenship. However, it is still framed under issues of social inclusion, belonging, negotiating identities between Islam and the West, and the successful integration of young Muslim refugees through social activities such as sport. It does not provide an account of young Muslim women's sense of self-agency and choice to play sport because they enjoy it, similar to other youth in Australia. Palmer's study focusses on how young Muslim women are placed in the bubble of otherness where they participate in sport as a means of belonging to a Western (Australian) society that does not perceive them as their own. Palmer's study examines these young women's decision to play soccer "as a way of establishing and embellishing a particular cultural identity that both affirms and challenges many of the traditions of Islam" (Palmer 2009, p. 28). However, Palmer, does show how these young Muslim women do present adolescent insecurities:

> These young women were highly typical of other girls growing up in a hugely mediated, Western consumer society. They were conscious of their body shape (they spoke of their uniforms "making them look fat"), mindful of the latest fashions and obsessed with boys, movie stars and the latest "spunks" of popular music. Indeed, the version of femininity that these young women acted out shared many of the mannerisms and attributes of adolescent girls in Australia . . . . (Palmer 2009, p. 32)

The problem with this analysis is that it presents young Muslim women's feelings as something that is unexpected given their religious and cultural backgrounds instead of showing that their feelings of insecurity and love for popular culture is something that is *normal*, something that is part and parcel of who they are as *young people* in the society they live. Palmer's study is also limited to the experiences of refugee women, which a number of studies tend to focus on, rather than the experiences of Australian-born Muslim women. Further, her study is also limited to Somali Muslim women living in South Australia, so her conclusions are not representative of wider Australian Muslim women experiences, which needs further attention. Still, Palmer does illuminate the ways in which Muslim women, regardless of their status, find ways to be active citizens through social activities such as soccer.

Other literature focussing on Australian youth in general as active citizens may help inform future research on Australian Muslim youth and their stories of success. For example, Ariadne Vromen (2011) examines how Australian youth use online platforms to become empowered but dutiful citizens. She found that although a majority of online websites still followed a top–down approach to young people's civic engagement—much

like the traditional electoral processes, for instance—there were some sites that allowed Australian youth to express their political viewpoints and encourage their active citizenship.[16] However, Vromen's study focusses on a sample of a hundred Australian youth and their online use in 2010 based on a 2006 longitudinal study.[17] Despite its limitations, her article may shed light into how Australian Muslim youth may use online platforms to become active citizens, especially if their recorded stories on their active citizenship show that online platforms motivated them to become engaged citizens.

However, some Muslim youth may find it difficult to be active citizens, especially when it comes to contributing back to society in the workforce. The issue of unemployment is one that affects Muslim youth across Australia, and it is an issue that arises due to instances of discrimination. In her study of eighteen young job-seeking Australian Muslims, Pam Nilan (2011) found that Muslim youth in the suburbs of Western Sydney found it difficult to get a job because they were "treated with suspicion because of their Muslim background, ethnicity, accent and/or appearance" (Nilan 2011, p. 57). However, Nilan also found that the problem of unemployment does not only affect Muslim youth, it also affects the wider youth population in Australia in general (Nilan 2011). The difference is that the percentage of Muslim youth unemployment is much higher than the national average, according to the 2006 census, and since then, the "situation has improved only marginally" (Nilan 2011). Nilan's brief study on Muslim youth unemployment is fruitful for it opens up opportunities for scholars to continue her research to find deeper patterns on Muslim youth experiences in finding employment (Nilan does acknowledge that her study is very limited, and that further research is required). Her study is also important for an understanding on why some Muslim youth may not actively engage in society. It is not because Muslim youth *do not* want to contribute back to society through employment, it's that "there appears to be a remarkably unanimous moral panic about Muslims in the non-Muslim Australian community" (Nilan 2011, p. 50) who thus consciously or subconsciously discriminate against them, thus preventing them from gaining employment.

This section has shown that although there has been some focus on Australian Muslim youth as active citizens in recent literature, the focus has not been expansive enough to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship, nor has there been a focus on the specific factors that encouraged them to become active citizens. Roose's study on Australian Muslim youth offers only a brief biographical account of their active citizenship over time and provides some personal insight into how the YMA instilled a motivation towards faith and active citizenship for these individuals. The NMYS reports only showcased Australian Muslim youth concerns and did not provide accounts from the Muslim youth themselves on what they have personally done to become active citizens—although both reports are invaluable sources as they may inform future research on the issues and concerns that young Australian Muslims face, especially issues sitting outside the trajectory of identity and belonging, and how these issues may be addressed. El-Haj and Bonet's analysis only provides suggestions on areas that current literature needs to address when it comes to the study of Muslim youth in general in the West—a source that may also assist in future studies on Muslim youth in the West, especially on Australian Muslim youth and their experiences.

6. Conclusions

The literature covered in this article offers valuable insights into Muslim youth in the West and in Australia and provides an excellent basis for conducting further research into the challenges and issues faced by Muslim youth and ways they overcome those issues. The findings of research conducted in the last two decades (2000–2020) period can be summed up in the following key points.

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16 See (Vromen 2011).

17 The online platform has changed since this study was conducted and published, and Australian youth civic engagements online may have drastically increased since then as new forms of social media platforms have provided them opportunities to become actively engaged citizens.

One, much of the literature on Muslim youth has been comparative toward Protestant and Catholic religious groups, primarily in the United States, whose youth groups have used their religiosity to give back to the American community.

Two, most of the studies done on Muslim youth tend to be gender-focused, particularly focussing on Muslim women, their veiling, and its impact on Muslim women's identity, religiosity, and relationship with Western culture. Most of the research conducted involving young male Muslims focus on terrorism and radicalisation.

Three, Australian Muslim youth are not sure what it means to be Australian and how Australianness reflects on their identity. The discussion allows for an understanding on Muslim youth feelings of inclusion and how they navigate their multiple identities in a society that sees them, more or less, as disengaged individuals who pose a threat to the Western way of life. Some literature on Australian Muslim youth has placed a focus on the negative perceptions of Muslim youth and their perceived radicalisation or unwillingness to integrate into Australian society because of their religious affiliation with Islam.

Four, there is emphasis in the literature that the "enemy within" paradigm generates a suspect community mindset among Muslim youth. The term suspect community not only reinforces the image of Muslims as suspects in the subconscious minds of the public, it simultaneously influences the way Muslims perceive themselves as a suspect community and affects how they interact with their faith, others in society, the law, official policies, and authorities. Importantly, this perception has a major impact on Muslim youths' identity formation and sense of belonging.

Five, most of the focus tends to be on Muslim youth immigrants rather than Western-born youth who are expected to have a direct and strong relationship with their host country, thus limiting the focus on Muslim youth to themes around conflicting and disengaged identities associated with being migrants or children of migrants.

Six, mosques play an important role for Australian Muslim youth in acquiring a sense of belonging and clarifying their Muslim identity. However, the role of the mosque is limited, and it depends on the services provided in the mosques and the type of mosques, whether it is ethnic based, small, or large complexes that use English language.

Seven, youth–adult partnership in Australia is an important key for success in community youth engagement, as youth do not always have the resources, experience, and means for successful civic action. Youth will most likely only engage in civic activities if they feel like they can make a meaningful contribution to their society or community and they are empowered to take leadership roles and given real responsibilities.

Eight, despite their tenuous sense of belonging and awareness of negative political and public attitudes towards Muslims, Australian Muslim youth take advantage of opportunities to engage with others in society. In this willingness to engage, religion is identified as a key component of empowerment and confidence in engaging civic activities. The combination of religion and civic activities has a moderating effect on Muslim youth identity.

An important conclusion of this review is that most of the research studies are dated. There have been significant changes, and youth quickly evolve and adapt; there is a need to research Australian Muslim youth to see how they evolved in the last decade especially with respect to the impact of increased scrutiny on Muslim youth since the emergence of ISIS in 2014 and their social media campaign to recruit Muslims around the world.

7. Issues for Further Research

These valuable findings and insights at the same time reveal gaps in knowledge and offer a roadmap in charting new research. In this systematic review and analysis of literature, the following important areas of research are needed.

First, the current literature focussing mainly on radicalisation and disengaged identities among Muslim youth ignore generic adolescent factors and external social factors that influence all Australian youth irrespective of their religious and ethnic identities. After all, Australian Muslim youth are youth first and foremost. They participate in and undergo

the same phases that any other Australian youth would, too—albeit their decisions and actions may or may not be heavily influenced by their religious identity.

One such way would be to examine literature on youth in general living in Australia. For example, Ian McAllister (2016), examines the way Australian youth use the internet as a means of engaging with the electoral process. Julie Hepworth et al. (2016) examine how drinking behaviour among youth are greatly influenced by social pressures. Using their results on general youth behaviours and choices when it comes to drinking will help understand how Muslim youth deal with social pressures, especially when most Western youth cultures tend to go against their religious practices. Annie Abello et al. (2016) examine how social exclusion among Australian youth can create a measure of disadvantage that impacts youth well-being well into adulthood. As Muslim youth in Australia already form a minority of the youth population, their experiences of social exclusion may be more severe than their Australian counterparts. A comparison between Muslim youth and Australian youth experiences of social exclusion may reveal correlating patterns or they may show how Muslim youth have used their challenging experience to positively transform themselves. These issues on Australian youth can be applied to the experiences of Australian Muslim youth broadly or in a more specific way.

Second, more research is needed on the volunteering of Muslim youth. Studies on increased activity online tends to overshadow volunteering and involvement in the traditional organisations where Muslim youth are still very active in large metropolitan cities in Australia. Studies that examine both online and traditional activism and volunteering space are needed to understand the dynamics involved and the nature of change and shift that may be taking place.

Third, much of the research focus on Australian Muslim immigrant youth, whose experiences may differ drastically to those Muslim youth who were born and raised in Australia. The majority of Australian Muslim youth were either born in Australia or went to school in Australia. In this respect, research is also lacking on how Islamic schools and new large mosque complexes shape the civic engagement and social isolation of Australian Muslim youth even though they are born in Australia.

Fourth, the ways that some Muslim youth use their unique sense of identity as Australian Muslims to become successful citizens engaged in positive action is not known. A focus on this would provide fresh insight that moves away from current discourse on Muslim youth as disengaged citizens with disengaged identities and helps to see evolution of Australian Muslim identity in the making.

Fifth, a focus on Australian Muslim youth civic engagement is much needed, particularly a focus on how Muslim youth use avenues other than their faith to express themselves and their commitment to society. While religion plays an important role in the lives of many young Muslims, not all feel a connection between their faith and their choices when it comes to engaging in civic activities. For positive civic engagement of Muslim youth, formations of bonding networks need to be explored and understood. It is not known the degree to which bonding networks influence the identity formation and positive transformation of Muslim youth.

Sixth, adult–youth partnership is highlighted, but there is no research done to examine how this works and is managed in practice in organisations that successfully integrate youth involvement along with experienced older leaders.

Seventh, there is a need to include Australian Muslim youth individual accounts of their active citizenship and more significantly, it is the process by which Australian Muslim youth become active citizens that needs more scholarly attention, as this process provides insight into Muslim youth decision-making processes, their choices, the factors that may or may not have influenced their behaviours, and how faith plays a role in their active citizenship and identity development.

Eight, much of the research and literature focus on issues Muslim youth are facing and the threat they are seemingly pose with radicalisation. There is a need to understand the opposite process of successful integration of Muslim youth in society, positive Muslim

youth transformations, and their contributions to Australian society. Understanding these may shed better light in social policies and educational methods.

Despite the limitations in current literature exploring Muslim youth in the West, there are still ample ways that the literature can be expanded to examine the factors and influences that shape Muslim youth identities beyond the political trajectories of terrorism, Islamophobia, and counter-terrorism, and how they have used these alternative avenues to undergo a positive transformation in their lives, integrate in society successfully as Australians, and contribute to Australian society.

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Muslim Community Organizations' Perceptions of Islamophobia: Towards an Informed Countering Response

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Abstract: During the past two decades, Muslim Community Organizations (MCOs) in the West have increasingly become stakeholders in the public debates and the national consultations regarding the Muslim communities. MCO's perception of Islamophobia is critical for understanding their collective response to the problem. Much of the Australian literature, nonetheless, tends to subsume Islamophobia within the dynamics of exclusion/inclusion within a social cohesion paradigm, and primarily through a focus on individuals. This article aims to contribute to the existing literature through a deeper contextual understanding of Australian MCOs' framing of and engagement with Islamophobia in its various manifestations, in order to better cognize its impact on their agentic capacity. Deploying an expanded theoretical framework of agency structure, this article analyzes 25 interviews with representatives of Victorian MCOs, to explore their perceptions of Islamophobia across multiple domains of power—the social, discursive and the political. MCOs' perceptions of the problem impact their responding anti-Islamophobia civic–political engagements towards soft grassroots connections and Muslims' empowerment. In light of the findings, the article points for the need to enhance building inter-community solidarity, utilize supportive institutional multicultural schemes and establish a separate Muslim advocacy organization.

Keywords: Islamophobia; collective agency; civil society; Strong Structuration Theory; Multiculturalism; racism; Australian Muslims; positional practices

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, Muslim Community Organizations (MCOs) in Australia have grown in numbers and scope with the growth of the Muslim communities, from providing religious services to providing settlement support services in areas such as economic, social, cultural, recreational, educational and health (Bouma 1997; Amath 2015b). MCOs' numbers increased significantly following 9/11 and the war on terror, in response to challenges of extremism and Islamophobia, to fulfil new internal and external demands (Amath 2015a, p. 180). Not only do MCOs have to respond to accusations of being sites for isolation and terrorism, in which one in four Australians support policies to stop mosque building (Dunn 2005; Peucker and Ceylan 2016; Hassan and Martin 2015; Underabi 2014), but they also have to engender services to respond to the impact of Islamophobia on the Australian Muslim communities. Moreover, MCOs have had to work with the government, engage with the media and the public to educate, respond to accusations and rebuild networks of trust through peacebuilding and cross-cultural engagements (Peucker and Ceylan 2016; Halafoff 2011; Al-Momani et al. 2010; McAndrew and Sobolewska 2015; Amath 2013).

Indeed within a post-9/11 context and the growing fear of Muslims, MCOs' roles stretched to fulfil a national expectation to account for and engage as representatives of Muslims, as well as attend to the

surge of challenges to the well-being, safety and civic–political participation of Australian Muslims (Amath 2013; Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2014a; Mukaty 2013). This has generated an academic interest in exploring MCOs' agency as stakeholders and representatives of Muslims' lives in Australia and comparably in the West (Kortmann and Rosenow-Williams 2013a, 2013b; Malik 2013; Van Heelsum and Koomen 2011; Machtans 2016). Much of the scholarship, however, investigates MCOs' agency vis-à-vis Islamophobia through focusing on their perceptions and actions in response to the grand question of Muslims' integration into Western societies (Bacchus 2019; Karim 2017; Malik 2013; Yildiz and Verkuyten 2012; Yukleyen 2009).

In parallel, there seems to be an increasing national and international attention to capture Muslims' collective voices and experiences of Islamophobia. These efforts attempt to elevate and analyze Muslims' perceptions of Islamophobia to inform future anti-Islamophobia policies and countering strategies. Perhaps it is beneficial to look at examples from the UK and Europe, since Australia's history of white European colonialism and its current connections to the US and the UK informs its public culture and its national forms of Islamophobia (Poynting 2019; Abdel-Fattah 2017; Busbridge 2017; Hage 2011). For example, in an effort to institutionalize a long-relegated phenomenon at the level of the UK government, the All-Parliamentary group on British Muslims (APPG 2018, p. 11) conducted two years of consultations with the UK Muslim community and organizations to propose a definition of Islamophobia: "a type of racism that targets expression of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness". The British parliament rejected their proposition based on claims of impinging free speech and countering extremism efforts (Lizzie Dearden Home Affairs 2019). Nonetheless, the partial success of the APPG efforts is equated to the fact that the Labor, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party in Scotland adopted the definition, along with many city councils, besides stimulating an inquiry into Islamophobia within the conservative British party (Sykes 2019). Collective voices of Muslims also form the basis of the *Counter Islamophobia Kit project* CIK produced by the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies at the University of Leeds. The CIK report proposes a policy and advocacy-oriented best practices to counter Islamophobia in Europe, based on empirical data from 27 European reports and surveys of Muslims' perceptions of the nature of Islamophobia and its impact (Law et al. 2018).

At the Australian national level, the Islamophobia reports (Iner 2017, 2019) are among the first initiatives to document Muslims' reported incidents to provoke a public and political recognition to the specificity of Muslims' experiences of vilification. In 2020, the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) issues its public policy statement on Islamophobia to establish the organization's position from the problem, nonetheless, in reference to secondary data. Another effort is the ongoing national consultation project by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC 2019), which comes as an update to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) project conducted in 2004, to survey Muslims on their challenges. AHRC project finds the key challenges to be media and political narratives, racism, institutional discrimination, policing and countering violent extremism.

This study is inspired by these efforts and commends the significance of sketching an empirically driven account of Islamophobia from the perspective of organized Muslimness. One the one hand, MCO representatives often meet and are consulted by government departments on issues pertaining to the Muslim Communities (Roose 2010; Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2014b). Therefore, the ways by which MCOs view the problem of Islamophobia can contribute to the ongoing national efforts to stimulate public and political recognition of the problem, as well as inform future anti-Islamophobia efforts by the government and advocacy groups. On the other hand, the shocking but expected terrorist attack on praying Muslims at Christchurch in 2019, by an extremist far-right, has emphasized the urgency to listen more carefully to Muslims' voices. It is the dismissal of Muslims' voices who have spoken of the danger of mainstreaming and legalizing anti-Muslim racism through politicians' rhetoric and policies that has led to Christchurch massacre (Choudhury 2018; Hage 2019; Herrera and Sabaratnam 2019; Malik 2019; Poynting 2019; Abdel-Fattah 2019).

This paper contributes to the growing academic, public and political need to attend to MCOs as stakeholders in the public discussions regarding the Muslim communities. This article analyzes

MCO representatives' perceptions of Islamophobia and explores how their perceptions can shape their responsive strategies, as well as impact the effectiveness of their civic–political engagements. This paper concludes that MCOs find the implicit, or as Islam (2018) calls it "soft Islamophobia", to be more harmful than the crude and explicit manifestations of the problem. Their active agency is informed but also constrained by these soft forms of Islamophobia.

2. Islamophobia: Australia and MCOs Agency

There is no shortage of literature exploring Islamophobia as a global phenomenon, with many studies examining Western Muslims' experiences of discrimination and marginalization. Since the inaugural attempt to identify and draw attention to the particularity of the UK Muslims' experiences of discrimination and inequality by the Runnymede Trust (1997), the literature has profusely engaged with theories of sociology, psychology, history and international politics, to conceptualize Islamophobia (Hargreaves 2016; Allen 2010; Iqbal 2010; Beydoun 2016; Modood 2019; Green 2015; Kumar 2012). Parallel to this conceptual attention is the growing empirical attention to capture the experiences of racism and discrimination of Muslims through documenting incidents of Islamophobia (Bridge Initiative 2015; EUMC 2006, 2006b; CAIR 2015a, 2012, 2010; Bayrakli and Hafez 2016, 2019; Iner 2017, 2019; HIRC 2016). Today, "Islamophobia" is the most widely recognized and employed term to label the various manifestations of anti-Muslim experiences and prejudices, such as negative attitudes, discourses and practices against Muslims and Islam by the media, politicians and members of the non-Muslim communities (Bridge Initiative 2015; Modood 2019; Klug 2012). This paper does not intend to devise a definition or a theoretical conceptualization of Islamophobia, but rather examine Islamophobia as a lived experience, with multiple manifestations, from the perspective of MCOs' experiences of the problem and its impact on their agency.

Three major interlinked strands of research examine Islamophobia in Australia. One discusses Islamophobia in reference to the national politics of multiculturalism (Briskman 2015; Briskman and Latham 2017; Poynting 2015; Bouma 2011; Hage 2011; Poynting and Mason 2008; Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2012). The other discusses Islamophobia in reference to Australia's history of white European colonialism and its current connections to the US and the UK (Poynting 2019; Abdel-Fattah 2017; Busbridge 2017; Hage 1998; Stratton 2016). The underlying argument of both strands is that Australia's liberal democracy guarded by a policy of multiculturalism cannot abandon its racial hierarchy towards migrants, especially "third world" countries, since it is founded on a white Christian colonial history. In this regard, scholarships formulate the Australian Muslims' experiences of Islamophobia as exclusionary practices towards "difference" due to an inherited culture of whiteness (Hussein and Poynting 2017; Mansouri 2020; Hage 2011). The third strand of the Australian literature often explores Islamophobia in reference to Muslims' experiences within social cohesion frameworks (Humphrey 2010; Rommel 2016; Mansouri 2010; Yasmeen 2010; Poynting and Mason 2008). Under social cohesion, a plethora of literature discusses Islamophobia in reference to its impact on individual Muslim's citizenship, identity, religiosity, belonging and integration (Johns et al. 2015; Mansouri et al. 2015, 2017; Peucker 2019, 2016; Patton 2014). Similarly, the literature examining organized forms of Muslimness, such as MCOs, subsume Islamophobia within the integration debate when examining MCOs' social capital (Amath 2015b), their perceptions and strategies vis-à-vis the integration debate (Sohrabi 2013; Sohrabi and Farquharson 2016, 2015), and their active-citizenship towards social cohesion (Peucker 2017; Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2014b; Peucker and Ceylan 2016). Few studies discuss MCOs' experiences beyond inclusion and exclusion frameworks as an external challenge impacting MCOs' effectiveness and their leaderships (Faris and Parry 2011; Edwards 2018). These contributions accentuate Islamophobia as an exclusionary force that pushes Muslims into the periphery of Australianness and damages their sense of inclusion, recognition and identity formation. In other words, the exclusion of Muslims from Australia's values, identity and citizenship becomes symptomatic of Islamophobia and integral to the experiences of Australian Muslims.

This paper builds on the previous literature; however, it proposes an expansion to the theoretical framing beyond social cohesion frameworks, in order to explore the notion of Islamophobia beyond the exclusion/inclusion discourse. Through adopting an agency-structure framework, this paper accounts for the impact of varying power dynamics (the macro) on shaping MCOs' perceptions of Islamophobia (the micro). It suggests that MCOs' "frames of meaning" (Giddens 1979) regarding Islamophobia transcends the integration debate and reflect their recognition of the institutional racism and the disciplinary tactics deployed by external actors within their context. These frames of meanings influence their perceptions of their capabilities and positionality as citizens in their spaces and, hence, informs their countering strategies. The paper mainly focuses on Victorian MCOs, the state with the highest level of diverse populations, the second largest population of Muslims (Hassan 2015) and the lowest level of Islamophobia (Hassan and Martin 2015).

3. Theoretical Approach

There is no simple answer to the question, what is Islamophobia? However, there is a multiplicity of conceptualizations of the problem depending on the aspects researched and methods used to undertake the research (Klug 2012). Whilst Bleich (2011) agrees, he also argues that researchers will benefit from situating their research questions within an overarching definition of Islamophobia. Given that Australian Muslims are minorities in non-Muslim dominant context, this paper theorizes Islamophobia within the domains of discourse and power, since they reflect much of the key literature conceptualizing Islamophobia (Kundnani 2016; Allen 2010; Lyons 2012; Beydoun 2018; Massoumi et al. 2017), as well as reflect the inherent inequality in power dynamics between minorities and majorities (Hage 1998).

Discourses on Islam and Muslims create a discursive formation of constructed knowledge, which is, according to Foucault (1972), a "collective system of thoughts around a certain object". This constructed knowledge is both a product of power and, at the same time, an exercise of power (Foucault 1980; Hall 1997). Islamophobia as a discursive field of knowledge about Islam and Muslims, however, often ascribes the centrality of Said's discussion on Orientalism (1979) to the formation of knowledge about Islam and Muslims. This is because many scholars stipulate the significance of the 19th century Eurocentric colonialism in forming and maintaining today's constructed "knowledge" around Islam and Muslims (Said 1979; Meer 2014; Allen 2010). Despite having common threads with Foucault's' notion of power/knowledge, Said departs from Foucault's notion of power as ubiquitous to preserve the centrality of power within Eurocentric mechanism of producing knowledge of Islamophobia (Said 2001). This paper draws from both to examine MCOs' perceptions of Islamophobia from the standpoint of the centrality of anti-Islam and Muslims discourses (knowledge) and the historical role of Eurocentric colonial power in shaping and disseminating these discourses. Through using this expanded framework of post-colonial theory within a post-structuralist approach, this study expands the conceptual trajectories of Islamophobia's power. Put another way, it escapes the imposition of preset confining dimensions regarding the problem; hence, it allows a broader investigation of MCOs' perceptions of Islamophobia.

The study deploys Strong Structuration Theory (SST) to examine MCOs' agency. Stones (2005) developed SST in light of Giddens (1984) Structuration Theory, to provide an applicable social practice theory that allows researchers to empirically examine the dynamics between the agents and the structures within their context. SST provides that agents are knowledgeable actors who base their actions on their interpretation of the consequences they might face, their knowledge of their power capacity and their knowledge of the public norms and the contrasting pragmatic plans of possible actions. Hence, SST allows this study to acknowledge and account for the impact of the dynamic of power relations between MCOs and their context on forming Muslims' perceptions of Islamophobia. In light of SST, this study defines MCOs as knowledgeable agents in constant interaction with restraining and/or enabling social and political external structures within their sociopolitical context. In this context, and during their interaction with defined structures, MCOs build their "frames of meaning", which

are their sets of values, beliefs and perceptions that inform their actions. To examine MCOs' frame of meaning regarding Islamophobia, this study examines MCOs' interpretation of their sociopolitical context, their recognition of their power capacities and their responses to the tension arising between their ideals and their pragmatic schemes. In other words, MCOs' frames of meaning are reflexive of their context, as they are formed at the axis of their interactions with these structural terrains. SST provides not only the epistemological underpinning for the relationship between MCOs and their context, but also the analytical tools needed to conduct the empirical analysis. This is unpacked in the following methodological section.

4. Methodology

As part of a PhD project, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of 25 Victorian MCOs in 2018, featured in Table 1. The interviewed MCOs are diversified in their focuses, sizes and structures, with one main standard criterion, that of being run and led by Muslims. MCOs who did not provide consent to be named were assigned a two letters pseudonym.

Table 1. List of participating Muslim Community Organizations (MCOs).

Kind of MCO.	Name of MCO
Umbrella organizations	• The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) • Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (AMA)
Women's organization	• WO
Youth centers	• World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) • YC
Religious organizations, centers and associations	• NP • IV • Australian Islamic Centre (AIC) • Australian Islamic Mission (AIM)
Educational organizations	• Islamic Sciences & Research Academy of Australia (ISRA) • Australian Intercultural Society (AIS)
University Islamic associations	• TR • RMIT University Islamic Society
Professional networking organizations	• Muslim Legal Network (MLN) • PA
Creative organizations	• Islamic Museum of Australia (IMA) • Salam Fest Muslim Festival (SalamFest)
Civil community organizations	• BN • Mercy Mission Australia (MMA) • The Moroccan Soup Bar (MSB) • FR • MC
Online initiatives	• IR • Voices Against Bigotry (VAB) • CO

The researcher generated inductive themes from the data, using thematic analysis (Braun et al. 2014) and critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 2001). Simultaneously, she contextualized the interviewees' accounts to secondary data, such as organizations' press releases, websites and media coverages. The overarching scheme of the analysis process, however, was informed by Stones' methodological bracketing of the agent's context and the agent's conduct. As an analytical tool, the methodological

bracketing is the guideline that directs the focus of the researcher to investigate the data in light of a particular dimension, focus or theme.

Both methodological bracketing (context and conduct) analyze MCOs' perceptions; however, each bracketing elevates empirical pieces of evidence towards different points of focus. The agents' context analysis, on the one hand, draws on MCOs' perceptions to lead the investigation into the "social nexus of interdependencies, rights and obligations, asymmetries of power and the social conditions and consequences of action" (Stones 2005, p. 122). Applying this bracketing to this research allows an examination of agents' perceptions of how they interpret Islamophobia and how they see their own social positions and power capabilities within this context. Precisely, this bracketing investigates MCOs' context through exploring their perceptions on (1) the nature of Islamophobia; (2) the challenges they face; (3) their capabilities, roles and responsibilities; and (4) their social positions within imposed positional practices. Positional practices are relational and institutional external structures enforcing restraining positions, identities and obligations on the agent (Stones 2005, p. 63).

The agents' conduct analysis, on the other hand, draws on the agents' perceptions and active agency (actions), to examine their "reflexive monitoring, ordering of concerns into a hierarchy of purpose, motives and the way the agents carry the action and interaction" (Stones 2005, p. 122). This paper uses the bracketing of the agents' conduct analysis to examine MCOs' choices of action, prioritization and justifications for their responsive strategies in light of their understanding of Islamophobia.

MCOs' context and conduct analysis allow an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of MCOs agency, whilst recognizing the impact of the structure on their perceptions and actions. Primarily, this deep understanding is informed through exploring the tension which arises between MCOs' idealistic believes (their perceptions of how they should act) and their pragmatic schemes (how they may be pressured to act) (Stones 2005, p. 92). The tension between MCOs' ideals and their pragmatic schemes allows an insight into MCOs' understanding of the influences impacting their capabilities, priorities and responsive actions due to the dynamics of the social system within which they operate. In other words, this study explores how MCOs in Victoria understand the problem of Islamophobia through analyzing MCOs' articulation of the problem, as well as through analyzing how they perceive their capabilities, responsibilities, social positions and responsive strategies within their context as Muslim entities.

The following three sections discuss the research findings pertaining to MCOs' frames of meaning regarding Islamophobia within the interlinked three domains of the social, discursive and political in reference to the manifestation of the problem.

5. Anti-Muslim Racism: Racialization of Muslims and the Problematizing Discourse

When describing the social manifestation of Islamophobia, MCOs' representatives define Islamophobia as racism motivated by lack of awareness, ignorance, prejudice and propagated fear of Islam and Muslims. They believe that anti-Muslim racism impacts the most vulnerable groups: Muslim women, for their apparent association with Islam. For example, responding to the question, what is the organization's understanding of Islamophobia? The (MC) representative says the following: "It's a hatred or dislike of Muslims because of an uninformed and very shallow understanding of anything about Islam". The (NP) representative says, "it is that Muslims being targeted for no reason other than being Muslims".

Findings from the National Anti-Racism Strategy by AHRC (2012) indicate that 66% of Australian respondents face racism. Racism in Australia is not limited to Muslims; nonetheless, they remain the highest recipients of racism in the nation (Hanifie 2019), with one in ten reporting racism, in comparison to one in fifty or one in thirty of Australians in general (Dunn et al. 2015). This is not surprising given that 49% of the Australian public hold negative views of Muslims (Markus 2016).

Indeed, religious diversity and difference are often viewed as challenges to be accommodated within liberal democratic settings (Ezzy et al. 2020). Dunn et al. (2004, p. 410) find that, after the abandonment of a white Australia policy in 1973, "cultural racism" became the prevalent form of

racism in multicultural Australia, as opposed to "old racism" based on inferiority in "white Australia" (Dunn et al. 2004, p. 410). Cultural racism constructs cultural and religious differences as a threat to "social cohesion" and "national unity" (Dunn et al. 2004, p. 410). Nevertheless, after 9/11 and the growing global and national discourses associating Islam with terrorism, Muslims' culture has been portrayed as the main threat to Western secularism and values (Kymlicka 2005; Levey and Modood 2008; Triandafyllidou et al. 2011). Dunn et al. (2007) add, in light of Modood (2005) and Kobayashi and Peake's (2000) definition of racialization, that the Australian context produces anti-Muslim racism through constructing Muslims as racially inferior with essentialized and culturally alien values in comparison to a defined majoritarian context. In this logic, Muslims and Islam are racialized into a single group with essentialized visual and cultural cues, despite their diversity to "define what Muslims are" (Ekman 2015, p. 188; Schiffer and Wagner 2011; Rana 2007). Put another way, Islamophobia as a cultural form of racism racializes Muslims, whereby the biological identifiers of race in racism is accompanied with cultural identifiers to target Muslimness (Modood 2019; Rana 2007; Meer and Modood 2009; Kundnani 2007b; Mansouri 2010; Considine 2017; Lentin and Titley 2011).

Primary to this form of racism is the emergent of discourses of Muslims' alienation, inferiority and incompatibility, which have pervaded the public and political domains of many Western nations, including Australia (Lentin and Titley 2011; Dunn et al. 2007; Kundnani 2007a, 2014). MCOs are aware of the pivotal role of these problematizing discourses in creating a perceived public knowledge about Islam as a problematic culture and Muslims as a problematic minority. These dominant discourses forge a constructed field of knowledge about Islam and Muslims. The Islamic Sciences & Research Academy of Australia (ISRA) representative believes that Islamophobia "is where Islam or Muslims are generalized to be understood in a negative way, which causes the phobia". Following Foucault (1980), discourses are "the production of knowledge through language and practice"; therefore, the mediation of the problematizing discourses around Islam and Muslims produces perceived or assumed knowledge about Muslims as problems.

Analysis of the data reveals that MCOs believe this constructed field of knowledge around Muslimness generates negative narratives pertaining to the incompatibility of Muslims' cultures as migrants, their unsophistication, their limited civic disengagement and their association with violence and terrorism. Therefore, these assumptions incite security policies, anti-multiculturalism and anti-immigration debates. Despite identifying the media as the main "culprit" in propagating misinformation about Islam (discussed later), MCOs still identify lack of first-hand interactions with Muslims as a main contributor to the public's ignorance. Indeed, misinformed or perceived knowledge about Islam and Muslims increases prejudice towards Muslims, especially among people who have less contact with Muslims and particularly with regard to narratives of Islam and Muslims as threats (Mansouri and Vergani 2018; Vergani and Mansouri 2016). This is why many MCOs seem to prioritize educational, interfaith and intercultural engagements with non-Muslims to counter ignorance. The (BN) organization, for example, initiates school and Islam 101 outreach programs, as well as enhances Muslims' understanding of their faith, to reflect a better image of Islam. Likewise, (MC) initiates events whereby the public can ask and interact with Muslims, besides promoting Muslims to embrace cross-cultural interactions in their everyday lives.

While MCOs' strategies to educate and create opportunities of interactions with non-Muslims aim at defeating ignorance through cross-cultural engagements, the ways by which they carry out these interactions are influenced by MCOs' awareness of these underlying assumptions. On the one hand, during their interactions with non-Muslims, many MCOs strategically project Muslims as good, normal, civilized, sophisticated and peaceful citizens. The Australian Intercultural Society (AIS) representative, for instance, believes people fear that Muslims will take over Australia because Islam's values are presented in ways that are so "archaic and so out of touch and incongruent with Australian society". The organizations' awareness of these narratives influences the conduct of the organization towards: (1) choosing an organization's name that has no reference to Islam, in order to allow initial neutral interactions with others, to build trust ahead of implicit biases, and (2) deliberately

communicate in a civilized, professional, loyal and transparent manner as counterparts to "Christians", "Australians" and "normal people", in order to denounce Islamophobia assumptions of Muslims as migrants and violent. The representative says the following:

> "So, we try to present ourselves as decent, civilized individuals who shared the same hopes and aspirations as you do, to our Christian friends, and we want the same for this country as you do because we embrace this country as much as you. This was our way of trying to help. Firstly, calm them down to think that there was no threat coming from us. Secondly, we are in the same boat as them. We are also concerned about the current and future well-being of this nation and its general population irrespective of what faith, ethnicity, color. And that we are also working to build this nation so that it's more advanced, more inclusive and socially cohesive. All those buzz words that people are talking about".

On the other hand, many MCOs strategically enhance Muslim' sense of belonging and citizenship to feel, act and be perceived as legitimate citizens, to counter narratives that project Muslims as migrants and "others". The World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) representative, for example, believes that Islamophobia is a form of "bullying" by which Muslim youths are made to feel and therefore act like strangers in their own country. Hence, WAMY's counter strategy is to enhance Muslim youths' self-esteem and acceptance of their positions as legitimate citizens via building their resilience and empowering them to act to their full capacity to promote themselves as "normal ordinary Australians".

At the political domain, the majority of MCOs signifies the constitutive role of historical and contemporary national and international political players in constructing and perpetuating the problematizing discourses around Islam and Muslims, hence legitimizing societal anti-Muslim racism. When asked whether Islamophobia manifests at the grassroots level, Salam Fest Muslim Festival (SalamFest) representative said the following: "No, it doesn't manifest at the grassroots level. It manifests from high above, but it trickles down to the grassroots level". In fact, many MCOs say that the Australian people are "supportive of Muslims", "decent", "open" and "inclusive", but they have been manipulated by political actors to perceive Muslims as a problem.

This study finds that MCOs' frames of meaning of Islamophobia at the political domain fall within three interlinked propositions: first, Islamophobia as an institutional disruption to Australia's egalitarian policy of multiculturalism; second, Islamophobia manifests through the positional practices imposed on MCOs which undermine and discipline their civic–political participation; and third, Islamophobia as systematic structural racism due to inherited white privilege. The problematizing discourses presented earlier are primary to all three propositions of political Islamophobia. Contrary to anti-Muslim racism presented earlier within the societal domain, MCOs' perceives political Islamophobia as the misrecognition of their religious and national identities and their civic–political participation. The following sections unpack MCOs' propositions and the impact of these frames of meaning on shaping their activism in response to the problem.

6. A Disruption to an Idealistic Multicultural Context

MCOs perceive Islamophobia as a disruption to an idealistic multicultural context in the form of harmful discourses and practices by the national political actors exemplified in the media and the government. Whilst MCOs identify anti-Islam political parties as a political manifestation of Islamophobia and recognize the influence of their vocality, the majority trivializes their significance. Many organizations share (FR) representative's perception that anti-Islam groups have "little to no power" in reference to their numbers and the characteristics of their members as "ignorant", "trolls" and "core-hearted anti-Islam". Alternatively, the majority of MCOs locate Islamophobia in the mainstream within the interconnected national political factors of history, media and the government's silence, rhetoric, agendas and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policies.

Indeed, Australia's official policy of multiculturalism is an egalitarian concept that presupposes the protection of minority rights and the inclusion of difference into the national identity

(Kivisto and Faist 2009). It certainly provides the legitimate basis for Australian Muslims to preserve and practice their religion and culture as citizens, as long as they respect the laws of the land (Mansouri 2010; Bouma 2016; Mansouri et al. 2007). Many MCOs believe that the "system is not set up to hate Muslims" (WO), symbolizing their constitutional right of freedom of religion and the financial support they receive to run communal projects.

Australia's multiculturalism is arguably successful in comparison to Europe's (Bouma 2016; Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2014b). Nonetheless, contemporary international terrorism by political Islamists and growing risks of transnational home-grown radicals have led to significant changes to multiculturalism nationally and internationally. At the international level, many European countries declared the failure or death of multiculturalism among a rise of populism and anti-immigration/anti-Islam political parties within the government (Busbridge 2017; Lentin and Titley 2011). Although Australia did not reach the extent of Europe's dismay, changes in the national public discourse are noticeable in the negative media coverage of Muslims and the growing national interest in governing and examining Muslims' identity, religiosity, integration and citizenship in relation to "Australian values" (Hage 2011; Humphrey 2010; Mansouri 2020; Yasmeen 2010; Akbarzadeh 2016; Lentini 2015; Rane et al. 2014; Kabir 2006). This section argues that MCOs perceive these changes and the government's course of action towards Muslims as a disruption to an idealistic egalitarian multicultural policy and, hence, an embodiment of Islamophobia.

In line with the literature (Poynting 2008), many MCOs mark the Howard government as the point of time when Australia's Islamophobia started to evolve and become normalized. The (CO) representative denotes the Howard government as the time when "there has been a deliberate campaign to create a group of people, being Muslims in this country, who are targeted by politicians and the media". MCOs highlight the role of the Australian media in perpetuating the problematizing discourse through "biased" and "selective" representation of Islam and Muslims, which is not surprising and validates the ample studies on the role of media in forming a negative, biased and stereotypical framing of Muslims (Rane et al. 2014; Brasted 2001; Dreher 2010; HREOC 2004; Kabir 2006; Chopra 2015). Moreover, many MCOs are dissatisfied with the government's course of action towards Muslims, arguing it reinforces the problematizing discourse of Muslims. Many MCOs share the views of (WO) and the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) representatives that the government is "enabling racism", either by "turning a blind eye to a particularly racist exclusionary policy, and a parliamentary member who has a very antagonistic view, and a very white-Australia view", or by "saying things that are Islamophobic or marginalize the Muslim community". In this respect, MCOs believe that politicians' indifference and language empower and give freedom and license to others to be more extreme.

Primarily, MCOs believe the state views Muslims as a security threat which becomes reflected in the government's interactions with Muslims through policies, consultations and prioritization of funding. Many MCOs claim CVE legislation mainly targets Muslims as an institutionalized form of Islamophobia within government policy. This aligns with findings in the literature on the negative impact of CVE on the Muslim Community (Cole 2017; Maddox 2012; Parliament of Australia 2006; Faris and Parry 2011). The (CO) representative says the following:

> "The government only sees us through the lens of security. Every interaction the government has with Muslim organizations, the Muslim community now is filtered through a CVE lens. So even programs which are purely social programs are funded out of CVE funding. That is not a good thing. As a community we should not accept it. Why should we only be seen from a security perspective?"

Some MCOs take an ethical stand and reject CVE funding to run communal projects despite their financial shortage. The (IR) representative, for example, refuses to take CVE funding to run anti-Islamophobia projects, proclaiming that CVE is "wrong" and "horrifying", as "CVE is basically, How do we stop Muslims from being terrorists? Because they are inclined to be terrorists". In addition, other MCOs believe that the underlying securitization discourse influences the momentum and direction of government funding towards policing Muslims. An ISRA representative, for example,

hypothesizes that "maybe" the government "do not care if Islam is hated", in the aftermath of receiving cuts to their much-needed Islamic Awareness project at the level of the corrective services and the Attorney General department in Canberra. ISRA says, "from what they've told us there's always limited funding for these things and they've got to decide where they put the money and then it never becomes a priority". The AIS representative holds similar views and adds that the government cut funding from "prevention" measures to sustain the expenses of the "policing" measures.

MCOs further accentuate that Islamophobia is an institutional disruption to the egalitarian context of multiculturalism when almost the majority of MCOs places the responsibility on the government to respond to Islamophobia through "anti-Islamophobia legislation", "speaking up" against it or initiating sympathetic and meaningful engagements with Muslims. This is because multiculturalism in Australia presupposes the government proactivity to halt racism and protect minority rights (Kivisto and Faist 2009). MCOs' assertion of the government's liability to represent and protect Muslims, nevertheless, is weakened by the government's propagation of the problem. For example, the (WO) representative states the following:

> "It's not my responsibility to make it run nice for Muslims. It's my government's responsibility, whom I pay taxes, to keep me safe . . . . I don't think it's the organization's responsibility to do it. I think it's the responsibility of the state to stop propping up institutions that feed it, to stop giving license and legitimacy to racist and right-wing Islamophobes, politicians, pundits, business leaders, enterprises, media. As long as they feed the beast, that creates the problem. Take away the funding for the support and legitimacy of the beast; we don't have a problem. We will still never have 100% harmony, but you won't have the extent of division that we have now".

Combined with placing the responsibility on the government, MCOs stress their symbolic and social citizenry. For example, the WAMY representative says the following:

> "We are the minority, but we have the full rights. Yes, we came from whatever background, but we are fully Australian citizens. No less no more... In front of the law, we are equal, and this is what's important".

In doing so, they refuse to pursue apologetic defensive anti-Islamophobia positions and activities not to undermine their pride as Australians and as Muslims. The assertiveness of their Australianness and Muslimness, notwithstanding, MCOs are aware of the damage to Muslims' identities, especially the youth. Therefore, many MCOs respond through building Muslims resiliency and providing spaces and programs to cultivate Muslims' civic and religious belonging and their capacity to feel and act as legitimate citizens to disrupt the underlying assumption of their "other-ness". The demeaning representation of Muslims' culture not only casts Muslims as outsiders, and migrants at best, but also harms Australian Muslim's sense of pride in their dual identities. Taylor et al. (1994, p. 25) provide that liberal democracies' failure to respect, represent and recognize the cultural particularity of minority groups can cause damages to one's identity as "non-recognition and mis-recognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being".

To this end, MCOs assume an idealistic multicultural context by which Muslims as a community are represented, respected and recognized as diverse and contributing citizens. Nonetheless, they perceive the political deviation from fulfilling this idealistic vision as a defect to an otherwise egalitarian context due to the power of Islamophobia. This corresponds to the ways by which many MCOs respond to Islamophobia through building Muslims' capacity to feel and engage as capable, sophisticated and legitimate citizens to disrupt the underlying misrecognition of their Australianness. The following section discusses MCOs' perception of Islamophobia as imposed positional practices to discipline Muslims, which adds to their experiences of being misrecognized as equal citizens.

7. Imposed Positional Practices: Obligations, Restrictions and Assigned Narratives

Analysis of the data reveals that MCOs encounter a "ceiling" that curtails their civic–political participation and capabilities due to Islamophobia. Following Stones (2005), this "ceiling" reflects the positional practices imposed due to MCOs' social positions as Muslims. Positional practices are institutionalized restraining structures that hold in place what MCOs can and cannot do within their position as Australian Muslim entities which further subjugate their symbolic representation as Australian citizens, as well as undermine their capability to participate as autonomous in the sociopolitical life. In this sense, Islamophobia undermines MCOs' social positions as Australians based on their subscription to Muslimness. The ICV representative says the following:

> "You should want to be a fully participating member of the Australian society. And you have as much right to call for change as anybody else. No one should take that right away from you .... It [Islamophobia] seeks to take that right away from Muslims to actually advocate for certain positions, and it marginalizes Islam and Muslims and it seeks to erase the identity of Islam and Muslims. And that's one of the reasons it's really, really damaging".

Fraser (1998) argues that recognition must allow "participatory parity" that is equal autonomy for members within the society to interact freely on a par with others. Seen in this light, this study puts forward the argument that islamophobia imposes positional practices on MCOs' civic–political engagements; hence, it undermines their capabilities to engage on a par with others as equal citizens, which contributes to their misrecognition. This is because the analysis of the data reveals that positional practices confine MCOs' sociopolitical engagements within particular obligations, restrictions and assigned narratives to assert their loyalty to the nation. Implicitly, these positional practices denote the otherness of Muslims as outsiders and migrants who need repetitively to assert their "goodness" as Muslims and their "citizenship" as Australians. Due to Islamophobia, MCOs feel obliged to practice unconditional gratitude, unconditional collaboration, condemnation of actions of "bad" Muslims, provision of commentaries to the media, engagement in interfaith and intercultural activities and transparency and openness. For example, the (IV) representative believes that Muslims are expected by the media, politicians and the general public to condemn every event in the world that is going on against non-Muslims perpetrated by Muslims. He says the following:

> "Somebody is attacking in Indonesia, then we have to justify. Somebody is attacking a church, that is beyond our control! The Muslim community is asked to defend ... every other day there is a major article against Islam in this country, and we are asked to respond to everything. Every other day".

Moreover, MCOs representatives feel obliged to invite non-Muslims, be open, accessible and transparent to refute accusations of Muslims' social isolation and political radicalization. The Australian Islamic Centre (AIC) says the following:

> "If we don't invite these people, these people will think that we are closed, that we have something to hide. But we don't have anything to hide. We are open to everyone, even to people who are afraid of us as Muslims".

Although Multiculturalism provides Muslims with the tools and capacity to criticize aspects of the government policy and language that disrupt their right of inclusion (Akbarzadeh and Roose 2011), MCOs believe restricting positional practices refrain Muslims' freedom of expression, especially their capacity to criticize national and international policies. The (CO) representative says the following:

> "Rarely will you find a Muslim organization making a public statement about some action of a Muslim majority government. Because we feel so under siege, we don't want to add to that .... If you look at the way the Muslim community is being attacked through media, through the right-wing politics .... There are so many people who are just looking to attack the community. So, there is a reluctance to add fuel to that fire."

Besides the positional practices of obligations and restrictions, Muslims' engagements are assigned within scripts to confine their participation within particular accepted discourses. Not only do MCOs perceive their engagements with the media as imposed and reactionary, but also, they believe their engagements are confined within preset narratives pertaining to the problematization of Islam and Muslims. This is comparable to Abdel-Fattah and Krayem (2018) argument that the "privilege" to speak, which is restricted to moderate Australian Muslims, is dictated within a script that confines their civic–political engagements to reproduce the binary categories of good/bad and moderate/radical which, thereafter, feeds Islamophobia. The WO representative, for instance, speaks of how Muslims have been captivated within preset narratives and repetitively being approached by the media to respond to terrorism, violence, oppression of women and aggressive men. She infers that these narratives control Muslims' nature of engagement within their confinements:

> "You've got the establishment that paints the strokes and dictates the scripts that we all have to follow. When you step outside the script and you question who wrote it, people feel very uncomfortable. Because they always like to be in control of how I behave and how I speak and how I fit into society . . . . We have so much capacity as an organization, as a community. We have so much capacity as a community and what we do. We're artistic. We're entrepreneurial. We're successful. We're high achievers. We work hard. I guess we have problems, as well. But we're only ever sought out for our opinion after a crisis".

Deterring from obeying these positional practices results in political, societal, mediated and economic sanctions. For example, Dr. Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, Mufti of Australia and New Zealand, received extensive backlash from the media and the public in the aftermath of his press release condemning the terrorist act in France because, while at it, he urged the Australian government to reconsider its foreign policy (Richardson 2015). His political gesture did not fall within the scripted guidelines confining Muslims' rhetoric to the boundaries of acceptable political participation; hence, it incurred public sanctions in the form of defamation in the media. Despite winning the defamation case over the media outlet which orchestrated the backlash (Knaus 2017), one of the MCOs' interviewed said the Mufti's press release was "the worst kind of press release" and that he knew at that time that "this is going to create a big hoo-ha". This reflects an awareness of these imposed positional practices and the vulnerability of Muslims' citizenship due to Islamophobia.

Beside backlashes from the media, MCOs incur sanctions from the government upon their failure to adhere to the implicit positional practices of unconditional collaboration. The (YC) representative gives an example of the economic sanctions they incurred when the organisation refused to accept the government's stipulation to collaborate by "doping Muslims" in exchange for financial support to their community projects. Similarly, one of the representatives gave the example of when a Muslim organization received abundant backlashes from media and the government upon its refusal to engage in what the organization believed to be a non-genuine consultation with the government on "National Security legislation" amid Tony Abbotts' infamous "Team Australia" rhetoric (ABC 2014). He believes that the government and the media amplified the organization's shift from complete collaboration into new spaces of negotiations as a breach of loyalty and citizenship. He concludes that Muslims are expected to "always be at the table", or else will be disciplined through backlashes and restrictions:

> "Why do you think they labelled us a terrorist sympathizer, and this sort of stuff? Because people are uncomfortable with that shift in what they consider to be mainstream organizations that are meant to toe the line, that are meant to build bridges".

The ICV representative speaks of a similar backlash from the media and the government upon the organization's submission to the federal Joint Standing Committee on Freedom of Religion or belief (ICV 2017). In its submission, the ICV highlighted the damaging impact of Islamophobia on Muslim youths and made 11 recommendations to propose ways to subside the effects of Islamophobia, one of which is the "the provision of safe places for Muslim youth to meet and talk about a range of issues in

emotional terms 'where they can be frank and even use words, which in a public space would sound inflammatory'". After four months of being on the public record, the Australian media, followed by international media, disseminated the news as "the ICV calls for taxpayers to fund 'rage rooms' for Muslim youths to plot terrorism" (Masanauskas 2017). According to the ICV, the premier Daniel Andrews called for a review of the ICV's funding, despite previously being a "strong supporter of the organization". The ICV representative believes this backlash was triggered not particularly in response to this submission but because the ICV "said no to the Victorian government on a couple of other issues". The ICV representative reflects on this incident by highlighting the need to remain "resilient", "sophisticated", "clever and strategic" to navigate this abusive environment and advocate on behalf of Muslims.

MCOs' awareness of these sanctions and risks led some MCOs to practice self-silencing, primarily to safeguard their financial funding since many depend on the government to secure financial support for their key services. This compromises their ability to advocate openly against institutional forms of Islamophobia despite their recognition of the institutional aspect of the problem. One of the interviewees, for example, is cautious of speaking against the government, in her capacity as the representative of her organization, to avoid jeopardizing the organization's funding. She speaks of this paradox, stating the following: "[I]t's a catch 22 because you basically have funding in an organization to operate because of the racism of the government, and the government is funding you". Another MCO representative believes "people [MCOs] don't want to bite the hand that feeds them" and "they are happy to placate and appease and apologize because they know at the end of the day, they might get 50 grands".

Self-silencing is not bounded to Australian MCOs. The *Civil Voices* report (2017) concludes that 69% of Australia's non-for-profit Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) practice self-silencing due to fear of losing government funding, despite the idealistic liberal democratic context of Australia (Howie 2017). CSOs believe "dissenting organizations risk having their funding cut", leading to a practice of self-silencing to "allay retribution" (Howie 2017, 2). However, the politicized and global nature of Islamophobia furthers MCOs' cautiousness to avoid not only financial sanctions but also an arbitrary and often an amplified backlash from the media, the government and the public, which further denigrates Muslims' social status. Many studies find that Muslims in the West avoid voicing their opinions regarding foreign and national policies, especially with regards to CVE, out of fear of being labeled as terrorist sympathizers (Breen-Smyth 2014; Cherney and Murphy 2016; Kundnani 2014; Spalek and Imtoual 2007). Breen-Smyth (2014), for example, argues that British Muslims, as a suspect community, are disciplined by security discourses and polices to be "quiet" in order to avoid conflicts and penalties and to be perceived as peaceful, good and moderate.

Islamophobia, in this regard, revolves around governing and managing Muslims to perform within a code of conduct that falls within the expectation of the majoritarian context and discourses. The disciplining of Muslims' citizenship is not surprising and comes to validate studies on the impact of the securitization discourse on the reception and political recognition of Muslims as legitimate citizens (Breen-Smyth 2014; Cherney and Murphy 2016; Finlay and Hopkins 2019; Kundnani 2014; Sayyid and Vakil 2010). MCOs' identification of these positional practices as manifestations of Islamophobia, however, illustrates the significant impact these positional practices have on shaping, directing and undermining their ability to voice their concerns and challenge Islamophobia as representatives of Muslims. In light of Fraser and Hrubec (2004) notion of misrecognition, this context undermines the social status of MCOs and Muslims in general, negatively subverts and restrains their civic–political participation, and impacts their citizenry and contributions. This leads the majority to prioritize soft grassroots cross-cultural engagements at the level of the civil society, not only to avoid risks of politicized sanctions, but also to fulfil a national expectation to collaborate as active citizens. One MCO representative even suggested that "maybe" it is more effective for non-Muslim organizations to speak up against Islamophobia, since they will not feel "as defensive or as constrained" as MCOs who are "especially getting government funding" and who want to be "respected".

To this end, positional practices of obligations, restrictions and assigned narratives undermine Muslims' social, political and economic status. MCOs' fear of incurring sanctions results in self-silencing which compromises their ability to advocate openly against institutional Islamophobia. The following section discusses views of MCOs who see the problem in light of white privilege.

8. Islamophobia Embedded within the System: White Privilege

Some MCOs contest the foundations of the Australian nation to elucidate how Islamophobia is engendered within the system. They link Islamophobia to white privilege, denoting that racism and inequalities towards non-whites are foundational to Western societies. By referencing Australia's colonialism and its ongoing treatment of asylum seekers, these MCOs contest the Australian system's ability to implement an egalitarian policy of inclusion. The (BN) representative, for example, infers the following: "Why should we acknowledge Muslims if we haven't acknowledged indigenous people?" She signifies white privilege as the core of Australia's institutional and systematic deployment of racism as a political and cultural attitude towards those who do not fit the Australian criterion of whiteness. Likewise, the (CO) representative believes Australia, like other Western nations, define a "barbaric" population through mechanisms of colonialism and white privilege, to legitimize control and maintain a majoritarian superiority. He adds the following:

> "The Western society, this country particularly is built on a racist foundation from day one. It has, from the very beginning, always, sought to create an 'other' that it could then define its identity around. 'They are the bad guys, they are the barbarians' and they started with the indigenous communities. It's continued right through. Because of global issues, we are now the 'other' and that's what it is . . . it's the same phenomenon. It's this idea that white culture is somehow inherently better than other cultures. This is myopic. This is a tunnel vision where there is a complete refusal to acknowledge history and the role colonialism had, and imperialism had".

Other MCOs further accentuate Australia's inherited connections to Europe and other white settler societies, labeling Australia's Islamophobia as "reactionary" and imitative of European experiences and concerns because of an inherited connection. In this respect, these MCOs recognize the influential role of Australia's colonial history and the impact of transnational and contemporary moral and political connections to Western white culture in forming a discursive phenomenon beyond their temporality and national locality. Poynting (2019, p. 4) states the following:

> "Islamophobia in Australia is not just in Australia. It is part of thoroughly globalized processes that incorporate this nation into empire. These processes, from an earlier empire, predate the existence of the Australian nation state".

Indeed, Australia's connections to the British empire and similar white settler societies, such as the US and Canada, as well as its colonial history, are influential in forging a unified perception of a "white land" or, in Poynting's (2019) term, "an empire" that is threatened by the existence of "others". In this light, MCOs perceive Islamophobia as racism ingrained within the status quo due to white privilege. This proposition appears in close ties with Critical Race Theory (CRT) notion that races are categorized within cultural and economic hierarchies, and that racism is a product of white privilege embedded within the social structure (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Following CRT, these MCOs view Islamophobia as another form of structural racism embedded within the nation's system to target racialized Muslims despite the nation's efforts to implement a policy of multiculturalism.

In light of this perspective, MCOs believe the civil society is left with no alternative but to take ownership to mobilize against Islamophobia as another form of structural social injustices contrary to their idealistic envisioned top-down intervention denoting the similarities between Muslim struggles and the struggles of African Americans and Aboriginals (WAMY, ICV, BN, Moroccan Soup Bar and MC). The founder of the Moroccan Soup Bar replied to my question of if it is the government's responsibility to respond to Islamophobia, saying the following:

"I wish I could say, government. I wish I could say those with power and privilege. They are certainly responsible, but the reality is they will never give over. If it's at their discretion that society changes, society will never change. Unfortunately, and sadly, but equally importantly the onus is on those who have been marginalized and vilified to re-organize and organize as coalitions and build on movements in solidarity to then tip across into the mainstream".

The founder's placement of responsibility on the civil societies, especially victims of racism, is shared by many other MCOs, such as WAMYs' representative, who drew a simile between Muslims and African Americans' struggles in his reply when asked if it is the government's responsibility:

"No, I'll put it for the Muslim community first. The Black Americans, nobody stood up for them. They had to die; that lady in the bus who ignited, and they triggered all the revolution. Somebody has to stand up. We have to stand up. It's all".

The ICV representative, similarly, asserts that the civil society has a major duty, given the nature of the problem as a "social justice issue" against systematic forms of racism, comparing Islamophobia to the struggles of Aboriginals and people of color:

"I think it's civil society. Absolutely. Just like civil society fought against racism. And if you think about it, the majority of the civil society is the main cultural group which is the Anglo-Celtic group. Many of them have been at the forefront of fighting racism against Aboriginal people or against people of color. They've been fighting against discriminations against LGTB as well. This is a social justice issue. This is a human rights issue. And so they absolutely should be advocating on behalf of the Muslim community. No, it's not just Muslims".

MCOs shift from their envisioned idealistic intervention, descending top-down towards a pragmatic scheme coordinated by the civil society and primarily Muslims illuminates, not only their dissatisfaction with the government liability towards Muslims (presented earlier), but also their perception of Islamophobia as systematic racism within the structure of the society. Acting on their dissatisfaction of the government's liability towards Muslims and their awareness of the entrenchment of racism within the structure of the society, MCOs take ownership of their struggles. Indeed, analysis of MCOs' conduct reveals a general preference to counter Islamophobia through contact and minute interactions with non-Muslims through day-to-day and cross-cultural activities. Besides, many MCOs collaborate with and learn from the experiences of other minority groups, especially the successful efforts of the Jewish Communities in tackling and reporting anti-Semitism. One main collaboration is the bystander Intervention program in response to Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, which is a collaborative project by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV), Australian Intercultural Society (AIS), Australian Union of Jewish Students and Benevolence Australia as part of the Victorian Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Action Plan by the Labour government (AIS 2018; Premier, The Hon Daniel Andrews MP 2017).

In this sense, these MCOs believe that white privilege forms and sustains the contestations of "us" and "them", which informs Australia's treatment of its refugees, aboriginals and consecutive waves of migrants, as well as its treatment of Muslims. Islamophobia, in this perception, rises as another symptom of Australia's problematic foundation of white privilege, despite a policy of multiculturalism. This resonates with scholars who have criticized multiculturalism for operating in close ties with a white colonial history. They argue that multiculturalism is not a racism-free construct, due to the hegemonic impact of white colonial history and ideologies on race (Ahmed 2008; Gunew 2013; Hage 1998). Hesse (2003, 17) agrees and adds that multiculturalism is "reflexes of European coloniality", as it was implemented as a response to an on-ground reality of cultural diversities formed in relation to post-colonial histories. In this sense, multiculturalism does not deny racism, since its egalitarian context "presupposes white control over what is tolerated" (Ahmed 2008; Hage 1998, p. 98). Hage (1998)

adds that whiteness is the "aristocratic" national cultural capital; hence, Muslims and "third world" migrants are not recognized as part of this formation.

In light of these perspectives, it is safe to argue that MCOs suggest Islamophobia is guarded and sustained within the foundations of the nation, since the system violates the merits of equality due to an inherited defect of white privilege. This results in the system's failure to recognize and represent Muslims as an integral part of Australia's multicultural context in a similar manner to the experiences of Aboriginal Australians.

9. Conclusions

MCOs' frames of meaning around Islamophobia reflect the experiential social manifestations of Islamophobia and the discursive problematizing discourses which emanate from the political domain constituting these two outward aspects of the problem. Based on the discussion above, this study indicates the following propositions to be central to MCOs' understanding of Islamophobia, thus impacting their responsive actions:

1. Social Islamophobia takes the form of anti-Muslim racism and discriminations.
2. Islamophobia's power emanates from the problematizing discourse around Islam and Muslims and constructs a perceived public "knowledge" about Islam and Muslims.
3. Islamophobia racializes Muslims as migrants, outsiders and security and cultural problems.
4. Islamophobia is a disruption to an idealistic multicultural context whereby Muslims' citizenship is delegitimized and misrecognized.
5. Islamophobia assigns institutional positional practices to Muslims' civic–political engagements and undermines their ability to advocate openly.
6. Islamophobia is another form of the systematic racism embedded within the nation due to colonialism and white privilege.

MCOs perceive Islamophobia in its entirety as systematic and institutionalized social and political injustices targeting Muslims. They locate this implicitly legalized form of racism within the interconnected international and national political and discursive domains of the geographical and historical West. Instead of locating the problem within vocal anti-Islam groups and political parties, MCOs locate Islamophobia within the mainstream system that constructs the discourses, policies and the experiences of vilification and misrecognition Muslims encounter within their multicultural settings. These are the national political silence, rhetoric, agendas and CVE policies and the media. This complements Beydoun (2018); Massoumi et al. (2017) position on the marginality of the far-right and the centrality of the state in manufacturing and propagating Islamophobia through its practices, CVE and foreign policies. These political and external factors generate a discursive field of constructed knowledge about Islam and Muslim, as well as institutional positional practices to manage Muslims' civic–political participation. This charged context promulgates ignorance and fear within the public; hence, it constitutes the explicit forms of social anti-Muslim racism.

Applying the methodological bracketing of the agent's context and the agent's conduct allowed a more in-depth analysis into the impact of the former on the latter. MCOs' context not only undermines the public recognition of Muslims, but also informs their perceptions of Islamophobia and influences their pragmatic strategies and activities to transform their context. In other words, and in light of Strong Structuration Theory (SST), this study suggests that MCOs are disciplined by the power of Islamophobia to devise responses informed by their context. At the moment, they utilize their limited resources to provide counter narratives through building bridges with grassroots and civil society organizations and building the capacity of Muslims to become ambassadors of Islam. Moreover, they identify their cross-cultural engagements, such as interfaith dialogues and diversity trainings, as a response to Islamophobia.

The government's "integrationist" approach to social cohesion is problematized for encouraging the integration of religiously diverse groups into the majority's culture (Ezzy et al. 2020). Some

scholars label such approaches as symptomatic of Islamophobia (Poynting and Mason 2008; Lentin and Titley 2012; Humphrey 2010). Islam (2018, 7) believes this form of "soft Islamophobia" dismisses the structural underpinning of the problem and holds Muslims, the victims, responsible to "break the stereotypes" through their interpersonal and intercultural engagements, to prove that they meet the standards ascribed by the majority. MCOs, however, take such engagements as necessary to provide counter narratives to Islamophobia, despite their awareness of the underlying perceptions of their accountability and the conditionality of their citizenship. Indeed, the power of 'soft Islamophobia' pressures MCOs to fulfil these obligations; nevertheless, they positively transform their cross-cultural engagements, not only as venues to legitimize their citizenship and belonging, but also as venues to educate non-Muslims, grow compassion, foster trust and humanize Muslims. The argument here is that MCOs utilize the macro level of the government's social cohesion agenda, which is arguably informed by soft Islamophobia, to implement transformative micro-level engagements to educate non-Muslims, normalize Muslims and foster mutual respect. Also, MCOs utilize the macro level of Australia's multicultural policy, to assert their legitimacy as citizens through initiating venues and opportunities to interact and educate non-Muslims. This is comparable to Meer's (2014, 2010) proposition that Muslims within "imperfect liberal democratic settlements" recognize their pragmatic possibilities and mobilize within democratic spaces to counter Islamophobia. He reflects on the British Muslim mobilization on issues regarding discrimination, legislation and media representation to argue that "Muslims are not mere objects of regulation or governance, but instead are audible and potentially transformative" through democratic participation, stakeholder representation and consultations (Meer 2014, 23; 2010).

Certainly, multiculturalism as a "civic or political program for diversity management" varies even within a single nation (Peucker and Akbarzadeh 2014b, 48). The Victorian State Government's responses to religious diversity are, arguably, more sophisticated than other states, in light of its explicit grants funding for religious and interfaith initiatives, its sophisticated legislation (Racial and Religious Tolerance legislation, and the Equal Opportunity Act) and the fact that it is the only state with a government body dedicated to religious diversity (the Victorian Government Multifaith Advisory Group) (Ezzy et al. 2020; Roose 2010). Within this context, Victorian MCOs' take pragmatic anti-Islamophobia responses that are informed by their macro context, that of the governments' attitude towards social cohesion and multiculturalism, but in a manner that fulfils their micro objectives, that of growing the public's knowledge, respect and compassion. Put another way, MCOs utilize their multicultural particularities to inform their strategies and create opportunities to fight or transform their inequalities. Future research, however, is required here to examine MCOs cross-cultural engagements through the lens of interculturalism, to unpack the processes implemented to redress power imbalances. Moreover, further comparative research is needed to explore the extent to which the Victorian context (in the form of government policies, rhetoric and projects) is influencing the experiences of MCOs in comparison to other MCOs in other states.

In light of the previous discussion, this study finds it heuristic to allocate MCOs' attention and resources towards strategies of building solidarity among civil society organizations, especially those concerned with advocating for minority rights, diversity and anti-racism initiatives. Building solidarity across the civil society minimizes the risks or impact of sanctions provoked by Muslimness and allows the exchange of political expertise and human–financial recourses to amplify responses to all forms of injustices, one of which is Islamophobia. Moreover, it may be worthwhile for MCOs to familiarize their members with protective legislations and cross-cultural and political opportunities provided by a policy of multiculturalism. Knowledge of institutional rights enhances their member's sense of belonging and citizenship, as well as informs their activism towards utilizing available institutional opportunities and structures. Finally, this study finds necessary the establishment of a separate self-funded Muslim organization with the specialist focus on calling out institutional Islamophobia. At the moment, the ICV undertakes this role in Victoria. Nonetheless, there are limitations to what the ICV can do, given its stringed funding to pockets of the government, its diversified focuses and its limited recourses, which heavily depend on community volunteers who might not have the political expertise to navigate

the system. A promising initiative is the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network (AMAN), which is set as a specialist advocacy and policy development body at the national level, in a manner similar to the Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR) in the US and APPG in Britain. Interestingly, AMAN, which was initiated in April 2017, was not mentioned by MCOs interviewed for this study in May 2018. Its main aim is to lobby the government on behalf of Muslims, provide media representation for Muslims and formulate a strategic think tank to carry out evidence-based research and policy proposals to promote and enhance Muslim–non-Muslim relations in Australia (Abdalla and Omar 2017). The success, strategies and structures of this initiative, however, are yet to be explored at the academic and the political level, which calls for further research.

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The New Muslim Ethical Elite: "Silent Revolution" or the Commodification of Islam?

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Abstract: Very little research has examined the emergence of Western Muslims into the elite professions that are central to the operation of the capitalist free market and that serve as a central location of economic and political power. Less research still has examined how this is shaping citizenship among Muslims and the future of Islam in the West. These professions include finance, trade and auditing and supporting free market infrastructure including commercial law, consulting and the entrepreneurial arms of government public service. Many Muslim men and women in these professions maintain a commitment to their faith and are often at the forefront of identifying opportunities for the application of Islamic principles to the free market through the development of social engineering mechanisms such as Islamic finance and home loans, Islamic wills, marriage contracts, businesses and context-specific solutions for Muslim clients. These may have a potentially profound impact on belonging and practice for current and future generations of Western Muslims. The political and economic clout (and broader potential public appeal) of these new Muslim elites often significantly outweighs that of Imams and Sheikhs and thus challenges traditional textually based Islam. This article, grounded in empirical research, seeks to build upon very limited research looking at Muslim elites, exploring these developments with specific reference to professionals working in Islamic finance and law across the Western contexts of Australia and the United States, two countries with capitalist free markets and significant Muslim minorities.

Keywords: Islam in the West; Muslim professionals; *Shari'a*; religious authority; citizenship; Islamic finance; neoliberalism; religion

1. Introduction

With the overwhelming political and scholarly emphasis upon the development and evolution of Islam in Muslim majority nations, this article seeks to make a case for looking much closer at the important development in Islam's intellectual, economic and political trajectories in Western contexts. The article commences by considering the dimensions of Tariq Ramadan's call for Western Muslims to develop new economic structures in the Western social landscape. It engages with the inherent challenges of such a project and considers literature on the commodification of religion to explore whether the spaces exist within the neoliberal economic system, to which it is opposed, for it to develop. The article then reveals the emergence of a new class of Muslim professional elites, wielding significantly more political and economic power than traditional Islamic authorities, who are engineering Islamic solutions and products that are shaping the development of Islam in Western contexts. This is ultimately contributing to changing the nature of religious authority within Islam and its global practice. Based on fieldwork in Sydney and New York and with broader reference to London. the article argues that despite the positive possibilities of this project, in order to carve a space, Islam has to become a point of distinction in the free market, commodified so that Muslim consumers might be targeted on the basis of their faith. The article explores both the development of Islamic products by

entrepreneurial Muslim professionals and the engagement of renowned Islamic scholars as expert consultants who are paid on retainer for their services (though peripheral to the everyday operations of the business). The article then explores how the end products of these arrangements are viewed by Imams and community leaders in wider Muslim communities and their impact in shaping structures of authority in Western Muslim communities.

The logic of the free market emphasis upon financial gain and profit appears to have created an opportunity for Muslim entrepreneurs to build upon their Islamic and cultural capital to develop new mechanisms based upon *Shari'a* principles that could have a positive net benefit for Muslim communities and wider society. However, no study has engaged in adequate detail with how these new Muslim professional and "ethical" elites are negotiating between Islamic principles and neoliberal economic principles, particularly where these principles might have a political or civic dimension. To this extent. the article seeks to make a small, but substantive, contribution and calls for further research in the area.

2. Ramadan's "Silent Revolution"

The challenges facing the approximately 50 million Muslims living as minorities in Western contexts (Pew Research Centre 2012) have been very well documented. The "war on terror," negative media representations, governmental pressure and surveillance, counter-terrorism laws and policing (including entrapment) and wider anti-Muslim racism and discrimination have combined to create an often-hostile social climate for Muslims. This is particularly the case in old-world Europe where national identity is considered by many, particularly on the political right, to be under threat from migration and multiculturalism. Writing almost fifteen years ago, Nilüfer Göle (Göle 2006, p. 11) observed, "anxiety is growing amongst both Muslims and Europeans about a perceived breakdown of borders, a loss of identities that accompanies the dynamics of this encounter and is leading to the reinforcement of national and religious identities." Over a decade later, these anxieties have only heightened, spurred on by the emergence of the Islamic State movement, Syrian civil war and refugee crisis and jihadist attacks in European capitals including London, Manchester, Paris, Nice, Stockholm and Berlin. Far-right populist movements have sought to capitalize on fear and uncertainty and have rapidly increased their supporter bases across the continent and even reached the highest echelons of government (Roose 2020).

It is in the shadow of 9/11, this hostile social climate and the Iraq invasion in 2003 that Tariq Ramadan, one of the most influential and controversial Western Muslim intellectuals wrote arguably his most defining work, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Ramadan 2004). In this work, Ramadan (who was banned from travelling to the United States between 2004 and 2010 and who currently contests charges in the French legal system) sought to "synthesize a global and coherent vision of Islamic principles, juridical instruments and the means of employing them" (Ibid., p. 3), and to "concentrate on the practical application of these reflections in Western society" (Ibid., p. 4). Ramadan sets out three core propositions of interest here. The first, that a new form of Muslim citizenship, based on Islam as a primary identity marker, was beginning to emerge, stating:

> We are currently living through a veritable silent revolution in Muslim communities in the West: more and more young people and intellectuals are looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while participating in the societies that are their societies . . . This grassroots movement will soon exert considerable influence over worldwide Islam (Ibid.).

The second proposition advanced by Ramadan is that this project is antithetically opposed to neoliberal capitalism. Ramadan goes so far as to refer to a vaguely defined "neoliberalism" as the *Dar al Harb*—"abode of war." Ramadan is outspoken in his critique of neoliberalism as an unjust system antagonistic to Islamic value propositions. He states Islamic teachings are intrinsically opposed to the basic premises and logic of the neoliberal capitalist system (Ibid., p. 177) and considers it to be defined by "an economic logic responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of human beings every day"

(Ibid., p. 195). To the extent that the economy of a nation and society cannot be differentiated from the everyday life of its citizens, Ramadan, on initial impression, would appear to suggest that Muslims are living within an economic system against which Islam stands in opposition. Ramadan, however, takes this further, setting out a project based upon Muslims working within the Western political and financial system, while seeking to set themselves "free of the capitalist logic of speculation and interest" (Ibid., p. 198). For Ramadan then, Muslims must work within society to change it in accordance with Islamic principles.

The third proposition is that Western Muslims must be "intellectually, politically and financially independent" (Ibid., p. 6). Ramadan argues that "by acquiring the conviction that they can be faithful to their principles while being fully immersed in the life of wider society" (Ibid., p. 6), Muslims would then find the means to confront and resolve the challenges faced, remedying tensions and inconsistencies through practice. This implies considerable faith in the younger, locally-born and raised generation. In effect Ramadan sets out a political and economic challenge for Western Muslims:

> American and European Muslims have an urgent need today to develop their economic structures within the Western landscape. They need to create enterprises, businesses and insurance and other companies that will make it possible for them to live and develop in their respective societies ... It is precisely when we confront these problems that we understand how much we still need all the creativity of Muslim economists, entrepreneurs, managers, business leaders, and association leaders (Ibid., p. 197).

This is, in effect, an embracing of what has been termed the "emancipatory potential of entrepreneurial activity" (Rindova et al. 2009), pushing for Western Muslims to break free from established constraints inhibiting their practice, creating positive living environments for Western Muslims and, through the declaration about intended change, seeking to build ongoing momentum.

Those familiar with the success of immigrant Muslim communities in the United States, who have not only integrated, but very often thrived in educational and business pursuits, might argue as Joppke and Thorpey (Joppke and Thorpey 2013) and Bilici (Bilici 2012) have, that Muslims are already engaging successfully as citizens. Outside the United States, Harris and Roose (Harris and Roose 2014) have argued that even where traditional indicators of civic engagement reveal lower levels of participation, migrant Muslim communities, and in particular young Muslims, are contributing to their communities though mechanisms not picked up by conventional measures such as formal volunteering, yet that have considerable impact on the communities around them. However, there is one significant difference between the scholarly approaches and what might be considered Ramadan's activism and advocacy; Ramadan seeks to place Islam at the fore of this global project. In effect, Ramadan proposed the need for a Muslim professional and ethical "elite"—leaders with the requisite cultural and symbolic capital that could, through their actions, shape the development of a politically and economically empowered Muslim community. However, beyond a critique of neoliberalism as the "enemy" of Islam, Ramadan does not engage in adequate depth about how Islamic principles might be enacted in a capitalist system where Muslims live as minorities without being compromised, leaving it to those on the ground to work out in practice.

3. Islam, Entrepreneurship and Commodification

Islamic financial instruments often preceded developments in Western contexts. The *waqf* (trust), a key element of law in contemporary Western contexts, may have been imported into England by Franciscan Friars returning from the Crusades in the twelfth century (Avini 1995, p. 70).

Muslim communities in minority contexts have historically enacted the *Shari'a* in their daily lives whilst simultaneously seeking to develop Islamic projects that extend beyond the secular (or religious) state. Soares and Seesemann document, for example, how Muslim leaders in French West Africa created an "Islamic sphere" that lead to "standardized ways of being Muslim", intra-community debates notwithstanding (Soares and Seesemann 2009, p. 93). Muslims stood opposed to the introduction of

individual representation in British Colonial India in the belief that it undermined their communal cohesion and claimed to be an "exclusive community with exclusive interests" (Shaikh 1986, p. 541). Such historical examples demonstrate the adaptation of Islam and Muslims to local contexts and customs that has enabled Islam to thrive and indeed, grow across the globe irrespective of the challenges of local contexts. However, contemporary free market capitalism has posed a greater depth of challenges, particularly so far as the development of an alternate approach to a dominant global system of trade and exchange.

A number of scholars have noted the mercantile dispositions of Islam (Essid 1987; Hosseini 1995; Rodinson 1978; Koehler 2014) and so it may be understood that trading enterprises are, conceptually speaking, possible and evident throughout history in Muslim majority contexts, though debate persists about whether these constitute "capitalist enterprises" (Turner 1974; Kuran 2004). Crow observes that some Muslim scholars consider that Islamic capitalism has "always been an historical reality which may offer a potentially viable alternative" (Crow 2013) to what is considered an unjust global economic system.

In arguably the definitive work on the relationship between Islam and contemporary capitalism, Charles Tripp identifies efforts by the Islamic world to develop an alternative form of exchange:

> For many . . . the prime concern has been for the moral economy as a whole—often based upon an idealized picture of the past, both recent and ancient. This has prompted efforts in the Islamic world to devise a discourse of equal power that would break the circle of capital–market-exchange–profit–capital which so dominates social life and dictates the culture of exchange under capitalism. (Tripp 2006, p. 6)

The Global Financial Crisis of 2008–2009 increased the momentum for those advocating Islamic finance, with many scholars arguing that the preconditions necessary—lack of oversight, faulty risk management and accounting and speculation—would not have occurred in a system strictly regulated by moral principles (Kayed and Hassan 2011). However, as Alqahtani and Mayes claim, this is a matter of scale, with smaller banks in the Gulf states withstanding the crisis more effectively than larger banks, suggesting that enactment in local context and close oversight is important (Alqahtani and Mayes 2018).

A key question as to how Muslims in Western contexts are enacting these approaches emerges. Amel Boubekeur has tracked the emergence of Muslim entrepreneurs in Europe for well over a decade, finding that a reinvigorated Islamic identity amongst second and third generation European Muslims has created opportunities for Muslim entrepreneurs. In contrast to the first generation of Muslim migrants importing primarily apolitical, practice related artifacts from the Muslim world that bestowed an "authentic, traditional historical sensibility to the exiled body" (Boubekeur 2016, p. 422). the second and subsequent generations are innovating and developing their own "ethi-Islamic" products that are "more engaged with the political, social and cultural realities of life for Western Muslims" (Ibid.). Boubekeur sees these entrepreneurs and their products as contributing to the formulation of an Islamic ethic in the public sphere and simultaneously developing a transnational Islamic business solidarity connecting Muslims across geographical, national and political divides, reconstituting a sense of dignity. However, such practices may be alternatively understood as concerned less with the maintenance of solidaristic bonds than as turning Islamic artifacts into products to be bought and sold; a process commonly referred to as the "commodification of religion."

A number of works exploring the commodification of religion in the United States have appeared in the past few decades. R. Laurence Moore's *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace* is a particularly influential book, exploring entrepreneurial activity by religious actors aimed at growing their respective Christian denominations. Moore argued that religion had been commodified by churches (Moore 1993, p. 5). His study explored the role of religious influence in "determining the taste of people who were learning purchase 'culture' as a means of self-relaxation and improvement." The commodification of religion is defined more formally by Ornella as a process of the "recontextualization of religious symbols, language and ideas from their original religious context

to the media and consumer culture" (Ornella 2013). In relation to Western Muslims, on whom there is comparatively very little scholarship on the commodification of religion. the act of consumption may be understood to serve as a "fundamental marker" of reinvigorated Muslim identify and self-esteem (Dawson 2013). Dawson goes so far as to argue that those fully involved in consuming these products could be considered to have been "commodified selves," merging with the commodification given by its socio-cultural environment to the extent that the objects provided "function as dynamic elements of an extended self" (Ibid., p. 136); Muslim identity in this frame thus becomes conflated with the consumption of "Islamic" products. This finding supports research by Cesari on the individualization of religious belief amongst Muslims as they settle in the West. Cesari notes that as the normative Islamic tradition transforms and evolves in local contexts, a new "Muslim individual" emerges (Cesari 2003, p. 259). Similarly to Ramadan, Cesari terms this a "silent revolution."

In *Brand Islam*, one of very few works exploring the commodification of Islam, Faegheh Shirazi Shirazi explores the marketing of products as *halal* or "Islamic" to Muslim consumers, noting that the production of such commodities is profit driven and exploits "the rise of a new Islamic economic paradigm" and are "not necessarily created with the objective of honoring religious practice and sentiment." (Shirazi 2016, p. 1). Shirazi notes, similarly to Boubekeur, that for at least some Muslims, consuming such items heightens their sense of connectedness to the *Ummah* (global community of believers), though also reveals the commodification of important aspects of Islam into a profit making enterprise, stating, "from the very air we breathe to the bottled water we drink, no doubt the halal industry will transmute even the most mundane products into Islamic commodities and, in doing so, continue transforming piety into profit" (Ibid., pp. 212–13).

As hinted at by Shirazi, at the theoretical and normative level there appears to be important fundamental differences between the foundations of Islamic ethics (and business ethics) and those of economic neoliberalism that make conciliation of the ethical and practical imperative difficult, if not impossible. Islamic principles are both an ethos and set of guiding rules based on the *Shari'a*. the "totality" of guidance contained in the *Quran* and *Sunna* (Saeed 2006, p. 45). While Islam and trade have been shown to be mutually complimentary and indeed beneficial to the development of each other through adaptation to local culture and custom, neoliberal economic approaches move beyond a notion of mere economic exchange, focusing on maximizing efficiency and profit at any cost; a proposition arguably at odds with Islamic financial principles including a concern with *Zakat* (charitable tax) and the forbidding of *riba* (interest). Indeed, as an economic approach, neoliberalism "holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey 2007, p. 3).

Neoliberalism as a guiding principle "values market exchange as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human activities and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs" (Harvey 2007, p. 3). Bourdieu has described neoliberalism as "a programme for destroying collective structures which impede pure market logic" and understands it as "tending on the whole to favor severing the economy from social realities and thereby constructing, in reality, an economic system conforming to its description in pure theory . . . " (Bourdieu 1998). This is a project that finds parallels in efforts by Islamists to develop a "pure" Islam based on a universal "truth." The *Shari'a* and neoliberalism then consist of two competing sources, one grounded in the word of god and one grounded in the logic of the "godless" free market. The question may be asked then, in what social space is such an Islamic political and economic project possible without undermining the integrity of this social intent? Tripp identified two responses that have emerged in response in the Islamic world: Islamic economics and Islamic finance:

> In both areas—the theoretical and the practical—there is an impulse to distinguish an Islamic
> sphere of transactions from a capitalist sphere. If measured by some abstracted and restrictive
> notion of 'Islamic authenticity'. the endeavour would appear to have had very limited success.
> However, both areas have provided examples of the ways in which Muslim intellectuals
> have delineated for Muslims various forms of effective engagement with a world shaped

by a particular capitalist modernity, whilst adhering to the spirit and even the letter of the Islamic *Shari'a*. (Tripp 2006, p. 105)

For Tripp. the Islamic banking sector in particular has gained recognition as an established part of the global economy (Ibid., p. 199); however, it is "now seen as a means of engaging successfully with the forces of global capital, rather than the first step on the road to the undermining and overthrow of the capitalist system" (Ibid.). It is argued here that a core factor shaping its successful integration has been the manner in which Islamic finance—and more broadly, business services—have built a key market segment that can be readily exploited (in capitalist parlance) or developed (in Islamic banking parlance).

4. Neoliberalism and the Artificial Division of *Shari'a*

Across the West, governments and the media have been quick to condemn any public talk about legal recognition of *Shari'a*. When, in 2008, Rowan Williams. the former Archbishop of Canterbury, stated that some form of acceptance was "inevitable," he was swiftly rebuked by both the British Prime Minister and Opposition leader (Butt 2008). The "anti-*Shari'a*" movement has spread across the US like wildfire, with attempts made (albeit unconstitutionally) to ban *Shari'a* being taken into account in US courts across more than 20 states. Canada saw the first attempt to introduce *Shari'a* courts for members of the Muslim community in Ontario roundly defeated by government veto over their powers (Kymlicka 2005), and in Australia any call for legal pluralism is met with universal political and judicial condemnation (Roose and Possamai 2015). The political space in Western contexts is, on first appearance, a hostile environment for any attempt at a political project of economic empowerment.

However, in an analysis of Sydney and New York newspapers and the broader political context (Possamai et al. 2016), it was revealed that while *Shari'a* was primarily associated in the public imagination with *hudud* punishments including stoning, amputation and also with the ill treatment of women, there was one key area where *Shari'a* was represented not only in positive terms, but as having broader applicability in the national interest—this is the paradoxical case of Islamic finance.

Governments and media have been very positive about space for Islamic finance. The UK Government has vigorously pursued Islamic finance as a growth sector. In October 2013 London became the first Western city to host the World Islamic Economic Forum (the Muslim equivalent of the World Economic Forum). Speaking at the forum, Boris Johnson, who had previously stated that Islam was inherently opposed to human progress (Johnson 2007), boasted about being the first Lord Mayor of London of "Muslim extraction" (due to his great, great grandfather Ahmed Hamdi). Johnson then announced a GBP 100 million fund to encourage IT startups to move from the Muslim world to London (Chorley 2013). At the same meeting. the British Prime Minister stated that the UK would become the first non-Muslim nation to issue a *Sukuk* (Islamic bond). The Australian Government has also actively pursued Islamic finance opportunities. Speaking in 2010. the former Assistant Treasurer Nick Sherry (Sherry 2010) stated support for Islamic finance as it "has great potential for creating jobs and growth." Numerous Australian banks have sought to open Islamic finance departments (Roose and Possamai 2015). While successive Australian governments have rejected Muslim asylum seekers, one Australian Government brochure seeking to encourage Islamic investment openly celebrated that the Australian Muslim population was greater than that of the other regional trade hubs of Japan and Hong Kong combined (Australian Trade Commission 2013). US governments have been less politically enthusiastic about embracing Islamic finance and made little effort to encourage international investment. However, private enterprises in the US including General Electric, Taylor De-Jongh and Morgan Stanley have actively courted business based on Islamic principles (Popper 2013). Islamic mortgage brokers have also proliferated in the US in recent years, with the largest, Guidance Residential, dominating a fledgling but rapidly growing market (Permatsari 2010).

How might we better understand this paradox? Particularly in contexts where the integration of Muslim populations is less successful than in the United States? The work of Will Kymlicka provides some useful insights into this contradictory stance and offers an insight into the space in which Western Muslims might accomplish their project. Drawing upon the earlier work of scholars

examining neoliberalism in Latin America such as Hale (Hale 2005), Kymlicka specifically examines multicultural policies as they relate to ethnic minorities in Western contexts; for example. the Maori in New Zealand. He notes that where neoliberals had traditionally stood against multicultural policies as they deemed them to provide an unfair competitive advantage in the free market, over time, minorities have been able to utilize their difference as a point of distinction and in doing so, open new markets. He states: " ... the defining feature of neoliberal multiculturalism is that ethnic identities and attachments can be assets to market actors and hence they can legitimately be supported by the neoliberal state" (Kymlicka 2013, p. 109). Islamic finance offers a key point of difference in the market. Kymlicka suggests minorities might draw upon social resilience to utilize the neoliberal sphere to further their projects of self-determination:

> If neoliberalism has shaped social relations, it is equally true that those social relations have shaped neoliberalism, blocking some neoliberal reforms entirely, while pushing other reforms in unexpected directions, with unintended results. In the process, we can see social resilience at work, as people contest, contain, subvert or appropriate neoliberal ideas and policies to protect the social bonds and identities they value (Ibid., p. 99).

With respect to the application of neoliberal policies in the developing world that valorized ethnic capital as a means of differentiating a marketable commodity, Kymlicka notes a particularly poignant example of how a political and economic project such as that outlined by Ramadan might take hold:

> The social capital that neoliberals hoped Indigenous peoples would use to form themselves into better market actors was instead used to turn themselves into effective political citizens who captured the opportunities created by neoliberal innovations and used them for their own anti neoliberal policies (Ibid., p. 115).

What we see is a space within the neoliberal capitalist system where Islam can, theoretically, be simultaneously drawn upon as a point of difference to generate profit (amongst a potential customer base of over a billion Muslims) and an entrepreneurial project of self-empowerment. The question is how such a project may shape the development of Islam in Western contexts and how it may, broadly and without any central leadership, challenge traditional lines of authority. Answers to such questions are possible only through immersion in the field.

5. About the Study

The research project from which this article draws the majority of its data was funded by the Australian Research Council and based upon interviews and fieldwork conducted across the cities of Sydney and New York between August 2012 and September 2013.[1] This captures a moment in time in the decade after 9/11 and the "war on terror" but before the rise to prominence of the Islamic State movement. A broader analysis of London was also conducted as a key point of reference. The broad aims of the research project are to explore the intersection of *Shari'a* and the secular legal system, as well as to gain a broader insight into how *Shari'a* shapes the daily lives of observant Muslims in global cities.

Cities, and in particular global cities, are fertile soil for such innovation. Saskia Sassen has argued that while global cities function as "highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy" (Sassen 2001, pp. 3–4), they also serve as sites of production including innovations and as markets for the products and innovations produced. Muslim populations in Western contexts are overwhelmingly based in cities, and in particular what could be termed global cities including Sydney (50 per cent of the Australian Muslim population) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011), New York (23 per cent of the American Muslim population) (Beshkin 2001), and London (22 per cent

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[1] Other team members were Professor Adam Possamai, Professor Bryan S. Turner. Professor Malcolm Voyce and Dr Selda Dagistanli.

of the United Kingdom Muslim population). It seems that if a project aimed at developing an Islamic alternative to the neoliberal economic sphere is to be successful, then it is theoretically (and somewhat paradoxically) not only possible, but more likely to take hold in cities closest to the very heart of the neoliberal economic system.

In recruitment, care was taken to meet with Muslims across the full spectrum of communities, from Sunni to Shia, from progressive to moderate (admittedly problematic and reifying terms) and from traditionalist to Salafi. Ethnic differences were also taken account of, and in New York effort was made to ensure both African American Muslim and immigrant (now 2nd and 3rd generation) communities were engaged. A total of 27 interviews were conducted in Sydney and 25 interviews in New York with "*Shari'a* practitioners"—Imams, attorneys and community representatives. It is these men and women that are at the coalface, assisting their communities in deciphering *Shari'a* for everyday life. In Sydney, 45 per cent of interviews were with women and in New York, 40 per cent. Women were overrepresented in community organizations and under-represented in the legal professionals and Imams interviewed.

It took significant effort to build connections, usually through snowballing, though also through responses, to recruitment material distributed online. In research with British Muslims, Marta Bolognani (Bolognani 2007, p. 284) noted the success of the snowballing technique, considering that it "made it possible for people to 'check my references' through those who introduced her and in a sense gave the respondents a semblance of power in controlling access." In addition, Bolognani (Ibid.) notes that contacting potential participants through formal means such as "letters on University headed paper" would "most definitely have been ignored." Given the highly specialized nature of the fields being explored (Muslim professionals developing Islamic financial and legal tools, community members and Imams) in geographically bounded cities. the number of potential interviewees was reasonably small, making snowballing through established contacts an appropriate strategy. This had the potential to skew research to only those participants identified by the researcher. This was mitigated by making a concerted effort to spread initial recruitment efforts across geographic areas of the cities examined and ethnic communities. As one example, equal effort was made to engage African American and migrant Muslim communities in New York with interviews conducted from lower Manhattan to Harlem and Brooklyn. Snowballing offered a social proximity and familiarity that provided two of the conditions of "non-violent" communication, with participants feeling more comfortable and confident with the process (Bourdieu 1999).

Interviewees were assured of anonymity, if they so wished, to both protect their identity in a relatively small marketplace and encourage them to speak freely on important issues. Interestingly, my outsider status paradoxically appeared to improve my access to US based research subjects. In the context of well documented New York Police Department surveillance operations targeted against Muslims, it may be that my status as an Australian and foreigner distanced me from these domestic concerns. Interviews were conducted entirely at places of the time and choosing of participants, usually at a Mosque, café or their place of business. Those afforded me the opportunity to gain deeper ethnographic insights into the daily life of participants; something not commented on here but did however assist in the contextual analysis of data.

The primary issue as far as method is concerned is that of applicability to the wider population due to the small sample. Those interviewed and, more broadly, consulted, were a mix of high-profile Imams, community leaders and businessmen and women who had been covered extensively in the press, and much less well-known, difficult to locate practitioners with virtually no media profile and in some case very small followings. In this way, it might be considered that this research provides a broad left and right of arc of occurrences within Muslim communities in the cities explored. More research is required if any attempt is to be made to gain a fully representative sample. Given the difficulty of locating many of the practitioners experienced, this could be very difficult. Furthermore, interviewees were (understandably) reluctant to share primary source material (including drafts of financial tools and templates) as this was valuable intellectual property. This is a limitation that could be addressed in

future studies. I move now to consider whether this project is occurring and, if so, how it is reconciling its interactions and shaping the intellectual trajectory and practice of Islam.

6. The New Professional Elite and Traditional Authority

The research project was initially focused upon the nuances of the practice of Islamic law in everyday life, with an emphasis upon marriage, divorce, child custody, financial arrangements (and pre-marital *mahr* payments) as well as different forms of dispute resolution. However, it quickly became clear that a significant gulf in both cultural and social literacy had emerged between primarily Western-born young Muslims working in the professions, such as law and finance, seeking to tailor Islamic solutions for Muslims in everyday life including financial products, legal services and through specialist professional services, and an older generation of foreign-born Imams primarily employed to lead Friday prayers and give sermons and advice to the primarily older generation. I have previously documented the dimensions of these developments across Islamic mortgage products, financial services and Islamic wills, revealing that young Western Muslims are developing businesses aiming to contribute to the development of Muslim communities (Roose 2016). However, I have not engaged in any great depth about the dimensions of contestation and how, within a neoliberal economic system, these young elites are engaging with traditional Islamic authority.

This section of the article focuses upon the "behind the scenes" dimension to *Shari'a* compliant products and specifically the nature of the relationships between elites and Imams with whom they must work to develop and promote Islamic products as a point of distinction in the free market. I consider how we are seeing the problematic compartmentalization of Islam, with Imams brought in as consultants and used to project an aura of Islamic credibility, while having very little to do with the day to day operations of the business. This is in the coal face of the "silent revolution" and a space in which Islam becomes a product, a marketable commodity, to be bought and sold.

7. Silent Revolution or the Commodification of Islam?

Those Muslims operating in professions governed by neoliberal principles, including finance and the law, face particular challenges in bringing their product to market. Not only must they work within regulatory mechanisms and constraints of the local system to develop a product that is competitive relative to others in the market, but they must simultaneously gain the approval of scholars, central to the symbolic capital of their products as "*Shari'a* compliant" within Muslim communities. Gaining consensus is notoriously difficult in a faith that has extraordinary national, linguistic and cultural diversity and multiple legal schools of thought. Tension and contestation over what is permissible (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*) is an important dimension of Islam (Begeaud-Blackler et al. 2016). The question then is how might an entrepreneurial Muslim seeking the sanctification of his or her product gain this approval in a faith with no central authority? To whom might they turn?

Whilst Islam has no central authority equivalent to the Pope in the Catholic Church or Governor such as the Queen in the Church of England, it does recognize esteemed jurists; scholars held in international regard for their knowledge of the *Shari'a* and what is permissible. Very often, these scholars are part of the equivalent of international regulatory bodies from whom entrepreneurs and businessmen and women must seek approval for their products. As one participant, a Sydney based community leader stated:

> ... they need that stamp of approval for them to, to gain the trust of the community so I think it's important for them. They cannot operate disconnected from religious authority. So, whether it's settling disputes or financial, new financial products that they are developing and offering to the market, they have to do that in conjunction with religious authority either locally or overseas (Interview, Sydney, 11 September 2012).

Traditionally, these scholars, known as Sheikhs, developed reputations based on their ability to resolve disputes and detailed knowledge of customary law (*urf*) (Esposito 2004). Sheikhs have

traditionally been accessible to those in the community seeking their guidance on the practice of Islam and Islamic law (and indeed many websites about that make such advice freely available). Indeed, in some cases there are open exchanges between attorney and scholar, as in the case of one politically ambitious New York lawyer who moved to New Jersey to develop his own firm and community standing and who was seeking to develop an Islamic will:

> When I was developing my. the template for my will, I have to constantly refer to the Islamic scholars because I can't myself, I don't even think it's valid if I open up a book and try to like find answers, I think that I have to go and sit and consult with several scholars and to come up with what is, probably they know the situation (Interview, Manhattan, 12 April 2013).

This individual then utilized this advice (and approvals) to sell his product. While this may be considered more along traditional lines, other interviews revealed a significantly more businesslike arrangement with Islamic authorities whereby Muslim professionals develop a product, seek out Sheikhs with international authority and employ them on retainer as consultants. Talking about their association with scholars, two Sydney based Islamic finance company managers stated of the relationship:

Interviewee A (I/A)	Think of it as a consulting company, like a law firm.
	Effectively like *Shari'a* consultants, so you appoint them and they're the
	four scholars . . . so they approve all our products and we need their
Interviewee B	sign off and they issue in Islamic terms, a *fatwa*, basically saying under
	our understanding this, we approve this product as being *Shari'a*
	compliant . . . (Interview, Sydney, 12 September 2012).

Asked how they recruited these scholars. the same interviewees stated openly, "They're paid, like there's a commercial arrangement between us and them," but quickly added, "but that goes back to relationships." Asked if there were any disagreements between the scholars and professionals. the same interviewees were candid about the dimensions of their relationships:

	You know we think there's an error or something's been missed, we go
	back and it's a two way relationship. We go back to them and say look,
	you screened this stock out but we think it's compliant for these reasons
Interviewee A/B	can you please review and here's the data and evidence to support it
	and then they go back, look at our information and go yep, yes or no,
	yes we agree or no we've looked at it and for these reasons we're still not
	comfortable with... (Ibid.).

I/A then added quickly, "But they're not religious disputes," I/B stating further, "It's more financial" (Ibid.). The extent to which these instances of disagreement translate to the withdrawal of a product is not known, nor was it easily possible to surmise the extent to which scholars were likely to compromise with the professionals who pay their retainer. What should be noted here is that in the absence of central authority, these scholars are subject to scrutiny from other scholars. While any major divergence from Islamic principles might be noted (such as allowing investment in a hotel chain that served alcohol in bars), it might be considered that only very few scholars are equipped with the requisite knowledge of high finance to make judgments on whether a transaction is based upon speculation or interest. Very few scholars are likely to possess this specialized knowledge and so regulation on this basis is arguably more difficult.

By way of contrast to Islamic finance professionals, some Muslim attorneys have made a living being engaged as expert consultants by either non-Muslims or Muslim parties to a court case, translating Islamic law (without any reference to Sheikhs) into the secular system. One New Jersey based attorney has made a career of just this:

> My expert services are all over the country, so I can tell you in the past couple of years I've had cases in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California, Georgia, Florida, Ohio,

St. Louis, Massachusetts, and the list can go on, Albany New York in upstate New York, so because of my expert services, I seem to be all over the country. And my expert services come into play in cases that are both commercial in nature and family law related in nature (Interview, Manhattan, 24 April 2013).

Asked how he was brought in as an expert. the attorney outlined the basis for his employment: "Most of the time what I've seen is the judge would tell the litigants, I don't understand anything about this, I want an informed law expert on this issue so the litigants would have to hire somebody" (Ibid.). Another New York-based attorney provided specialist advice on Islam, yielding insights into how he was used by non-Muslims in cases:

There are some lawyers that do not have that knowledge, they go and hire experts who they happen to be lawyers as well, so and that's really what happen, so you will interpret and then many times I'll be sitting with the lawyer saying you know what you should do this, you should to this, you should do this, and it makes sense right? (Interview, Manhattan, 2 May 2013).

Muslim lawyers in Australia have also been keen to develop products marketable to Muslim communities, though in the cases of those interviewed, within the scope of a broader, non-Muslim firm. This is significant in itself, in that Muslims are being employed to develop tools to generate profit from Muslim communities as a customer segment. A senior solicitor at a regional law firm outside Sydney has been pivotal in developing an Islamic law specialization within what was a traditional law firm catering to farmers and white Australians. He stated:

. . . the partners have been pretty good in terms of allowing us to run it how we think it needs to be run, but they can see the benefit in terms of its increasing our client base, exposure to a whole different range of clients which the firm otherwise wouldn't have had (Interview, New South Wales, 6 August 2012).

The same process is followed whereby Imams are consulted to gain approval for a product, such as an Islamic will, that will theoretically stand up to scrutiny in Australian courts (as of yet they have not been tested). This occurs so that the product can be marketed as *Shari'a* compliant. However. the profit from these products then directly enters a non-*Shari'a* compliant system. This example is even more marked in the case of a principal of a firm operating out of a Sydney office and run by a principal of a number of boutique finance companies run out the same office. The principal worked with a Muslim scholar in 2001 to develop a product that he now runs independently of his involvement. While investing considerable time and effort into the development of the project. the project was ultimately about business:

. . . we had to make a dollar out of it otherwise we wouldn't do it, I'd go and do something else. And so sure, we've made some dough out of it. If it was scalable then we would have probably got where we wanted to go but, so we've made money out of, out of [company name] finance and it's certainly paid its own way, if we could make it into, you know, if it was ten times as big then we'd all be sitting back with a smile but or 20, if it was scalable it'd be profitable, but I'm just not sure whether it's scalable (Interview, New South Wales, 3 December 2012).

The key question here relates to profitability. Yet in the complete absence of control by Muslim communities of the product, it is possible, and indeed likely, that profits made from the sale of this product move directly into more mainstream banks and investment vehicles; a veneer of Islamic principle is maintained, whilst in practice the product is anything but. This stands as a concrete example of the pure commodification of Islam to fill a market niche.

8. The Ethical Elite: Compromise or Corruption of Principle?

Of the 17 Islamic professionals interviewed about their attempts to build *Shari'a* compliant products in the cities of Sydney and New York, several patterns emerged. All were born and raised in the West; precisely those amongst which Ramadan was seeking to promote his "silent revolution." All were tertiary educated and worked in highly competitive segments of the workforce in corporate or family law and finance, which equated with higher than average incomes. In other words, these professionals were already on an upward social and economic trajectory. An emergent question then is whether these attempts to build new *Shari'a* compliant products stemmed from a desire to service their communities or from the identification of an opportunity to make a profit; or both. Irrespective of the answer however, it was in building these products and bringing them to market that these men and women would need to confront the stark reality of the neoliberal free market.

Unlike historic circumstances whereby Islamic projects were designed to cohere communities, in many cases these products come into direct competition with one another for the same consumers. Furthermore, profits from these enterprises, particularly if run through non-Muslim businesses, may feed back into the very system of unethical economic behavior that Islamic financial products (in particular) seek to circumvent. Very little has been written on this in Muslim minority contexts and more work is required to understand the impact on communities. However, what is possible is to look at how this behavior may be understood as conforming to neoliberal economic approaches.

At their practical best, these products were developed, marketed and sold by Muslims, for Muslims. The reliance on Imams for approval of the products was a necessary component of ensuring *Shari'a* compliance. However. the more removed from this ideal situation. the more the Muslim ethical elites were forced to compromise. Labelling paid Imams as "*Shari'a* consultants" and pushing back on restrictions that may reduce profitability constitutes what would traditionally be considered overreach by a business owner against an Imam as the Islamic authority figure and could arguably, if the Imam is compliant, fundamentally alter the practice of Islam for a large customer base and generations to come. Muslim attorneys and lawyers trained in secular Western law and legal procedures, yet without formal Islamic training, that feature as expert witnesses in court cases answering questions about Islamic practice and translating Islamic principles into secular courts, are shaping the manner in which Islam is understood by the judiciary with an impact on Muslims before the courts.

In a similar vein. the development of niche Islamic financial and legal products within a firm could conceivably be viewed as mutually beneficial for both the firm (as a source of revenue) and Muslim communities. However not only must the partners or business manager be convinced of the profitability of a new product, requiring defining the Muslim market segment, but the profits must be fed back into the firm, undermining the net purpose of the project in the first place.

In a best-case scenario, there exists an apparently seamless arrangement whereby Muslim professionals work with Imams to the benefit of the community. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Muslim professional elites sell Islamic financial products where Muslims are just a market segment and the profit may go to a non-Muslim enterprise where there is no control over where the profit is spent. To some extent, this replicates the finding of Alqahtani and Mayes (2018) whereby Islamic financial products were more successful in smaller enterprises, potentially due to greater oversight. This is by no means a definitive study, though the similarity in patterns between two global cities on opposite sides of the world indicates that Ramadan's "silent revolution" on the one hand, and the "commodification of religion" on the other, are in tension.

It appears that for a project of Islamic economic and political self-empowerment to work, Islamic "expertise" and knowledge must be in some way commoditized; that is, packaged into a saleable product (recontextualized) and sold to Muslim consumers. A key question then is whether, in recontextualizing their products to make them marketable and profitable, Muslim professional elites are moving into the domain traditionally ruled by Imams in providing Islamic expertise? How are these products perceived within Muslim communities and, in particular, by the Imams and community leaders at a local level?

9. Relationships between Elites and Imams: Generational Cleavage

In interviews with Imams (n = 15) and community leaders (n = 20) about these developments, a clear gulf emerged. Imams and community leaders, particularly second generation, locally born or raised Imams that were positive towards their Muslim elite counterparts, were arguably more cognoscente of the challenges facing their communities. Peucker, Roose and Akbarzadeh focus in particular upon the socio-economic challenges facing Muslim communities in Australia (Peucker et al. 2014), including very low levels of home ownership, a key vehicle to the accumulation of private wealth (Hassan 2010). In 2011, only 44 per cent of Muslims lived in a home they owned (13 per cent outright, 31 per cent with a mortgage) compared to 67 per cent of all Australian households. While the lower socio-economic profile of Muslim communities in Australia is likely one contributing factor, anecdotal evidence suggested that many more Muslims were not purchasing homes due to the difficulties reconciling the conditions (payment of interest on loans) with their faith. An Australian-born Sheikh from a working class suburb in Western Sydney stated his support for such initiatives:

> So finding an alternative through an Islamic product that you know accommodates for Muslims, and this is obviously something great, positive you know because we need, we need, like you know we need to live like everyone else, we need to own our houses but we need to own houses legitimately (Interview, New South Wales, 16 January 2013).

Displaying a similar level of grounding amongst his community members, an Imam from an impoverished African American community in New Jersey stated similarly:

> My belief is that most of them are probably trying to provide a service, that's my belief, I think most of them may be trying to really provide a service and I think most of them have good intentions, I think they're trying to provide a *halal* product in an atmosphere where there is no *halal* product, right, which I think is a good thing ... (Interview, Newark, 6 May 2013).

Locally born and raised Imams and community leaders were positive about these interventions, viewing Muslim elites as possessing the necessary cultural and educational capital necessary to mold Islam to the local context in a way most Imams could not. A Bay Ridge-based Muslim Arab community leader considered:

> They [professional elites] know the system ... they're able to marry these two worlds, like Islamic law and American law and figure out how do you put those together in a way that makes sense. I think Imams have a hard time doing that because all they know is Islamic law, they can't put Islamic law in the context of an American legal system, which is a, you know, a deficiency on the part of the Imams ... (Interview, Brooklyn, 30 April 2013).

A leader amongst the African American Muslim communities of New Jersey and New York stated similarly:

> ... in a legal issue they're not going to go to the Imam and ask the Imam about how does Islamic law look at this, they're gonna go to probably the Muslim attorney who's going to hopefully if he's a good attorney, is going to balance what he knows about Islam versus what we need to get achieved in American law. Same thing from a financial standpoint and from any other standpoint, even educationally, most people aren't getting their Islamic education from the Imams (Interview, Manhattan, 30 April 2013).

The Muslim Director of an Arab community center was also outspoken in her support of professional elites:

> Islam is supposed to be moving forward, it's not supposed to remain as it is, so if the Imam's aren't doing their job let the lawyers do it for them because it makes sense they have the education they have the understanding, they have comprehension of the issues ... (Interview, Brooklyn, 12 April 2013).

In contrast to the pragmatism of locally-born Muslims and their trust of Muslim entrepreneurial activity, older Imams brought to Australia or the United States to service the needs of specific ethnic communities were unanimously, at the least, suspicious, and very often openly hostile to the new products. A common mechanism employed by professionals is to seek to "educate" Imams about their products and to announce their products at Friday prayers. In Manhattan, one West African Sheikh was hostile to this practice:

> . . . for us here we refuse to deal with them, we refuse to announce or to allow them to announce to the congregation here because we don't want to be responsible for that or part of it, at least we wanna really always advise the community to what is good for them, you know, yeah (Interview, Manhattan, 14 March 2013).

Similarly, a Lebanese-born Imam at a major Sydney mosque stated:

> Most of them here are not, they claim that they are Shari'a, they're Shari'a compliant but it's not. And they only deceiving people about that because you know what I mean, what I know about the rules that they follow . . . (Interview, Sydney, 22 November 2012).

A Sheikh with an international profile who counts amongst his followers up to 10,000 Muslims in New York considered that many Muslims remained skeptical for the same reasons countenanced by the Imams above:

> I think as it stands. the majority of Muslims are very fishy and skeptical about these Shari'a compliant loans and they'd rather just take a real loan and say god forgive me, they go through what they view as being a shady you know, attempt to basically Islamify the loan that is not Islamic (Interview, Skype, 18 March 2013).

It might be hypothesized that as the number of locally-born Muslims grow across Western contexts, that irrespective of their ethnic or cultural background the role of Muslim elites and the products they offer will become increasingly accepted, albeit under constant scrutiny. As one New York based attorney suggested, one possible resolution to the tension between the role of an increasingly marginalized Imam and new professional elites might be that "maybe the next generation of Imams are gonna be the lawyers and the financiers . . . " (Interview, Manhattan, 24 April 2013).

10. Implications for Islam's Political, Economic and Intellectual Trajectory in the West and beyond

This article, building upon previous research, has surveyed the social space into which a new professional and entrepreneurial class of Muslim elites has emerged. Ramadan's call for a project of Muslim community economic empowerment is one example of the impulse to modernize and appears to be playing out in the streets of global cities across the West. The article has explored the location in which such a project might be possible within a system to which Islamic principles based on the word of god appear, in the first instance, to be fundamentally opposed to free market principles based on the "godless" free market. However. the neoliberal capitalist system has proven capable of embracing diversity, including Islam, so long as it opens new markets and is a profitable enterprise. As Kymlicka as suggested, this, theoretically at least, creates the space for projects based on subverting neoliberal principles to flourish. Islam's history of mercantile trade and the commercial base of the modern global city make this fertile soil for any such project.

The article has revealed that to operate in this space. the "neoliberal sphere," Muslims require, above all, symbolic capital, a good reputation with their potential consumers based upon the perceived Islamic credibility of their products. While some professional elites are engaging with scholars in a spirit of cooperation and good will, others appear to have commercialized the process, employing elite international scholars on retainer as consultants, using their names and reputations as proof of the *Shari'a* compliance of their products. Others, particularly in the field of law, are brought in as Islamic "experts," irrespective of their formal Islamic qualifications to state what is permissible independently

of the scholars. Governance by experts is considered a key feature of neoliberal economic systems (Harvey 2007, p. 69) and plays a key role in the commodification of Islam in the West. Some new elites are developing Islamic business units selling *Shari'a* compliant products, though requiring consumers to overlook the *Shari'a* compliance of the law firm at large, including, perhaps. the other clients they take on and where profits are invested. Such enterprises appear to be creating self-sustaining Islamic projects, with the practicalities of ironing out inconsistencies being worked out in the everyday practice of the business.

Yet, we are also arguably viewing the compartmentalization of Islam into a market segment, with business success based upon winning Muslim clients. This has been explored at various levels by scholars including Boubekeur and Shirazi, yet a wide array of questions are yet to be investigated. What are the implications for this within Islam? Is it a case where the products that are most compliant with Islamic principles are the most naturally competitive and win the most consumers, furthering a "pure" Islamic project? Or is it more likely the case that the most professional and well-organized businesses with the best marketing (and connections with local Imams) will win clients, irrespective of the "validity" of their product? Will Imams and Sheikhs, as suggested, increasingly move into the profitable finance and legal sectors where their Islamic credibility can translate into "expert" status? Is this part of the adaptation of Islam to local context (*urf*) that has so well served its spread to a global faith? Or is it undermining the principles that sustain the faith in practice, and will these projects collapse under the weight of their own contradictions? Is Islam becoming wedded to neoliberal capitalism and will this alter its intellectual and economic trajectory in Western contexts?

To a large extent, this depends upon the support of the wider Muslim communities for these products and the project they are shaping. In the short term, it appears that Islamic enterprises and the products they market enjoy the strong backing of influential Western-born Muslim Imams and community leaders. These figures do not accept the products uncritically, however view Muslim professional elites and entrepreneurs as having positive motivations and as offering their communities viable alternatives. Meanwhile older, conservative foreign-born Imams (not chosen for consultation by the professional elites) brought out to lead Friday prayers at major mosques across the suburban areas of the cities examined were more hostile and untrusting of the motivations of elites and the base for their products. This second group is increasingly marginalized, as the number of Western-born Muslims grows markedly. It appears possible that their failure to engage with these products will see their role in shaping the daily practice of Western-born Muslims increasingly erode.

Of course, none of these summations take account of the divide between young hardliners, conservatives and the "silent majority" of everyday Muslims and their views on these products, not to mention the growing role of women in the professional class (where Muslim women are very often finding more success than men) and how this might translate into the development of ideas on gender equality. How might this broad Islamic project of economic development contribute to security nationally and globally? How might it filter back into the Muslim majority world in a context where Islam will become the world's largest religion this century?

Ultimately, this article raises many more questions than it answers, and its relatively small sample size precludes drawing definitive conclusions; survey work with Muslim communities on these issues would be a logical next step. While the global focus remains on questions about Islam in Western contexts including radicalization and security, it is vital to move beyond these paradigms to engage with how Muslims are engaging as citizens and shaping Islam's political, economic and intellectual trajectory and future.

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Afghan-Hazara Migration and Relocation in a Globalised Australia

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Abstract: This study examines a set of unique isolated lived-experiences to offer some general observations concerning Afghan-Hazara migration, relocation, and individuation in Australia. Culture may have the appearance of immutability. However, like any social formation, it is produced, reproduced, and contested through time. Everyone is an individual, and while we speak of the impact and culture, lived-experience is very different. People always have choices they can make about what lessons they might derive from experiences. If one faces discrimination within the realm of the state, which is historically well documented where Hazaras are concerned, one begins looking for alternative pathways to advancement. These include personalised networks in religious communities, education, and business entrepreneurship. The study analyses the fluid nature of belief systems, and the multiplicity of ways lived-experience shapes individuation and reshapes identity through pathways to advancement in a globalising Australia.

Keywords: migration; religion; identity; lived-experience; entrepreneurialism

1. Introduction

> Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of the dream house is opposed to that of the childhood home . . . . Maybe it is a good thing for us to keep a few dreams of a house that we shall live in later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it. For a house that was final, one that stood in symmetrical relation to the house we were born in, would lead to thoughts—serious, sad thoughts—and not to dreams. It is better to live in a state of impermanence than in one of finality.
>
> —Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space.* 1958, p. 61.

Bachelard's characterisation of the "house" and its impermanence relates to the way people are living simultaneously in a multiplicity of social worlds at any one time. These multiplicities of social worlds can exist in several ways and are not necessarily problematic. However, the liminality between these social worlds can become a more serious issue where migration is concerned. *Ali* is a 22-year-old businessman and sportsman of great skill living in Brisbane. He is of Afghan-Hazara heritage but was born in Quetta, Pakistan and migrated to Australia with his family in 2012. When *Ali* was 18 years old, he represented Australia at the highest junior sporting level in Europe. Before the competition, team members tricked *Ali* into entering a "red light" district.[1] Perturbed and disgusted, *Ali* covered his eyes and begged Imam Hussain for forgiveness: "Everything is Haram". This event

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1   Names have been changed as is common ethnographic practice.

was one of many disturbingly transversal conflicts in identity, problematising the multiplicity of new social settings *Ali* was forced to navigate. This paper focuses on understanding the relationship between religious belief systems, identity, and migration through lived-experiences in new social worlds. Applying a sociological ethnographic method of inquiry, this paper analyses the experiences of a cohort of individuals in order to offer some generalisations about religion, politics, and society. *Ali*'s parents, *Zaynab* and *Abdullah*, were displaced by the Taliban from their home province of Uruzgan in Afghanistan in 1996, finding liminal refuge in Quetta, Pakistan. After decades of systematic discrimination and persecution, *Abdullah* embarked on a perilous pathway to advancement for his family to Australia. *Abdullah*'s experiences in this period of liminality are beyond the scope of this paper. Fortunately, the stories of *Abdullah* and *Zaynab's* globalised children: *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa,* and their experiences with alternative pathways to advancement in Australia offer the most consequential inflections of their parents' sacrifice.

2. Background

Ali and his family are ethnic Hazaras and ethnic Hazaras make up the vast bulk of Afghan refugees who have arrived in Australia in the last 20 years. Most Afghan Hazaras are from Hazarajat, which is in central Afghanistan. With rich cultural traditions predating Islam, Hazara culture also squared well demographically to the adoption of Shi'ism. The 8th century Arab geographer of the Islamic Golden age, al-Maqdisī, named Hazarajat *Gharjistan*, meaning "mountain area ruled by chiefs" (Mousavi 1998, p.39). However, Hazaras have experienced systematic persecution and marginalisation from the political process in Afghanistan, occupying the lowest stratum in a deeply fragmented society (Barfield 2012; Rubin 1995; Maley 2002, 2008, 2016; Rashid 2002; Ibrahimi 2017). If one faces discrimination within the realm of the state, one begins looking for alternative pathways to advancement. The literature on pathways for advancement in the context of Hazara refugees identifies several pathways. One traditional pathway is personalised networks within the Hazara community. Two non-traditional pathways, which draw on the empowering features of globalisation, are education and business. Education and business represent pathways for advancement, which can create certain opportunities outside the sphere of the state. Due to the centuries of systemic oppression Hazaras endured in Afghanistan, these pathways for advancement have been historically favoured.

This family's journey took them from Uruzgan in Afghanistan, to Quetta in Pakistan, and from Quetta to Logan in Australia. Due to entrenched divisions within diasporic communities in Logan limiting perceived pathways to advancement, the family later relocated. Displaced from familiar spaces and marginalised within new diasporic communities, the family sought various pathways transcending traditional realms of advancement. A generational distinction indicates that the Hazara youth born during the era of globalisation gravitate towards education and business as means of advancement. Globalisation enhances the salience of education as a pathway of advancement in a similar way to business. Hazaras are also drawn to business due to their malleability to entrepreneurialism (Collins et al. 2017). Successful businesspeople cannot afford to be discriminatory in their actions because they tend to miss entrepreneurial opportunities themselves if they discriminate on economically irrelevant grounds, such as perceived race, ethnic background, or sectarian affiliations. Hazara identity is well-constructed to identify and avoid these distorting prejudices due to their own experiences with discrimination.

It is extremely difficult to generalise the migration experience of Afghan-Hazaras in Australia. The migration process and refugee experiences with "othering" are radically unique and inherently subjective. Therefore, this study focuses on a set of unique isolated experiences of Afghan-Hazara refugee migrants in Australia. The analysis uncovers fluid engagement with religious identity, differentiated social worlds, and divergent pathways to advancement through lived-experience. Across the participants surveyed, the theme of fluid belief systems links identity, belonging, nationalism, religiosity, and purpose with personal advancement in Australia. Interplay between belief systems and kin structures also plays a role in identity construction of participants. The study reveals that despite

being of the same family and upbringing, the three children pursue divergent pathways for advancement as a result of lived-experience. The eldest seeks meaning through religion and pilgrimage (*ziyarat*). The middle child finds purpose and identity through sports and entrepreneurialism. The youngest child becomes critical of religion and religious institutions, finding purpose and identity through individuation. The study highlights very distinct pathways not just occupationally but ideationally as well. Each engaged in a multiplicity of social worlds, where participants share different world views. This militates against any type of homogenising view of Hazaras in Australia. These do not reflect generational scale differences. Rather, different socialisation experiences in Australia demonstrate that people adjust to the social worlds they enter and are not fixed in their ways.

3. Methodology: Reflexive Sociological Ethnography

This study used a method of sociological ethnography involving extended synchronous and asynchronous, structured and semi-structured interviews, to unpack dominant themes drawn from the experiences of a deeply spiritual Shi'i Afghan-Hazara refugee family. Ethnography is a method for understanding social practices and interactions through systemic study of individual cultures. Sociological ethnography can be divided into two broad camps: Grounded theory (GT) and extended case method (ECM). GT seeks to uncover generic explanations through similarities. By contrast, ECM treats complex narratives of social worlds as "cases", analytic units for understanding an empirical phenomenon through multiplicity. According to Burawoy (1998), the ECM "applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro", and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory" (5). Therefore, ECM enables theory to illuminate a specific ethnographic case, revealing how lived-experiences in micro-level social settings relate to macro-level sociological phenomena. Describing the approach, Gluckman (1961, pp. 9–10) proposes taking:

> "a series of specific incidents affecting the same persons or groups through a period of time, and showing how these incidents, theses 'cases' are related to the development and change of social relations among these persons and groups, acting as a framework within their social system and culture."

Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Hazara Australians, Hetz and Radford (2020) examined the negotiation of identity between Hazara (ethnic), Afghan (homeland), Muslim (religious), Australia (host nation), and refugee (former). Using a similar approach, participants in this study describe divergent pathways for advancement in differentiated social worlds. While themes of religion and culture inhere, individuation through lived-experience is the primary implication observable across the study. The ECM was implemented and iteratively refined across a three-month period involving a series of dialogues with three Afghan-Hazara male siblings, conducted over telephone and email. Central to the study were issues of religiosity, identity, individuation, and pathways to advancement in Australia. The research is significant to public policy issues, including refugee migration, diasporic communities, and cultural integration. Refugee ethnography provides instructive micro-scale observations capable of informing macro-scale policy practices. Furthermore, ethnographic refugee research plays a crucial role in balancing the securitisation of refugees in academic and political discourse. The research contributes to the scholarly literature on lived-experiences of refugees in Australia, the process of individuation, and the fluidity of identity.

4. Context: Afghan-Hazara Belief Systems and the Culture Stripping Process of Migration

4.1. Diasporic Communities in Australia and the Culture Stripping Process of Migration

In both print and digital media, politically conservative wings of Australian media, such as News Corp and its subsidiaries, frequently problematise diasporic communities. Diaspora communities are portrayed as disorderly and culturally incongruent with Australian values. Lebanese communities in

western Sydney and Sudanese communities in Melbourne are constructed as groups promoting cultures incompatible with Australian values. Humphrey (1992, 2001) redresses this misconception by arguing that migration itself is a culture stripping experience. Studying Lebanese diaspora communities in Australia during the 1970s, Humphrey argues that this culture stripping process creates many of the social problems seen as flowing from a particular culture in Australia. Therefore, it is the absence of culture and authority that contributes to the social issues at play in diaspora communities. Reducing issues of diasporic social integration to a clash in cultures ignores the reality that these communities are stripped of the very culture pundits use to explain their social behaviour in Australia. This reflects a loss of cultural influence in diaspora communities, without there being an apparent substantive problem.

4.2. Dimensions of Afghan Hazara Diaspora: Kinship, Masculinity, and Spirituality

The Afghan Hazara population in Australia has its own set of culture stripping problems. The cultures of diasporic communities share a longstanding feature, which privileges patriarchal structures at home and in society. More instrumentally, belief systems play an important role in the construction and reconstruction of identity in diasporic communities. Transcending the scope of generalisations, this is deterministic yet deeply intersubjective and constructed on several levels of social mediation. The interplay between novel belief systems and kin structures is particularly deterministic in identity construction in the case of the Afghan Hazara diaspora in Australia.

For many Afghan Hazara families in Australia, the culture stripping process of migration erodes pre-existing parental authority, and the dominant position of the father as leader and decider for the family. Parents typically do not speak the local language as well as their children, nor do they learn it as fast. The erosion of authority can lead to a situation where power dynamics within families are flipped. Within this inversion, children become intermediaries between the state and the parents. Historically, the father would play this role but can no longer do so. This is not necessarily problematic. However, it can become a problem if people have a sense of being without any compass. A 2018 study prepared by the United States Institute of Peace (Ahmadi and Stanikzai 2018) found that through decades of war and violent conflicts in Afghanistan, resorting to violence has become an acceptable social norm of masculinity in Afghanistan. Through ethnographic psychodynamic investigation, Chiovenda (2020) found that war, social violence, displacement, and cultural expectations have a profound impact on the psychological and socio-cultural dynamics of masculinity norms in Afghanistan. Chiovenda's research found that across four decades of protracted war, violence became normalised as a necessary feature of masculinity in Afghanistan.

The existence of such starkly contrasting social norms in Afghan culture, clarifies how the culture stripping process of migration deprives the father of his dominant position in the family in Australia. This is not to say that Afghan Hazara men are more likely to commit violence. In fact, the experiences shared by *Abdullah*, *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa* in this study indicate a belief-based disinclination to violence. Nonetheless, the stark contrast between norms of masculinity in Afghan society compared to Australian society forces Afghan families to revise previously accepted and internalised norms of masculinity.

4.3. Religiosity and Collective Shi'i Identity

From the participants surveyed, discrepant levels of religiosity are observable. An abstract, yet distinct, form of collective transnational Shi'i identity, with reverence to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (family of the House), and the plight of Imam Husayn arises as a recurrent theme. As a pathway for advancement, this *motif* of belonging arises in varying degrees of salience across participants over time. Central to Twelver Shi'ism is the holy month of *Muharram*, which laments and mourns the martyrdom of Imam Husayn Ali and his family at the Battle of Karbala in 680AD. *Muharram* climaxes on the 10th day known as *Ashura*. Aghaie (2007) emphasises its centrality in Shi'i ritual, noting "at the core of the symbolism of Ashura is the moral dichotomy between world injustice and corruption on the one hand and God-centred justice, piety, sacrifice and perseverance of the other" (p. 111).

Muharram and *Ashura* are observed around the world in various localities. From Karbala to London and from Quetta to Brisbane, the holy month is observed and expressed in a multiplicity of ways in various local contexts (Bowen 2014). Perhaps due to dislocation, migration, and relocation, the story of Imam Husayn is an important and recurrent spiritual *motif* thematic in the study. Leading global expert of *Ashura*-oriented literature, Muhammad-Reza Fakhr-Rohani, has written comprehensively on the poetics of Shi'ism through the life and plight of Imam Husayn (Fakhr-Rohani 2007, 2014). Describing the centrality of *Ashura*, Aghaie (2007) writes:

> "Ashura will always remain a never-ending lesson. It has since vociferated the voice of the perennial battle between right and wrong. Darkness and light; it continues to mark the oppression of pure religious thought and noble human characteristics. In this way it reverberates the voice of religious nobility as exemplified and crystallised in the Battle of Ashura". (p. 20).

The Karbala massacre and plight of Imam Husayn and his family hold temporal relevance to the history of discrimination and persecution modern Afghan-Hazaras experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The plight and perseverance of Imam Husayn, and the poetic liminality of the Battle of Karbala, become even more relevant when squared with the culture stripping process of migration and relocation many refugees experience.

5. Conceptual Framework: Obstacles and Pathways to Advancements

5.1. Belief Systems and Afghan-Hazara Culture

A belief system is an ideology or set of principles people use to interpret and navigate social worlds. Belief systems can be influenced by factors, such as political affiliation, philosophy, or religion. Typically, belief systems form in two ways. First, through childhood upbringing and environment. Second, through lived-experience (Nescolarde-Selva and Usó-Doménech 2016). Hazara kinship is particularly unique due to the frequency of refugee and migrant experiences, as well as distinct Shi'i religiosity. Observing kinship structures, Hárdi et al. (2004) found that migration, remittances and reproductive social ties are particularly salient in the case of Hazaras. Because of the systemic discrimination Hazaras face in Afghanistan, migration and transnationalism are central elements of modern kinship (Monsutti 2005). The martyrdom of Imam Husayn also features in Hazara kinship, which entail religious practices and life-cycle ceremonies, such as *Muharram* and *Ashura* (Cole and Keddie 1986).

A central theme of this study is the role of belief systems and divergent religious outcomes during times of uncertainty. Focusing on the mobilisation of guilt in Shi'ism as a tool of manipulation and coercion within diaspora communities in Australia; this theme helps explain how new experiences prompt one to revisit earlier beliefs. *Hassan*'s experience in revisiting earlier beliefs resulted in three journeys to the holy Shi'i shrine cities Karbala, Najaf, and Mashhad. The notion that in dire extremity, one seeks God essentialises this psychological approach. People may engage in any form of dramatic religiosity to be accepted. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith 1759), Adam Smith argues, quite explicitly, that there is a universal human preference to be favoured rather than disfavoured by the communal group of which one wishes to be a member. This means one explanation for religiosity is not intense religious belief but a perception on the part of a given individual that those whose respect or support they crave value religious practice. One may not pray or believe in the entirety of the faith, yet still hold religious practices because the problems that would arise from abandoning them would not be worth the trouble. Therefore, it becomes difficult to make assessments of how religious a society might be by quantifying attendance at Friday prayers because it is a norm.

5.2. Belief Systems in New Social Worlds

Ali, *Hassan*, and *Musa*'s socialisation experience is vastly different from that of their parents. The children are products of the globalised world and likely encountered globalising experiences

before arriving in Australia. Parental authority further erodes because younger generations assimilate faster and enter new social worlds. Aspiring to adopt and emulate the values Australia has constructed as identity over the past century, *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa* integrate centuries-rich Hazara culture with Twelver Shi'ism as a belief system in a variety of ways. While Shi'i Islam remains a central feature of Afghan-Hazara culture and spirituality, its forms of identity expression and performance are largely influenced by context-dependant local norms and customs.

Brubaker (2015) divides religious identity into symbolic and material dimensions. The former constitutes issues relating to values, ideals, and culture. The latter refers to economic and political factors, and how these are instrumental as resources for advancement. Accepting the transversal nature of religious identity, Brubaker argues that religion carries a unique "normative ordering power" (Brubaker 2012). The construction and instrumentalisation of religious identities are complex and cut along several dimensions of society. Identity construction begins on an individual level. It is then mediated and negotiated within religious communities, which are also affected by wider social and political norms. Because Shi'ism is the minority faith in Islam and collective identity centres on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Karbala, the belief system is uniquely based on grief, resistance, and victimhood. Upholding Shi'i virtues requires extreme piety in modern Australia. Within diasporic religious communities, lack of piety can be mobilised to cast shame and guilt on those who strive for better things in their lives.

5.3. Grievance, Guilt, and Shame

Shame and guilt are features of Afghan and Pakistan culture (Barfield 2008; Hárdi et al. 2004). The guilt/shame paradigm has also been applied to understand modesty in Islamic culture and society (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan 2014). If one experiences the extremities of absolute war or poverty, and the culture-stripping migration process, grievances in diasporic communities are likely to exist. In diasporic communities where grievances are prevalent, shame and guilt can be mobilised as a coercive, and sometimes prejudicial tool in intergroup relations. Grievances can be expressed in malign ways when stratum prejudice, perceived or otherwise, intersects with collective identity. The literature on guilt-based societies suggests that power is maintained through the creation and sustained reinforcing of guilt to make certain behaviours morally unacceptable and ultimately undesirable (Hiebert 1985). Mobilisation of guilt and shame help explain the historical prevalence of pride, and revenge dynamics, such as honour killings. Guilt and shame-based social norms can also arise when victim-based belief systems are added to a context or localisation with existing grievances.

5.4. Hidden Sectarianisation

Sectarianism is a contested term, which often conflates cleavages within the Sunni-Shia rivalry and reduces them to entrenched doctrinal incongruence or "ancient hatreds" (Haddad 2020). The term is also used in the European context in reference to racism and prejudicial attitudes in the United Kingdom (Damer 1989; Davies 2006). While problematic in a binary Islamic context, the term is relevant to Afghan-Hazara socialisation in diasporic communities. This is because the amplification of grievance and intergroup competition takes place at the doctrinal level, the communal sub-state level, and crucially, at the nation-state level through national identity and belonging. Therefore, pathways to advancement are context dependant, implicating state power. James C. Scott analyses the dynamic between state power and tribal ethnic identity. He argues that identity is generated "at the periphery, almost entirely for the purpose of making a political claim to autonomy and/for resource" (Scott 2009, p. 258). Before unpacking the "hidden sectarianism" described in this study, it is necessary to draw some distinctions from other associated intergroup terms in social psychology such as prejudice and discrimination. In 1954, Gordon Allport wrote that "intergroup prejudice consists of negative opinion against an outgroup without sufficient evidence" (Allport 1954, p. 115). Social psychologists typically divide prejudice into "blatant" and "subtle" categorises (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). While the

tangible evidence of subtle prejudice is less salient, Pettigrew (2008) argues "subtle prejudice correlates highly with blatant prejudice and predicts discriminatory intentions and behaviour".

While the scholarship on sectarianism is rich, Haddad (2020) persuasively argues the term "sectarianism" is problematic and that, if any, "sectarian identities" is a more suitable application (*Ibid*). Haddad interrogates the sectarianism literature, making the point that the prejudiced nature of sectarian*ism* requires a more tautological body of literature akin to critical studies on racism (p. 26). However, notions of sectarianisation and sectarian identities offer relevance to the study. In seeking to distil the sectarian issue, Haddad offers two useful observations regarding religious identity of relevance to this study.

First, when measuring the normative ordering power of religion, the importance of localised context cannot be understated. Haddad (2020) argues "religious identity's normative ordering power is only as potent as the religious doctrine from which it is derived are relevant at any given moment" (p. 61). This becomes important during the liminality stages of migration because religious beliefs might confer more social status in Quetta, Pakistan than Brisbane, Australia. The second observation of relevance to this study is Haddad's depiction of the fluidity and context-dependant nature of identity. He writes, "In times of tension or crisis, the gap between ideal intergroup relations and reality widens, as does the gap between what people claim and how they feel. People can over-emphasise the extent to which they are guided by socially-desirable values" (Haddad 2020, p. 67). These observations essentialise the fluid nature of belief systems and the multiplicity of ways they can be used to express Shi'i identity in diasporic communities. *Hassan*'s experiences with religious community as a pathway to advancement indicate elements of hidden sectarianism exist *within* religious diasporic communities in Brisbane. Despite shared Islamic creed, relatable displacement experiences, and diasporic 'othering' in Australia, a form of hidden sectarian*ism* arises within religious communities in diasporic social worlds.

6. Seeking "Qualified Life" through Shi'ism: Escaping Othering and Hidden Sectarianism in Logan

> *"I had lots of questions about the teachings of religion, that I wasn't satisfied with the messages of the religion preached and taught by the scholars over the years. I had many questions, hundreds of questions. But still I asked myself, I need to find out the answers of my questions. I said I must take responsibility to seek the authentic and accurate answers to my questions. And I got most of the answers to most of them on the last day [in Mashhad]."*

—*Hassan*.

As the eldest son, *Hassan*'s position in the family was elevated in the process of migration to Australia. Hasan took a vanguard position integrating the family into Australia's globalised society, without discarding the deeply spiritual and cultural traditions. For this reason, *Hassan*'s personal experience with pathways to advancement in Australia began through the traditional route of personalised networks within the community, gradually pivoting towards the more globalised pathways, such as education and business. *Hassan*'s story of migration to Australia is primarily one of globalised integration through business entrepreneurialism. Before reaching this position, however, *Hassan* engaged actively with diasporic religious communities as a pathway for personal advancement. As the vanguard of the family's spiritual traditions, *Hassan*'s prejudicial experience with this pathway created several inner conflicts. Seeking answers to the many intersecting issues affecting his diasporic experience, *Hassan* travelled to the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf in 2015. Returning to similar obstacles in Australia preventing a "qualified life" through Shi'ism, *Hassan* travelled to the Iranian shrine city of Mashhad in 2017. Between miracles in Mashhad and "hidden sectarianism" in Logan, this section examines *Hassan*'s navigation of new social worlds and pathways to advancement in Australia.

6.1. Shrine Cities as Utopian Spaces of Qualified Life

Due to the fluid process of migration, reconciling identity with religious belief systems can be difficult for young Afghan Hazaras in Australia. Seeking to uphold the "qualified life" of Shi'i Islam, and leading the family into unfamiliar globalised society, *Hassan* travelled twice, to the most revered and sacred sites in Shi'i Islam, the shrines of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Family of the Prophet). Similar to the notional *polis*, norms and shared values construct the fabric of society to reflect utopian ideals in Shi'i shrine cities. The story of Hassan's journey for a "qualified life" is crucial to understanding his navigation of multiple social worlds. As a pathway of advancement in Australia, *Hassan* engaged with religious diaspora communities in Australia. However, his experience, which is a common critique of the decentred nature of clerical Shi'ism, was that personal gain, rivalry, and prejudicial attitudes within religious communities influenced power structures, alienating new followers seeking unity. *Hassan* identified this issue as communal rather than doctrinal. Therefore, rather than abandon the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Family of the Prophet), he went to its temporal and spatial heartland of Karbala.

Before going to Karbala, *Hassan* had been struggling to understand and grasp the teaching of Shi'ism while living in Australia. He believed "The teachings which I have been told was not making sense as a teaching of religion but rather than a means of control for personal gain. The teaching was also misleading and offered a culturally embedded view of religion". Due to wrong and manipulative messages of Islam conveyed to *Hassan*, he felt "I lost all of the hope and it looked like all the doors are closed for me". Reflecting on this period he recalls: "I lost the trust and faith for the religion after my past experiences of misleading information, which affected my mental health, spirituality and as human purpose. I lost my dignity and my value". However, a Muslim friend incessantly encouraged *Hassan* that his answers could be found through travelling to the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf. "He insisted me multiple times to visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (PBUH) and seek help, he mentioned your life will be changed just like mine changed". While encouraged by the stories of his friend and others, *Hassan* worryingly asked himself, "Since I am no longer believing the religion, how will Allah, Imam Husayn (PBUH) and Ahlebait (PBUT) help me?". Despite these concerns, he was still intent on visiting the shrine of Imam Husayn and the shrines of other Imams in Iraq.

In Twelver Shi'ism, shrine cities are key sites of pilgrimage (*ziyarat*) and theological learning (Litvak 1998). Considered by many as the most spiritual site in Shi'a Islam, Karbala contains the shrines of Imam Husayn and Abbas ibn Ali, two of the sons of Ali, the first Imam in Shi'ism and fourth Caliph. While the month of *Muharram* and observance of *Ashura* are observed in several global locations annually, Karbala is eternally evoked in lamentation of Husayn and his partisans. In 1984, Grand Ayatollah Mohmmad Hussain Fadlallah wrote, "*Discussion about the Karbala event does not mean stopping in geography or its history. Each of our generations has its own Ashura and its own Karbala*". For many Shi'as, *ziyarat* to Karbala is tantamount to making the Hajj. Throughout history, Shi'i historiographies construct Karbala as the centre of Shi'a collective consciousness. Ja'far as-Sadiq was an 8th century Muslim scholar and the 6th Imam in Shi'a Islam. He also founded the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence in modern Twelver and Ismaili Shi'ism. Emphasising the centrality of Karbala, as-Sadiq wrote,

> *If I relate to you the merit of visiting his grave, you shall abandon the Hajj, while a group from among you would not go for the Hajj. Woe be to you! Do you not know that Allah preferred Karbala to be the Sanctuary of His peace and affluence before He chose Makkah to be His Sanctuary?*

Visiting the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, *Hassan* pursued a pathway of personal development through the epistemic community and qualified life of shrine cities in replacement of Logan. Socially discontented and spiritually disillusioned by the prejudicial structure of religious diasporic communities in Australia, he sought spatial providence in the temporal and spiritual capital of Shi'ism. However, several visa issues made the viability of *Hassan*'s journey to Karbala unlikely. The trip organiser told him, "only a miracle could make you get your visa, I cannot see any chance of you receiving your visa on time. He mentioned that if you get your visa, I would consider it a miracle and special invitation to visit the shrine". *Hassan* had an inner conversation:

I had a moment where I had an internal conversation that If I get my visa on time that means It's a sign from Imam Hussain (PBUH) that you are invited, and I will get help with all my questions, beliefs and doubts regarding the religion. But If I don't get my visa on time, I will get this sign that I am not welcomed, and I will not receive any help and support from Imam Hussain (PBUH).

Miraculously, *Hassan*'s visa arrived a few days before the group intended to travel to Karbala. The organiser told him "you are very lucky, and you are specially invited for travel to Karbala by Imam Husayn (PBUH) because I could not see any chance of you travelling with us". This gave *Hassan* hope that Imam Husayn (PBUH) would help and receive him because, "this answered the internal conversations I had with myself. So, and I travelled with full hope that I will get my answers". During the pilgrimage, *Hassan* worried "would I get help from Imams (PBUT) and would my pilgrimage and prayers be accepted as I had stopped practising the religion from the last 2–3 years. I was not getting feelings of spiritual connection. But on the contrary I still kept believing and having positive and hopeful thoughts". He reflected on the journey in its entirety:

I was receiving answers of my questions through discussions with a friend who joined me for the pilgrimage. On the last day while I was in Najaf at the Shrine of Imam Ali (PBUH), our discussions reached a climax. This clearly showed me the actual problem that could severely help me to change my life. As it was the last day of our stay in Iraq and end of our pilgrimage. I visited again the shrine of Imam Ali (PBUH) and seek help for the actual problem which was holding me and causing all the doubts about the religion. And I hold that strong faith that I will get help to resolve this problem and will constantly get help in the future with my faith and my purpose."

6.2. Hidden Sectarianism in Logan

I tried to enlighten them but it was a waste of time. All of them think they're Ayatollahs. Within their minds, they're all Ayatollahs.

When *Hassan* returned to the religious communities in Australia, he stopped asking questions or engaging in religious debates or discussions. "I went to the mosque, but I wasn't asking any questions from them because I knew they wouldn't be given the right answers. When I came back, I didn't do any debates with any of them. It's useless they're not going to change their mind. I'm not going to waste my time". He deduced that within diasporic communities in Australia, Hazaras were "treated like 3rd class citizens. This was mostly between the Pakistani and Afghani people". Still deeply religious, *Hassan* received answers "every day from prayers". Returning from the shrines in Iraq back to Australia, he says "I pray more now for hours and get more answers. I get messages from different avenues".

Thinking about hidden sectarianism in the context of this study, one psychological concept that might explain prejudices within diasporic communities is Sigmund Freud's theory of "narcissism of minor differences" (Blok 1998). Freud's theory holds that people, on both the individual and collective level, form an exaggerated sense of uniqueness to differentiate themselves from others. To offer a cursory example with no intent of generalisation, Indian Muslims who might find unity with Afghan-Hazara Muslims in Karbala are more likely to exaggerate their ethnic differences in Australia if it is politically expedient to do so. This example says more about the context-dependent pathways to advancement and access to the nation state than it does about perceptions held by Indian Muslims towards Afghan-Hazaras. Typifying Freud's psychoanalytic theory of narcissism of minor differences, Khoja Shi'a experienced centuries of discrimination in India similar to the discrimination Shi'a Hazaras faced and continue to face in Afghanistan.

6.3. Miracles in Mashhhad

Several years later, *Hasan* was drawn to the spatial and temporal focal point Shi'i shrine cities represent. After seeing visuals of himself present in the holy shrine of Imam Reza during prayers, *Hassan* travelled to the Shi'i shrine city of Mashhad in 2017. While Qom hosts Iran's dominant educational *hawza* (seminary), Mashhad is considered by many to be Iran's most transcendental shrine city. Mashhad houses the shrine of Imam Reza, the 8th Imam in Twelver Shi'ism. Gaining its name from the creation of the Imam Reza shrine, Mashhad means "place of martyrdom". The historically spiritual city is constructed as a key site of cultural diplomacy for Iran to promote transnational Shi'ism. For many Shi'a, however, Mashhad is viewed more as a place of spiritual transcendence than a space of state-supported symbolic capital. Dissatisfied with the teachings of Islam, and the messages and preaching of scholars over the years, *Hassan* had many questions:

Because I was not able to trust any scholar at that point. I asked myself, I must take responsibility to seek the authentic and accurate answers to my questions. Based on the teachings of the religion that Allah always help its believers through Ahlebait (PBUT) and that the believers should seek help from Allah through Ahlebait (PBUT).

With these objectives in mind, *Hassan* travelled to Mashhad to gain answers and clarity to his many questions regarding faith and belief. At the shrine of Imam Raza, he met a scholar in Mashhad named "Syed Ali Reza". After lengthy discussions, *Hassan* realised the scholar "was also struggling with his life, personal development, spirituality, personal growth, beliefs and purpose. He was constantly seeking answers and ways which align with the religious beliefs". The scholar told him of a psychologist and religious scholar who "helped him to change all facets of his life in which he was struggling". After *Hassan* shared his experiences of prejudice within religious communities limiting pathways to advancement, "He said I can share with you what I have been told. He said my situation is like yours. Islam does not want you to put yourself down. It is not harsh, if you commit sin God will forgive you". "Whereas, seeking improvement and betterment in every aspects of life were considered sins, those were the messages I have received before from the scholars, which was completely opposite to what this scholar (Syed Ali Raza) taught me [in Mashhad]."

6.4. Shi'ism as Entrepreneurial

Because of the guilt and shame-based social factors discussed in relation to the context of collective identities in diasporic communities, certain features of victimhood, grief, and piety can be mobilised in practical ways divergent from doctrine. At the same time, this interpretivist paradigm squares well with entrepreneurialism through the empowering Shi'i virtues of courage and perseverance. Discussing personal advancement through Shi'ism *Hassan* was exposed to a "completely different view of the religion, in which there is hope, opportunity, support, encouragement, growth, personal development, having a successful life and a life full of abundance". Describing a spiritual transcendence of sorts, he described this new philosophy of entrepreneurial Shi'ism as "All those things, which I was imagining and expecting from the religion to be while I was young".

Previously, I have been told only about sin, committing sin will have this consequence, do not do this, do not do that etc. but there was no substitute for the "don't do sin or don't do that). Everything we as a human being would require having a better life and become successful person was portrayed as a sin and void way of livelihood under the teachings of religion.

Guilt and shame are two dominant themes experienced by *Hasan* within religious diasporic communities. Aspiring to earn money was not considered virtuous. *Hassan* said, "I have been told by scholars earning money and doing business is not good and you cannot gain spirituality, the religion wants to pray all the time". Furthermore, *Hassan* previously was told to seek closure from religion and that "earning money/doing business will get you away from Allah and Ahlebait (PBUT). These were and many more restricting beliefs of how religion wants us to live our life was taught to me, which could not make any sense to me". The scholar in Mashhad offered a different opinion, telling *Hassan*: "belief and intellect is the true message of the religion". The scholar encouraged him to continue

working on his personal development while seeking help and guidance from Allah. Referring to this encounter, the scholar told him: "this conversation could be the help you have received from Imam Raza (PBHU) during this visit to the shrine". *Hassan* agreed, noting "I believe that it was a help I received from Imam Raza (PBUH) when I visited the Shrine. And I am still receiving help constantly on daily basis from Allah, Ahlebait (PBUT) and Imam Raza (PBUH)". *Hassan* reflects his journey to Mashhad with nostalgia,

> I am greatly thankful and grateful to Allah, Ahlebait (PBUT) and Imam Raza (PBUH) for the help, support and opportunities to help me become a better and successful person/entrepreneur and achieve my life's purpose so I am able to bring positive change in the lives of all the oppressed, orphans, and all human beings.

In dire extremity one seeks God. Despite the centrality of his Shi'i faith, *Hassan* did not find fulfilment through the traditional pathway of advancement of religious community in Australia: "I've been treated very badly before in the religious community and it affected me mentally a lot. Because of the wrong message they had given me". *Hassan* viewed his disheartening experience with the Shi'i community in Logan as more of a social factor than intrinsic to the teachings of Shi'ism. Because of the centrality of Shi'ism to *Hassan*'s identity and his vanguard role in the family's integration into Australian society, *Hassan* sought answers through the *ziyarat* to the holy shrine cities of Shi'i Islam. Through Shi'ism and *ziyarat*, *Hasan* was drawn to entrepreneurialism and business as pathways for advancement in Australia.

> I asked the scholar [in Mashhad] about business and personal development. Does Islam stop us from doing business and earning money, he said no. As long as it is align with religious teachings, it is lawful and whatever is acceptable in your society. Do everything with permission and be ethical. Even in numerous quotes of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) a businessman and trader has been called "Habibullah". If one can do business and trade, should do. And the Prophets and all the Imams (PBUT) I can see they were entrepreneurs they were businessperson.

7. Becoming *Australian* through Sports and Business

> *I still love the Imams. But human beings are just a product of infinite consciousness and who we are being. Our names, our genders, our cultures – they're all labels.*
>
> —*Ali.*

As the middle child, *Ali* occupies a similarly distinct role to *Musa* and *Hassan*. *Ali*'s engagement with Shi'ism as a belief system began in Quetta and continued during his early years in Australia. However, due to reasons not dissimilar from *Hassan*, *Ali* slowly lost faith because of the inherent contradictions in the religious communities in Australia. *Ali* found a unique pathway to advancement through his engagement with sporting communities in Australia, culminating in representing Australia at the highest junior level. Scholars such as Saad (2011) have highlighted the interrelationship between sport, culture, and the construction of national identity. Representing Australia in Europe was stressful because of the difficult logistics involved in attaining a European visa as an Afghan-Hazara with permanent residence in Australia. Stressed from the visa situation and dissatisfied with the support from the relevant Australian sporting body, *Ali* was relieved to reach Europe and be able to compete in the competition. As discussed, the "red light" district incident was particularly disturbing because *Ali* was still very faithful in 2017. Before departing for the competition location, team members told him "let's go for a walk around the shops". He recounts how things soon appeared odd as he ventured down certain streets,

> So we left the hotel. There was this one street name it gave me a bizarre feeling. When I got there, I realised, this is purely haram. I was apologising to Allah and Imam Husayn. My

team members were encouraging me to look around, telling me it was interesting. It was a shock to my system and I did pray that night. I was already emotionally drained from the visa issues, and needed to focus on the competition".

After the competition, instead of drinking with foreigners, *Ali* chose to read the *Ziyarat Ashura* – a prayer that forms part of the liturgy used during the pilgrimages to the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala. Upon returning to Australia, *Ali* did not attend Friday prayers at the Mosque in Australia. He still observed the holy month of *Muharram*. Because of the globalised content at his disposal, *Ali* was able to remain spiritual by listening to *Nohas* and also various *Majlis* convened by imams (scholars) he liked. Some of the influential imams (scholars) included Allama Talib Johri, Allama Nasir Abbas, Allama Irfan Haider Abidi, and Allama Syed Mohsin Naqvi. Globalised Afghan-Hazara's are uniquely positioned to derive spiritual purpose from digital religious platforms. One particular event that solidified *Ali*'s decision to abandon the local religious community as a means of advancement came when a community leader in Brisbane approached him and told him they would get a sponsorship for him from a local MP. The community leader told *Ali*: "send me your bibliography and we'll talk to the local MP and get you a sponsorship. However, some weeks later *Hassan* came home quite distressed telling *Ali*, "they're planning to use the money for themselves". Describing the magnitude of the event, *Ali* recalled, "that made me lose faith in the institution, they were a bunch of hypocrites". *Ali* messaged his contact in the community to let him know he was no longer interested in receiving the sponsorship.

Despite the disappointing news, *Ali* remained highly spiritual and observed the holy month of Muharram at home. *Ali* rationalised this decision by noting that "during Muharram at the mosques, I never felt a sense of peace. It wasn't helping my spirit. I was wondering why it was happening. I was there with good intentions – for *AhluBayt* and for Imam Husayn". Because of his poor experiences with the leadership of the religious community and the feeling of detachment from Muharram observance, he said "because of these things, I had lost confidence in the mosque and the community". Collectively, these factors contributed to *Ali*'s decision to pursue pathways to advancement in Australia through sport and business. By this point, Ali's sporting abilities for his age in Australia and throughout Queensland were unrivalled. He subsequently sought Australian identity and advancement in Australia through this pathway. He said "sport helped me a lot with my identity. It gave me a new sense of identity and also confidence as to who I am and who I am becoming. Sport was something that I liked to do. I liked the interactions, I enjoyed the interactions". Representing Australia and integrating into new social circles through sport, *Ali* found purpose and advancement outside of the diasporic religious community, and into local sporting communities.

7.1. Identity and Sport as a Pathway for Advancement

Describing the importance of sport during this point of liminality, *Ali* recalled: "it helped me get out of the bad communities. I was feeling like I am a part of the country, I am a part of the people. We want people to accept us, and sports was doing that for me". Like his brothers, both *Ali*'s identity and purpose were in flux. He said, "Sport in this sense, helped me find family". For most of his junior years, *Ali* was somewhat infamously known for his ambition—to become the best sportsman in the world. Because of the prevalence of "tall poppy syndrome" in Australian culture, *Ali*'s honest ambitions were sometimes poked at and ridiculed by others in the sporting community. This was not a considerable problem, and after some time assimilating into Australian culture, he began to share his goals and ambitions less with his teammates. At the same time, local sporting communities grew to understand the roots of *Ali*'s convictions and ambitions. *Ali* continues to compete at the highest Australian level but also took on full time work in finance—precipitating a new passion enabled by the liberal capitalist nature of Australian society.

After spending some years honing his finance skills, *Ali* began a career the finance industry and immersed himself in new bodies of literature. In his words, "When I started working in finance, I saw a new world. I found a new passion. I was bad at school but I love finance, capitalism and entrepreneurship". This newfound passion began around 2018. However, working in Australian finance

did not align well with the Islamic laws regarding finance, interest, and taxation. In entrepreneurial vein, he declared, "If Islam is stopping me from working at a bank, then *I'm done with it*. That's when I stopped praying, stopped doing Ramadan". He explained the inner balance struck by stating,

"I still love the Imams. But human beings are just a product of infinite consciousness and who we are being. Our names, our genders, our cultures – they're all labels. What is religion even saying? What's my purpose in this world? Islam actually does not tell you these things clearly. Everyone has a purpose that's why I'm here. I did not get that from Islam. I got it from other avenues. Human beings are a product and we are using that to experience consciousness".

7.2. Australian Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurship as a Pathway for Advancement

Ali, Musa, and *Hassan* certainly all share many sentiments regarding entrepreneurship. While *Hassan* seeks to integrate his Shi'i beliefs to complement his entrepreneurial mindset, *Musa* and *Ali* see less of a need to wed to the two for successful pathways to advancement in Australia. As the most globalised of the siblings, *Musa* is still in his tertiary education years, which *Hassan* and *Ali* were unable pursue after their year 12 studies. Australia has prospered greatly through neoliberalism. Harvey (2007) describes neoliberalism as a principle and pathway to advancement, which "values market exchange as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human activities and substitutes all previously held ethical beliefs" (p. 3). Bourdieu (1998) describes neoliberalism as "a programme for destroying collective structure which impede pure market logic". The existence of identity through neoliberalism squared with Shi'i Islam is a significant finding drawn from this study. *Ali*'s path to entrepreneurship involved several business-oriented jobs after year 12 before entering finance. He recalls,

"I didn't know that the finance industry existed. I never had that mind-set of being an entrepreneur. I thought Islam is just telling us to be workers. Once I got into finance I started reading more. I became curious, how does this money work? So I started studying rich people, how they make money—I want to be a capitalist".

Ali reflects that from a young age, he had entrepreneurial ideals, but they were discouraged because of Islam's emphasis on "staying poor". He believes that moving to Australia shifted his mindset dramatically. "Things changed so much between Pakistan and Australia, I feel like we always had it. Education is a big part of it. However, I found the correct education is financial literacy, learning to invest – to multiply it. And you can help people with that, that's my goal – to help orphans and the disabled. Money allows me to do that. It obviously doesn't buy you happiness but it does give you choices".

8. Advancement through Individuation: Radical Revision of Previously Held Beliefs

My life in Quetta and the transition to Australia was defined by my experiences as a Shia.

Islamic scholars liked to sell this idea of depending on Allah under the elaborate fallacy of, "Allah will help you, as long as you have tried your best and exhausted all the means that would help you reach your goal." I did not fully grasp this horrendous logic while in Quetta but living in Australia for a short while cleared my mind.

<div align="right">—Musa.</div>

This section details the contradictions *Musa* found in Shi'i Islam as a belief system in both Pakistan and Australia, and the alternate pathways to advancement he consequently sought. Contrasting *Hassan*'s unsolicited new "vanguard" role for the family in Australia, *Musa*'s position in the family as the youngest made him most malleable to globalisation, and to non-traditional pathways to advancement in Australia. Because *Musa*'s religious scepticism developed in Quetta from a young age, he reflects "my understanding of Islam seems like a blur". Like *Hassan*, *Musa* attributes his disillusionment

with Shi'ism largely to the thematic contradictions evident between communal practice and doctrinal theory. As a pathway to advancement in Australia, *Musa* expresses an optimistic philosophy of identity through individuation.

8.1. False Prophets and "Horrendous Logic"

They left no room for individuality and it felt like I was a soldier bound to strict training regimes.

Musa's candid views on the inherent contradictions in Shi'i Islam began in Pakistan and further solidified once relocating to Australia. His engagement with belief systems offers a unique account of previously held beliefs and new philosophic potential pathways for advancement. Reflecting on the appropriation of Shi'ism as a communal tool in Pakistan, *Musa* recounts, "The community had a shared system of belief in Islam, with Shia majority in the area we resided in. Religious gatherings (Majlis, Jashan, Nazar/Niaz etc.) were commonplace to unify people, create a social environment, sense of unity and strengthen connection with Allah/ Ahl al-Bayt". However, in retrospect, *Musa* saw "no distinction between cultural practices and the teachings of Islam. Ideologies that were not part of Islam were upheld and spread by "scholars" and the average citizen". Reflecting on these false prophets in Quetta, *Musa* concluded "Unsurprisingly, this left no shortage of hypocrites who presented themselves as devout, kind and genuine Shia".

Unlike *Hassan*, *Musa* viewed the practical mutation of Shi'ism as partly due to its ambiguous doctrine and its malleability to incorrect interpretation. In Quetta, he identified several ideological misrepresentations negatively affecting the Hazara community. These included "outlook on life, their standards, ambitions, education and their faith in their own abilities". *Musa* also remarked that "Islam was accountable in part because of its flawed philosophy towards modern society". In his view,

> Islamic scholars liked to sell this idea of depending on Allah under the elaborate fallacy of, "Allah will help you, as long as you have tried your best and exhausted all the means that would help you reach your goal." I did not fully grasp this horrendous logic while in Quetta but living in Australia for a short while cleared my mind. Once I developed the courage to develop my beliefs, I started to think: if I put all the effort and achieved everything myself, what role did Allah play in it? How do I know He helped? To what extent did He help?

Though not initially pursued in depth, philosophic questions concerning the nature and the existence of God were central to *Musa*'s identity and purpose in Australia. He concluded that "the concept of religion and specifically Islam was foolish as any other person's answer to the origin of life". In his experience, "Islam inhibited me and many others from thinking critically or finding answers contradictory to our religious beliefs." A noteworthy finding relevant to the themes examined in this study was the existence and prevalence of black magic (*kala jaddu*) and possession (*jinn*) in Pakistan (Rytter 2010; Hardie and Khalifa 2005). *Musa* viewed such localised Islamic superstitious norms as making "the Shia more prone to believing in superstitions/miracles, whether they were part of Islam's preaching or the Quetta culture".

An issue *Musa* identified in his experiences in both Quetta and Logan was doctrinal (mis)interpretation by Ayatollahs and Islamic scholars. Squaring this thematic issue of interpretations of the infallibles, and flawless texts, such as the Qur'an, *Musa* explains,

> It does not seem right having select humans explaining to a larger set of humans what the word of God (or in this case, Allah) is. These Ayatollahs are making interpretations, and interpretations can be flawed. Plus, if Quran requires high-level study to understand/derive its message, then to me this suggests that (1) it was not written to be understood by an average person (which is counterproductive) and (2) it is not the word of Allah and its ideologies are not timeless.

> By living in Australia for a mere three years, I developed my philosophy to this extent because I was given the freedom to explore, critique and question ideas. In the big picture,

this reflection and account of events serves to demonstrate the way in which Islam could have influenced the wisdom and intellect of an average person like me. It also serves to show that whether my views are right or wrong is not important. What is important is the action of critical thinking, having the courage to contest ideas, explore other answers and present one's beliefs for critique/correction. These attributes are not characteristic of Islam as it clings to its foundations as absolute truth … which is a philosophy that a well-developed religious system should absolutely avoid in the absence of empirical evidence.

8.2. Leaving Nothing to Allah

As discussed, Shi'ism is entrepreneurial in nature. While *Hassan* sought to integrate Shi'ism to complement his entrepreneurial ambitions, *Musa* saw this philosophy as flawed insofar as it was only entrepreneurial to those in positions of religious and social power. He describes the entrepreneurial features of Shi'ism largely as a tool for normalising conformity and rationalising hierarchical subordination. Recalling some doctrinal examples, "There was/is an emphasis on humility and forgiveness, considering haram the acquisition of wealth via simple/compound interest and listening to music, as well as the prevalence of the mindset "leave everything to Allah". Reflecting on the guilt and shame-based cultures of the past, *Musa* recalls "I was unaware of my beliefs at the time because I was young, I showed signs of doubt in these approaches.

> The emphasis on humility prevented people from wanting better things (clothes, cars, money, luxuries) and instilled a mindset that having good things, wanting them, and feeling confident because of them posed you as materialistic/greedy. This had a subconscious effect on the way I responded to my own ambitions, achievements, and mistakes; mostly in a way that made me feel inadequate and below Allah. The problem I saw with feeling below Allah, whether it be in admiration or to seek repentance is that it made you feel powerless and trivial when you experienced hardships or when other people mistreated you.

> It compromised your ability to defend yourself and made you more likely to forgive unconditionally. These attributes translated into your character and with a complete lack of awareness as to why. This was often the case with the women because they tended to be more agreeable, so feelings of triviality were not advantageous in a third-world city like Quetta.

Upon moving to Australia and experiencing the capitalist nature of society, *Musa* identified further problems with the issue of "simple/compound interest" being haram. After studying science and mathematics at university in Australia, *Musa*'s views of Shi'ism as a tool of subjugation further solidified.

> I did not have a proper understanding of this [interest in Islamic finance] until we moved to Australia, but I do recall mentions of it being haram while living in Quetta. Anyway, interest is a major part of our current economic system, so I found it very foolish to limit people to only noble means of acquiring wealth. This is probably one of the reasons why many Muslims including Shias were poor in Quetta; there was not enough emphasis on other forms of education such as finance, science etc. In fact, there was not enough emphasis on proper quality Islamic education.

8.3. Dogmatic Doctrine: Shi'ism as an Obstacle to Individuality and Personal Advancement

Beyond the economically dogmatic features of Shi'i Islam preventing pathways to advancement, *Musa* identified a broader trend of doctrinal dogma limiting human behaviour. This feature deals largely with the normative social tensions between Shi'i Islam within the context of Afghan-Hazara culture, and its contrasts with the Australian society *Musa* largely grew up in.

> Forbidding music was another rule that made no sense to me. It was mainly because I did not like the idea of constrained individuality and freedom to explore other "non-Islamic"

areas of life. It closed the Shia's minds to only religious activities and created unquestioning, brainless individuals following a strict Islamic system. The common explanation I was given is, "Music about drugs, alcohol, sex, romance etc. causes you to daydream and disconnects you from reality." And it makes sense why not many Shia in Quetta cared about this rule; it is/was a very over-simplistic perception of human behaviour.

As I was growing up in Australia, I began understanding my childhood doubts about the approach of "leave everything to Allah". I realised that without clarification, this mindset relieved all levels of responsibility from the individual and discouraged the use of one's own natural abilities. I felt this approach was common because of a lack of education amongst the wider Muslim community in Quetta. But more importantly, to me, this belief in Islam dulled people's minds and took advantage of their tendency to choose the easiest path, i.e. depend on a higher being and let it take care of you. Perhaps this had the most profound effect on the collapse of my belief in Islam (and any religion for that matter). I began seeing religious people (mainly Muslims) as lazy, that they did not have the capacity to think for themselves and have the courage to explore other answers.

8.4. Polysemic Poetics: Nobility or Victimhood

Many of *Musa*'s experiences with communal issues as a pathway to advancement in Australia are similar to those expressed by *Hasan* and *Ali*. Throughout this study, however, the powerful poetic narrative of Imam Husayn's martyrdom arises as a *motif* of somewhat obvious relevance to the plight of Afghan-Hazaras, particularly during the process of migration. Because of the uniquely fluid and context-dependant factors affecting 'identity', one might hold onto the story of Karbala beyond Shi'ism. Similar to the crucifixion of Christ, the story serves as a substitute for some other kind of emotion that is at play. This might be memory of childhood in Quetta or workplace encounters in Australia. The historical event serves as something to evoke and legitimate grief where one might be expected to show a stiff upper lip. It is important to note that much of *Musa*'s upbringing was in Australia. Therefore, the aforementioned guilt and shame-based societal factors prevalent in certain cultures and diasporic communities are of epiphenomenal relevance to *Musa*'s identity. Describing the Karbala narrative in his eyes, *Musa* says:

Imam Husayn is probably the main figure that comes to mind when Islam is mentioned. His martyrdom was a lesson for courage, patience and mercy. While I saw such a sacrifice as sincere and dedicated to peace, I felt some of these historical scenes were over-embellished to present an image of nobility rather than victimhood. I could see how Muslims or non-Muslims studying the event of Karbala could subconsciously confuse the message of courage with silence in the face of oppression. In Islam, I am certain there is heavy emphasis on standing up against evil and oppression; it has good moral standards when it comes to injustice, which is why I would choose it as my religion, should I come to conclude that God does indeed exist. However, there are elements of victimhood in the story of Karbala which I thought does not fit well with the message of peace and courage being taught in a typical Majlis.

The context-dependant contrast in locality is crucial to understanding the evolution of *Musa*'s perception and individual connection to Imam Husayn and the Karbala tragedy. He recounts,

In my time as a Shia, I felt most of the religious gatherings were about grief, sadness and morbid events. As a Shia in Quetta, I started questioning whether it is okay to carry on smiling/ being happy after spending the past hour mourning and crying over the demise of an important Islamic figure. It just seemed insane that we could be crying in one moment and smiling/laughing/cracking jokes in the next. But more importantly, I felt there were psychological consequences stemming from the plethora of negative emotion experienced in this kind of practice.

My life in Quetta and the transition to Australia was defined by my experiences as a Shia. For example, the overemphasis on humility taught me empathy and respect, praying regularly taught me discipline and I also learned the importance of being kind to other people. What you will also notice is that I have not placed as much emphasis on the actions of the Shia Muslims and the way they treated me and each other. This is because I think a religion should not be judged by the actions of its followers, but rather the ideas it represents in its scripture. At the end of the day, humans are flawed creatures and they will make mistakes. Having said that, there is a high degree of human influence in Islam because of the existence of Ayatollahs.

8.5. Squaring Guilt and Grievance with Opportunity and Advancement

Despite *Musa*'s critical take on the practical implementation of Shi'ism, he offers several important observations concerning hidden sectarianism in Quetta compared to Brisbane.

Hazaras were a minority in Logan. I did not feel a part of the community because I guess I was already moving away from Islam. This sense of disconnect in Logan and even after moving was also related to the hypocrisy of the people and them pretending to be good/genuine people. In fact, my aversion to religious people even outside the Shia community was generally due to this and their virtue signalling habits. There was not much of a division in terms of the rich and poor; all types of people came to pray. I never really noticed any Sunni at the mosque and other places of gathering because I saw everyone as equal. But maybe they did attend, and I was not aware. I am inclined to think the Shia in Logan were more open-minded than those in Quetta, so it is a likely possibility.

When asked about the importance of a "moral centre" and squaring his Islamic background with Australian society, *Musa* offers a unique perspective on the nature of materialism in Quetta compared to Australia: "I would rather say people in Quetta were focused on material sources of pleasure due to an overwhelming rate of unemployment and lack of education". In his words, "all that was left to do for the Shia community in Quetta was engaging in materialistic pleasures. I felt that Australia actually had a stronger moral centre on a governmental level, but of course, I would say there was still an uncontrolled indulgence in material sources of pleasure".

Finally, on the topic of opportunity and pathways to advancement in Australia, *Musa* holds broadly optimistic views for his future in Australia. *Musa* describes Australia as "more accepting of homosexuality, sex workers, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and people of different backgrounds. While there was a level of racism and discrimination, that was of course a minority of instances". On the issues of racism and education in Australia, he believes "an issue like racism will never be eradicated (as is the case for many other social issues), so I moved past it. The Australian education system was also much better, and I never felt forced to mould into a specific "Australian identity". *Musa* identifies several opportunities and future pathways to advancement in Australia, such as sports, university, and many other fields. Entrepreneurial and optimistic of his future in Australia's globalised society, he concludes: "There are some language barriers at times, but that is because English is not my native language and I am still learning about Australian lifestyle and culture. It is nothing that proper education could not solve, though".

9. Conclusions

The primary implication of this study is one of individuation through lived-experience and the fluidity of identity. Everyone is an individual and while we speak of the impact and culture, lived-experience is very different. People always have choices they can make about what lessons they might derive from experiences. In this study, three male members of a single family not separated greatly by age hold radically different experiences with religious and social integration in Australia. This spans from *Hassan*'s intense sense of religiosity although not grounded in the local community,

through to *Ali*'s reconciliation of entrepreneurialism and religion, in an inclusive sense that involves making money to help the vulnerable. Having spent most of his life in Australia, *Musa* holds a largely sceptical approach to religiosity. Distinctive in *Ali*'s case was being networked into international sports and sporting social networks. This took him out of Afghan and Shi'ite social worlds into a different world where socialisations and encounters were much different. As a student at an Australian university, *Musa* is taken out of the Afghan and Shi'ite world, into a different kind cosmopolitan educational world. Culture may have the appearance of immutability. However, like any social formation, it is produced, reproduced, and contested through time.

As individuals, everyone has a capacity for individual agency. The study highlights very distinct pathways that *Hasan*, *Musa*, and *Ali* have taken, not just occupationally but ideationally as well. Each engaged in a multiplicity of social worlds, and they share different world views. This militates against any type of homogenising view of Hazaras in Australia. These do not reflect generational scale differences. Rather, different socialisation experiences in Australia demonstrate that people adjust to the social worlds they enter and are not fixed in their ways. For all that they are same family and same generation, they have been living in different social worlds. This works against fixed senses of identity. While faith is thematic in this study, individuation is not tied to culture or faith. Rather, it is a process of psychological differentiation through lived-experience. Ultimately, identifications are complex, and people have agency in choice and through this, the capacity to make individual lessons.

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