

Curtin University Sustainability Policy (CUSP) Institute

**Muslim Women Responding to Globalization:
Australian and Kenyan Narratives**

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ABSTRACT

The cultural determinism summoned in the discourse on the ‘war on terror’ embraces gender frames that invigorate the Islam and the West divide. In a vacuum of historical, geo-political and economic contexts, such frames conjure a Muslim woman archetype in opposition to Western conceptualizations of modernity. Ignoring the social milieu, as well as the current global transformations affecting people’s lives globally, conjectures in singular co-optations that isolate traits from religious dispositions have implications in how Muslim gender issues are perceived and addressed.

This thesis intends to reconceptualize the Muslim woman image in an attempt to move beyond the gender polemics of cultural determinism and divide. Using narrative enquiry, the study makes a comparative analysis to discover how Muslim women in two disparate societies – Australia and Kenya are responding to the dynamics of change accelerated by globalization. Through primary research, it captures the narratives of 40 women along the axis of the two major influences on their lives - modernization and Islamization enhanced by globalization. In tracing the way global paradigms and policy changes at the macro-level have affected Muslim women and the responses produced, it provides an unconventional frame to view the lives of contemporary Muslim women.

The study contends that in general, the issues facing Muslim women in the rapidly changing environment can be understood as challenges internal and external to faith orientation. On the one hand, the forces of a modern global culture offer opportunities and channels to redefine aspects of daily living and lifestyles. On the other, a resurgence of Islam manifests itself in an assertion of religious observance, cultural identity, values and morality that increasingly question these settings. The challenges are not confined to minorities in the West, but also borne by many in non-Western societies. Through its research findings, the study proposes that culture in itself is not immutable or a constant, but cultural expression is a vital part of utilizing opportunities availed by development and central to the process of development itself. As the means of comprehension without which life, lifestyles,

objectives, aspirations and much more cannot be expressed, given meaning or be implemented, cultural expression is a vital aspect of human development. Accommodating these in the multicultural settings of contemporary environments is evermore salient in the globalized world.

As the world becomes more interdependent, the challenges for a global society manifest in how societies organize themselves; how citizens participate and how decisions on collective issues can be more congruent to facilitate a more socially sustainable development. Through its schedule, the study attempts to provide an insight into the issues and challenges facing Muslim women in contemporary times and in the course of its findings makes a case for the value of diversity, cultural expression and a sustained representation of Muslim women within development issues.

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My thesis tenure has also gained from interactions at four international conferences of which the ‘Globalization for the Common Good’ in Istanbul and Melbourne remain a fine recollection of amity and goodwill coming together to dialogue global differences.

I cherish the memories of my mother, both my grandmothers and my grandfathers in their wisdom, values and as role-models. I owe a great deal to the support of my father; my late older brother who lives as a valued memory of ‘intelligent annoyance’ and my younger brother for making me keep up with his brightness. My children, I am sure are thankful this thesis comes at a time they are no longer dependent on me, or they would have suffered a diet of mostly pizzas as they did in my Bachelor’s years! I am glad for their ‘technical’ support in formatting the thesis and also enjoy their cooking! Most of all I thank my husband who continues to be my source of inspiration and pillar of strength.

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PREFACE

JOURNEYING TO A THESIS – A NARRATIVE

At many junctures, I have felt the desire to edit out this preface to avoid critical appraisal of its contents. Yet, the more I have thought about it, the more it has made sense to include it. The journey narrated in here contains the thematic fabric of this work. In acknowledging this, I find value in revealing the position that I, as the researcher adopt in relation to the study. It reflects the motivations and premises as a launching place that helped in expressing and conceptualizing the work. The narrative here trails the passage to a study that began with research focused on conflict displacement dilemmas of long term refugees in the Third World, and follows the impulsion that led to the present topic. It also reproduces some characteristics of the interrelation of settings and the ever growing relatedness of peoples and places through globalization, the underlying context of the thesis.

My focus initially was the quality of life of the conflict displaced, particularly the ‘forgotten’ individuals in the protracted refugee camps of East Africa. The drive for the study came from observing the settlement of Somali refugees in urban Mombasa, Kenya, heightened later by work with mostly refugee Muslim women in Australia. Their settlement needs though similar to other migrants have added dimensions. The stories of long stays in refugee camps, intimidation, loneliness, the problems of isolation, the need for trauma counselling, the difficulties with language and the acculturation process in an alien environment are additional challenges these women face. Despite uprootment and instability, their sheer resilience and aptitude to adjust to new environments is really remarkable. At the same time, their vulnerabilities in the wake of so much flux, bring to mind a dissipation of resources - not only as economic entities, but also as social assets. On a positive note, these are relocated individuals who stand a chance for a better quality of life. For those whose plight does not make it on the national or international radar, susceptibility to harassment, detention; mistreatment and dependency on hand-outs and at times forced repatriation remain a harsh reality. Forced to flee their homes, conflict-displaced people have little choice in where they are able to take refuge and what assistance is provided to them. With gross violations of rights, the experiences of exile are very painful for some. On their part, the shift in territorial responsibility of displaced individuals places a huge burden

on host developing states, not only in terms of infrastructure and environmental pressures, but also in concerns over national welfare and security. Contextualized as an issue of human security, the study was designed to make an analysis of refugee resettlement in the Third World. The correlation of human security to sustainable development is argued as the simultaneous advancement for the cause of human betterment and the conservation of essential resources and life support systems.

Though immensely motivating, the project was relinquished as the more affecting issue of the Islam and West cultural divide became pervasive and difficult to disengage from. I still consider the plight of the conflict displaced and especially gender security an urgent matter for research and policy direction. With increased armed conflict in many regions of the world, the humanitarian crises affecting populations cannot be ignored. The potential increases in the volumes of the displaced created will continue to have socio-economic implications for many regions. Additionally, as global climate changes, the prospects of environmental refugees on a large scale are a likely reality very soon.

The change in the thesis focus to an enquiry into Muslim women's responses to globalization has various motivations. While also coming primarily from exploring further the conceptual frameworks that include social issues into the sustainability discourse, this became cased into observance of the perceived cultural conflict between Islam and the West. The shift in focus on Muslim women is a consequence of both a perception of the relay of anti-Muslim rhetoric in public discourse, anecdotes from friends, acquaintances and general community, and the need to explain, clarify and present the so-called moderate view as a Muslim.

Having been in Australia only seven months when the 9/11 events happened, as screen messages right away went into an 'us and them' mode, feelings about being marked as one of the 'others' were strong. The unease in the public was shared by many other Muslim women. My experience of life in the West was then limited to three years spent in the United Kingdom doing a Bachelor's degree. In the hurried and intense experience of study with two little children, the severity of winter, adjustment to a fast Western lifestyle and few

social contacts, there was little time or inclination to really feel any acceptance in the Western public sphere. The academic environment, a forum for passionate discussions over the success and failure of Keynesian economics against economic rationalism made for some lively engagement in policy directions for the UK. Being just after the post-Thatcher era, economic rationalism was in full vogue then as the path to fast-track development.

At a time when entering the European Union and being part of the monetary union was at its zenith in the country, the polemics of the two lecturers particularly were engaging. John (a pseudonym), a brilliant, but eccentric mathematician had extreme right-wing market views, was against joining the EU as well as the monetary union (partly because of his dislike of the French or so he said!). He compared government spending to making a hole in the ground that you would never fill up! Tom (not his real name too) on the other hand, a mixed economy champion scoffed at these ideas, and many times digressed to engage the class in spirited arguments. Had I known how significant these harangues would be in my future academic pursuits, I would have paid more attention and retained their robust views for future arguments. The concept of welfare economics was absorbing to someone from the developing world who knew little about government spending and went in with preconceived and accepted ideas about government (un)accountability and (ir)responsibility. In the prevailing excitement about market forces being able to deliver superior outcomes for growth and development, economic rationalism made sense, well, simply because it was made out to be 'rational'!

My appreciation of the concepts presented was a simplistic, theoretical understanding needed to pass the semester exams. Through the elective of Development Economics grew a budding interest into environmental degradation that had scant attention in Kenya then. Later, teaching the subject at A-level Economics, my interest in the area grew with the inclusion of a holistic approach towards issues of social and environmental sustainability that I promoted as the patron of an extra-curricular club. Our activities included fundraising with variety shows for the 'Beautification of Mombasa', an undertaking of the then Mayor of Mombasa and a street-children project in Mombasa for which I wrote and directed short comedies and had the most entertaining rehearsal sessions. This burgeoning concern then

led to enquiring about a Master's degree in sustainability when for the first time Australian universities started marketing campaigns in the little known and laid-back town of Mombasa. Even though my keenness about environmental concerns still remains, the digression into social concerns within sustainability stems mostly from experiences in Australia, and a firm belief that sustainability is more than just about environmental issues.

It was in Australia that I had my first experiences of discrimination and encountered full-on the discourse of Islam and the West. After 9/11, I came across several women who also had similar experiences. In 2003, I participated in a consultative forum *Ismae* (Arabic for 'Listen') held nationally in Australia by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission to investigate claims about discrimination and vilification of Muslims. Like this incident, my community work has given fair insight into the challenges facing the Muslim community generally and Muslim women in particular.

As a settlement officer there were many opportunities for networking with service agencies including government departments and NGOs working with the Muslim community. These interactions revealed a deep lack of awareness about Muslims. In the many forums that I attended, my 'oppression' was an accepted trait of the Muslim woman's life. On many occasions I heard some absurd generalizations like 'Isn't it true Muslim women are second class citizens?', 'Muslim men mistreat their women', 'I thought Muslim women wear the *hijaab* because they are forced to', 'I thought all Muslims were Arabs?', 'When I tell other women how dynamic Muslim women can be, they look at me with surprise - how can you associate with them?!', and as a home-owner, I have been asked, 'Is it common for women in your culture to own property?'

Conceptions about Islam are mostly placed in its resistance to modernity or conditions essential to attaining modernity. Nonetheless, as most other societies in a continually globalizing world, Muslims and Muslim societies are tending towards modern lifestyles in all aspects of being, adopting education, economic and political institutional models that were introduced initially through colonialism and now dispersed through globalization. The trajectories of these developments have been different in the different regions of Muslim

diaspora, a reality often ignored or little acknowledged in the blanket criticism levelled at Muslims. Comprehended as a single monolithic entity, Muslim societies' backwardness is often highlighted in the unequal gender relations in Islam and critiques of cultural incompatibility. Yet, paradoxically, Muslim societies have been led by women such as the late Benazir Bhutto, Megawati Sukarnaputri, Tansu Ciller, Khalida Zia and Sheikh Hasina. At the same time the transitions in Muslim societies prompt debates on the desirability of modernization. Inspired by the work of Muslim revivalists, these have given form to various visions of restructuring of societies. As economic duress and social instability is attributed to secularization and marginalization of religious ideology, revivalists seek models of development that are more attuned to Islamic principles.

These are some of the impulses that have propelled me towards this enquiry; most significant of which the gendered effects of the Islam and West discourses. On the broader level, the study is situated in the global context of the contemporary era in which we are witnessing unprecedented changes through the phenomena of globalization that impact upon societies simultaneously. Of salience for this thesis is both the perceptible conflict between Islam and the West, and the inner struggle within the Muslim world as it submits to the global nature of contemporary life. The essence of both propositions is well captured in the former secretary-general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan's words at different forums:

'Moreover, just as some who benefit from globalization may feel threatened by it, so many who are statistically safer from conflict do not feel safe. For that, we have terrorism to thank. It kills and maims relatively few people compared to other forms of violence and conflict. But it spreads fear and insecurity. And that drives people to huddle together with those who share their beliefs or their way of life, while shunning those who appear 'alien'. Thus, at the very time when international migration has brought millions of people of different creed or culture to live as fellow-citizens, the misconceptions and stereotypes underlying the idea of a 'clash of civilizations' have come to be more and more widely shared; and insensitivity towards other people's beliefs or sacred symbols is seized upon by those who seem eager to foment a new war of religion, this time on a global scale.' (Kofi Annan 2006); and

‘Yet I am sure there is no necessary conflict between belief and modernity, in Islam any more than in other religions. The challenge for Muslim thinkers, ... must be to live up to the finest traditions of Islamic thought...They should encourage their fellow Muslims to enquire freely what is good and bad in other cultures, as in their own.’ (Kofi Annan, 1999).

This study explores how the above propositions affect Muslim women and how they are responding to them. Following is Part 1 of the study. It starts with Chapter 1 that provides an overview of the study including its conceptual and theoretical frameworks, following this Chapter 2 describes the methodology and Chapter 3 draws up profiles of the two participant groups.

PART I: INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

Underscored by the much clichéd clash of civilizations' thesis, the culturalist approach adopted in the 'war on terror' attempts to explain the problems of the Muslim world in terms of their faith (Roy, 2004; Mamdani, 2005). It is based on a standard belief - that culture exists on its own, is transmitted across generations and lineates the ultimate explanatory model of any society. In differentiating Islam from the West, the approach takes on an ideological conflict that also features a gender element (Flanders, 2001; Pettman, 2004; Dubriwny, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Aly, 2007; Ho, 2007). As observed in the former US president's address to the nation in 2006, the gender element surfaces strongly as saving Muslim women from a particularly misogynistic faith:

'Since the horror of 9/11, we've learned a great deal about the enemy... we have learned that their goal is to build a radical Islamic empire where women are prisoners in their homes..., and launch attacks on America and other civilized nations. The war against this enemy is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century and the calling of our generation' (Bush, 2006).

Similar elements appear in the rhetoric of other leaders in the aftermath of 9/11. For example the former Australian Prime Minister, John Howard's comments added the essentials of violence in 'a commitment to *jihad* and extreme attitudes towards women' as 'two problems unique to Muslims that previous intakes of migrants from Europe did not have...' (SMH, 2006).

In supporting patriarchal gender relations, Islam as a belief system is presumed both encumbering the well-being of Muslim women and incommensurate with the standards of contemporary, modern, urban global societies in its violent inherency. While such frames serve to galvanize support for the 'war on terror', they obscure the diversities of the Muslim diaspora. The singularities overlook the changes manifested in women's lives through economic development. As well their aspirations, their communal and self identity, and their

agencies in navigating day to day living in the modern world are obscured in a cultural determinism. In theory, cultural determinism (UNDP, 2004) is the idea that a group's culture explains social, economic and political conflict or that intrinsic cultural traits are obstacles or facilitators of economic performance and the advance of democracy. With its core supposition that culture is set, rigid and ageless, the hypothesis draws critical assessment in its risky public policy implications that can be repressive of culture. Sen (2006, p xv) sees the perils of invocations of all-embracing singular identities as –

‘Indeed, many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choiceless identity. The art of constructing hatred takes the form of invoking the magical power of some allegedly predominant identity that drowns other affiliations, and in a conveniently bellicose form can also overpower any human sympathy or natural kindness that we may normally have.’

In the same vein, the UNDP's 2004 report on human development building its analysis (p 5) on claims of cultural categorizations cautions that cultural determinism can invoke violent reactions when nationalistic policies disparage or repress ‘inferior’ cultures argued to stand in the way of national unity, democracy and development. That such assailment of cultural values can fuel tensions and aggression over ‘moral inferiority’ is evidenced in the discourse on the ‘war on terror’.

As part of the ‘war on terror’ discourse the focus on Islam is unequivocal in its global manifestation and influence on public perceptions in contemporary times. In response to the 9/11 attacks, the United States retaliated through military action and retained a rhetoric of divergence of Islam from the West turning religion into a cultural and political identity. Not only were the prime suspects of the attacks deprecated as devoid of moral virtue and ethically irreconcilable with the morally just, free and civilized USA and its allies (Saikal, 2003; Poynting et al, 2004; Mamdani, 2005), but these attributes implicitly extended to those seen as culpable by ‘default’ political identities. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the impression on public opinion manifested in the intolerance directed towards Muslims, and especially Muslim women in Western countries. In USA these have been documented in

reports by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)¹. In Australia, the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales (ADB, 2003), and the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC, 2004) detail the discrimination and vilification of Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11. In Europe, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC, 2006) has conducted research on what it calls Islamophobia. On the European research, a synthesis of 75 reports is presented in a synopsis entitled 'Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001' co-authored by Chris Allen and Jorgen S. Nielsen at the University of Birmingham, England. Its summary highlights:

'...Despite localized differences within each member nation, the recurrence of attacks at street level upon recognizable and visible traits of Islam and Muslims was the report's most significant finding: ranging from verbal abuse indiscriminately blaming all Muslims for the attacks; women having their [*hijaab*] torn from their heads; male and female Muslims being spat at; children being called 'Usama' as a term for insult and derision; and random assaults. The representation of Muslims in the media was also noted. Some media attempted to differentiate between Muslim terrorists and other Muslims, but some did not. Similar concerns about the role of politicians and other opinion leaders were also raised. Within the mainstream of political activity, some political leaders made immediate verbal statements stressing the need to differentiate between 'Muslims' and 'terrorists'. Other countries (such as Portugal) had no problem tarnishing all Muslims as violent militants.'²

While these are reactions to contemporary discourses, generally, with regard to gender perceptions, regionally Muslim societies are linked with the 'patriarchal belt' characterized by multi-level, kin-based family structures and male headship. Offenbauer (2005) describes the 'patriarchal belt' as the region stretching from North Africa across the Muslim Middle East including Turkey, and Iran to South and East Asia³ where kin-based family structures

¹ See their website at <http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/ReportsandSurveys.aspx>. Accessed January 5, 2010

² These comments on the summary are retrieved from: http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/European-Monitoring-Centre-on-Racism-and-Xenophobia#Report_into_Islamophobia_in_the_EU_following_9.2F11. Accessed January 5, 2010

³ Offenbauer omits other regions like Sub-Saharan Africa where male-headed households and male control over resources are also a normative. See for example, Creighton and Omari, (1995)

prevail. In development theory, patriarchal systems are associated with pre-modern, pre-capitalist forms of social organization. A simplistic, ideological model of patriarchy is defined as a structure where authority and control are exercised by men over women (Bullock and Trombley, 2000). In overstating Muslim male misogyny, Offenhauer (2005, p 10) observes that researchers of Muslim societies often point out the features in question as prominent across the entire so-called belt of 'classic patriarchy'. The most commonly linked attributes with classic patriarchy are patrilineal extended families, male domination, early marriage and consequent high fertility, son preference, restrictive codes of behaviour for women and on the more insidious side, honor killings and genital female mutilation (Offenhauer, 2005, p 11). The key connotations are often taken as a monolithic application and the assumption of congruence between representation and behaviour is at times incredible. Implicit within sensationalist rhetoric such generalizations not only feed preconceived notions but, in personal interactions can be humiliating⁴. This is not meant to trivialize the enormity of the suffering of victims of such atrocities, nor does this thesis rule out that there are harmful practices against women in some Muslim societies. Rather this work makes a case for caution over generalizations and the rigid positions towards minorities invoked in the rhetoric of 'clash of civilizations' that deflect from engaging in receptive ways of addressing gender issues. At this juncture the question is - why is there an unrelenting acuity of the Muslim woman archetype, so persistent and prevalent in Western minds? Most academic work locates this in the broader, old and new discourses related to the historical power relations between the West and the Muslim world.

Although an arbitrary term, in the study's context, the term West is used to refer to cultures that derive from European Enlightenment values, norms and traditions and that have 'detraditionalised' (Roald, 2001) being open to change through modernization. This definition is shared by other commentators for example Gay, (1972), Gardner, (2006) and Fitzpatrick et al (2007). With the declining influence of the church, the basic ideas of individualism and rationalism grew to become core elements of what the Enlightenment stood for. The theoretical articulation of modernization is a systematic process through which societies transform and steer to transit from more traditional to comparatively modern

⁴ For those who sit through discussions on these, there is a cringing feeling of 'all eyes on you'. A Muslim friend narrated an incident where she was approached directly to be asked if she was circumcised!

societies. Lane and Redissi (2004, p 26) in evaluating its normative observe a lucid theoretical dichotomy between the two ends conceptualized in opposites like ‘parish culture versus cosmopolitan culture’, or ‘emotivity versus rationality’ and ‘traditional versus legal authority’ that characterize premised pathways by such polarity. In geographic and political terms, the definition offered by Saikal (2003, p 2) is adopted here. Saikal refers to the West as ‘North American, West European and Australasian democracies that have functioned as somewhat coherent political and military alliance under US leadership since the Second World War’. The definition of the Muslim world is also drawn from Saikal (2003), who calls the ‘domain of Islam’ – ‘all the Arab and non-Arab followers of the religion of Islam, whether living in countries where Islam is the dominant religion or residing as minorities elsewhere’.

The section below locates the Muslim woman archetype in the old and new relations between Islam and the West.

1.1 Archetypes in old and new discourses

In the context of colonialism, the literary representation of Muslims and Muslim women in particular has long been a reflection of Edward Said’s critique of a Euro-centric genre of cultural depiction of the ‘other’ theorized as Orientalism. According to Said (1998), colonial accounts of anthropology, history, travel and sociology have historically been the reference frame in the cultural stereotyping of the mysterious and exotic East. These feature prominently in the archetype of the Muslim woman. Examining what informs discursive practices of Western literary traditions on Islam, Zine (2002, p 1) points to Oriental constructions of Islam as ‘mapping the evolution of the Muslim woman archetype’. Similarly, Kahf (1999), in tracing Western representation of Muslim women also finds a narrative of perceived oppression so deeply diffused in Western culture that it has become conventional wisdom. In her work, she points to the useage of the basic archetype at levels ranging from a ‘high’ within academic articles to a ‘low’ in television cartoons operating without a need for substantiation.

Within feminist discourses, an asymmetry in power relations manifests in the advocacy of women's rights. Several different streams of activism based on the recognition of female subordination and discrimination fall under the rubric of feminism. While there is growing recognition of the diversities of gender, class, culture and race differences of gender subordination, in venerating freedom over the backwardness of the patriarchy of traditional societies, the liberal and radical positions remain dominant and privileged⁵. The feminist movement emanating in the West and based on Western ideological values has considerable bearing on global governance, particularly with regard to the promotion of the rights of women. Feminist theories in questioning the universal nature of dominant discourses have maintained that they are grounded in male positions of power that 'put together a view of the world from places women do not occupy' (Smith, 1987, p 19). In turn, the privileged position of various Western feminist networks and public figures has been successful in 'putting together a view' for the cause of the Muslim woman. While the feminist movement should be credited for galvanizing action over gender issues, its approaches often reflect the realities of Western contexts.

In the post 9/11 era, gender is an indispensable element within the international discourse on terror and in the configuration of international politics. Readings of the discourse reveal an analysis of merging nationalism and militarism in the construction of war rhetoric where gender is used figuratively, yet conventionally. Women remain 'passive pawns' within (Pettman, 2004) - on the one hand as victims of terrorism (that deserve retribution) and on the other as victims of oppressive regimes that need rescuing. In this context, Afghan women have figured as classic symbols of the demarcations between the uncivilized Muslim 'them' and the civilized Western 'us' to rationalize 'the rescue of their women from their men' (Pettman, 2004, p 89). This selective symbolism was taken up by both Laura Bush and Cheri Blair as a women's rights' issue. The question however is – why now and why not in

⁵ Liberal feminism stresses the ideal of autonomy and individual choice and sees liberty as a primary social good. According to Evans (1999 in Bullock and Trombley, 2000 p 478) liberal feminism is identified with the interests of white middle-class for whom participation in formal and/or hierarchical structures is an expectation of an ethic of individual achievement. Coming from a different perspective radical feminists aim to reshape society and restructure its institutions, which they see as inherently patriarchal. Providing the core theory for modern feminism, radicals argue that women's subservient role in society is too closely woven into the social fabric to be unraveled without a revolutionary revamping of society (Evans in Bullock and Trombley, 2000 p 478).

other regimes that oppress women, for example, Saudi Arabia that follows a particularly repressive ideology? These collectivities of outrage and concern over the rights of ‘their’ women have been opportunistic and not to say the least convenient in the interlocking of gender into the current US foreign policy (Pettman, 2004; Chisti, 2002, Hussein, 2005). Chisti (2002) and Hussein (2005) both point to the ‘gender apartheid’ cause taken up by the Feminist Majority Foundation, a U.S based feminist organization on behalf of Afghan women. Flagged as a ‘rescue’ mission from the Afghan *burqa* (the quintessence of Muslim female oppression), Chisti (2002, p 85 – 86) notes a simple binary analysis of ‘equality vs. inequality, freedom vs. oppression, and civilized vs. uncivilized’ as prime motivators with little deliberation over the underlying socio-political contexts or concern over a looming humanitarian crisis. Instead of an outrage over the bombings, the loss of lives and the resulting predicaments, the focus of the campaign was the liberation of the Afghan woman:

‘Certainly the women in Afghanistan, who bear the brunt of war’s brutalities through forced displacement, death and destruction of livelihood, would have benefited if their [W]estern feminist sisters who exercise considerable privilege in influencing the media and high levels of government, had unflinchingly condemned the bombings. The campaign’s focus, however, did not call for the ending of the bombing...but was cleverly adjusted to focus on three goals: restoring the rights of Afghan women and girls, increasing humanitarian aid and demanding that Afghan women have leadership roles in rebuilding the country’ (Chisti, 2002).

The reproduction of Muslim gender stereotypes is equally fuelled by the national and international media particularly since 9/11. Semantic and semiotic negative imagery in credible print is highlighted in Rahman’s (2008) research on the images of Muslim women in the international magazines, Time and Newsweek. Western popular literature, both fiction and biographical further energizes these stereotypical images. Clyne (2003, p 20) in critiquing the representation of Muslim women observes that popular literature or what she calls ‘airport literature’ in concert with television news and films are key agencies in shaping public opinion. She also observes that marketing mechanisms rely on the commercialization of the Muslim woman image - that the book is judged by its cover; ‘the

decision to purchase must be made quickly, something exotic or slightly provocative must appear on the cover, in the title or advertising blurb of the book’.

Other theses capture the linkage between the discourse of the ‘war on terror’ and national security, immigration and integration that features gender. The gendered aspect of rendering the Muslim ‘other’ is framed as a threat to democratic societies (el Matrah, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Aly, 2007; Ho, 2007; Samani and Marinova, 2007). In her analysis of nationalism and Islamophobia in Australia, Ho (2007) finds a commonplace logic of the oppression of ‘their women’ portrayed as a ‘threat to national security’ woven into nationalist issues focused on immigration, integration and national identity. Similarly, Aly (2007), in his examination of the chasm between Islam and the West finds an appropriation of culture in political discourse aimed at Muslim women. He notes:

‘The Muslim woman, in her varying degrees of cover, has become merely a symbol; a battleground for a much broader polemic. She is not a person with interests, aspirations, feelings. She is a concept’, (Aly, 2007, p 112).

Such cultural stereotypes and generalizations coalesce to perpetuate a categorization and critique that mislead and misinform what are the current and relevant state of affairs in Muslim societies, the status of women and the practical issues confronting them. While the religious framework is an important cultural compass for Muslims in providing direction in life and lifestyle choices, the historical and contemporary persuasions galvanized by liberal and capitalist ideologies integrates the lives of Muslim women as they do others into a changing global world.

In following and tracing the influence and effects of development paradigms and the profound shifts in global politics after the 9/11 attacks, this thesis provides an unconventional frame to view the lives of Muslim women. The conceptual framework goes beyond the cultural differences to engage with the contextual realities of individual lives. The thesis argument and the research question are outlined below followed by the theoretical framework.

1.2 The conceptual framework, argument and research question

The generalizations discussed above conceptualize Muslim gender oppression in a vacuum of other relational phenomena such as economic, social and political disparities. The diversities of geographic ethnicities, the changes communities face, the ingenuities of individual approaches to traverse escalating change and crossing of cultural boundaries as people connect in today's world are also subsumed. Muslims, like other societies face unprecedented changes and challenges in the intensification of economic, political, social and other links through globalization (Al-Roubaie, 2003; Akram, 2004; Ernst, 2004). What are the changes and challenges particular to Muslims and how do they interact to rework identities, lifestyles, interpersonal and other relationships in Muslim societies?

Since the Second World War, the predominant pattern of the evolution of societies has been modernization. Colonial and post-colonial processes of industrialization, urbanization, secular education, legal reforms and democratization have all transformed Muslim societies in their own particular ways into 'modern' cultures. The growing opportunities for education, workplace participation, political and legal reforms have challenged and changed the domestic role and status of Muslim women. In the current global environment, these intersect with a resurgence of Islam. A redefining of aspects of daily life and living is compelled through interface with different Islamic movements in local and transnational spaces. Within these spaces, globalization facilitates enhanced interrelatedness and consistency with a lifestyle created in the image of a Western culture (Thompson, 2001). At the same time, the petition for religious observance, cultural identity, values and morality increasingly questions the public and private roles of Muslim women. How do Muslim women respond to these and balance the essentials of their faith with developing abilities to fit into the modern world?

In looking for the answers within this study, the thesis argues that contrary to perceptions of uniformity and stagnancy, Muslim societies are diasporic and diverse in various ways and transforming just as other societies in a globalized world. It contends that the geographic spread of the Muslim world is extensive and complex in terms of developmental variation. The diversity of ethnic groups and the multiplicity within individual societies are also

considerable. The dynamism of transformation through human capital infrastructure such as health, education, and workplace participation, brings structural changes to these societies impelling changes in individual lives. Consequently, Muslim women face challenges both from within their faith system as well as in adapting to modern lifestyles. Such challenges are not confined to those living in the West, but also borne by many in non-Western societies as Muslims globally are compelled to reevaluate the balance between modernity and religion (Ernst, 2004; Lombard, 2004).

Afkhami (1995, p 1-2) encapsulates the quintessence of the problem facing many Muslim women today as a struggle where '[t]he most taxing contradiction they face casts the demands of living in the contemporary world against the requirements of tradition...' On the one hand they have to contend with differing views propagated by the various scholastic authorities (some of whom relegate the activities of women to just the domestic sphere) and the other, the day to day struggle in existence of today's world to endure the 'mix of values, mores, facts, ambitions, prejudices, ambivalences, uncertainties, and fears that are stuff of human culture'.

In considering the above, the study argues a reconceptualization of the Muslim woman 'category' by posing the following question:

How are Muslim women responding to contemporary challenges in a globalized world?

Making a comparative analysis, the study aims to discover how Muslim women in two disparate societies are responding to the dynamics of change accelerated by globalization. Through primary research, it captures narratives of the women along the axis of the two major influences on their lives - modernization and Islamization enhanced by globalization. The term globalization in its current usage is a connotation of the progressive closeness of societies across the globe on different fronts. Although historians recognize earlier globalizations associated with exploration, colonization, maritime trade and migration, the contemporary globalization is concerned with the what Appadurai (1996 quoted in Thompson, 2001) calls the 'shifting of ethno-, techno-, media-, finance- and ideo-scapes'

that accelerate the rates of connectedness across the globe. Systems, modes and nodes of connection are reproduced in an escalating process with opportunities of encounter that cover inter-relations on a global scale (Allievi, 2003). Partaking in these modern-day physical as well as virtual phenomena, Muslims are a part of and partaking in the shift and spread of 'scapes'. Their global connections are fostered by employment, educational, financial and migratory moves across the globe. At the same time, sustained by these connections and unbounded by spatial limitations, the 'ideo-scape' of Islam extends its reach as a transnational doctrine.

As it permeates different spheres of contemporary life, globalization enhances the project of modernity and in the same vein facilitates the spread of countering forces like Islamization that rekindle the need to reevaluate modernization. In the current globalization, a transnational Islam exists both as a proselytizing migratory force as well as in the global, public, communications space (Bowen, 2004). Through its spread, the transnational character of Islam connects Muslim communities through a shared obligation to revive Islamic orientation. Although its dictionary meaning (Collins, 1990) denotes it a societal conversion or subjection to the influence of Islam, the term Islamization has come to mean a revitalizing of Islamic practice and identity (Lapidus, 2002), and signifies the intensification of the practice of Islam in the current times. This context associates it with the more commonly used terms of Islamic revivalism⁶ and Islamism⁷ which have political, proselytizing and revitalizing characteristics⁸.

How do Muslim women respond to these? The breakdown of the question is through investigation of the following themes in the primary research:

- Demographics;
- changing gender relations in Muslim societies;
- perception of the global focus on Islam;
- the localized impacts of Islamic revivalism on individuals;

⁶ Rahnema, 1994; Ashik Ali, 2006

⁷ Roy, 2004; ICG, 2005. Having to quote directly from some studies, I have used the terms synonymously and interchangeably.

⁸ Whilst the political factor is the pressing focus in contemporary times, in terms of context relevance, the thesis limits itself to the gender discourse as part of proselytizing Islamization

- the perception and the focus on the veil as part of an Islamic identity; and
- perceptions of being a part of a culturally plural society.

Even as all the above relate to micro-level changes, they correspond to paradigm shifts in the global system discussed in the theoretical framework in the following Section (1.3). The primary research is outlined in Section 1.4 below and the analysis and findings from the data are presented in the subsequent thematic chapters.

1.3 The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is situated within the area of women/gender-focused development. Evolving as a praxis field on its own, it postulates the economic, social and political well-being of women (Moser, 1993; Jaquette and Summerfield, 2006) through female emancipation. Since the 1970s, interventions to address these have focused on the absence of women in the development process and have prevailed in promoting women's role as contributors to economic prosperity (Rathbeger, 1990; Malhotra et al, 2002; Jaquette and Summerfield, 2006).

The core of the discourse centres on identifying the structures that impede the advancement of women and the need for directed efforts to change these. In the last four decades women's movements have mobilized action on areas of impediment and urged for international consensus over frameworks to achieve identified commitments to empower women (UNIFEM Australia, n.d). Critical areas of concern are poverty, education, health-care, violence against women, effects of armed conflict, economic structures and policies, advancement of women, women's human rights, women in the media, women and the environment and the girl-child. The key international women's conferences through the United Nations system (in Table 1 below) have provided the forums for action at the national, regional and international levels. Through collaborative efforts on various fronts these make material difference to the lives of women.

Table 1: UN major conferences on gender issues

| Major conferences addressing gender issues through the United Nations | |
|--|---|
| 1975 | International Women’s Year – Plan of Action led to UN’s Decade for Women |
| 1980 | Copenhagen Women’s Conference – emphasis on education, employment and health |
| 1985 | Nairobi Women’s Conference – review of obstacles and achievements |
| 1993 | Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| 1995 | Beijing Women’s Conference – identifying key obstacles to women’s advancement. Adoption of gender mainstreaming in areas of concern |
| 2000 | Beijing + 5. New York – framework for action to promote empowerment of women |
| 2000 | UN Millennium Development Summit – the MDG goals covering a range of development goals |

Source: UNIFEM Australia

Women’s empowerment as a key constituent in development goals has dual outcomes, one as an issue of social justice and the other as a ‘means to other ends’ (Malhotra et al, 2002, p 3) or intrinsic and instrumental values (Narayan, 2005). As an issue of social justice, it promotes human welfare through enabling self-actualization and therefore intrinsically worth pursuing. As a ‘means to other ends’ it has a multiplier effect in promoting the welfare of other constituent relationships, for example, the family, children, and other kinship.

Although empowerment is conceptualized in many different ways and in the context of different excluded groups, there is general consensus over its broad definition as women’s

ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families and society (Malhotra et al, 2002, p 5). The terminology used in assessing empowerment includes agency, status, domestic economic power and bargaining power, and encapsulates the idea that women have control over their lives viz a viz the family, community, and society. As the core of women's activities are concentrated around the household, women's empowerment is closely related to gender equality and gender equity. The nucleus of the discourse centres on exclusions through hierarchies in gender relations. However, other frameworks like Bennet's (2002) link empowerment with social in/exclusion of sections of communities. While empowerment operates from below, social inclusion is associated with the removal of institutional barriers that may exist to enable advancement. In modern times, social exclusion has meant various forms of disenfranchisement for different marginal groups; it draws on social constructions of adversarial cultures and identities (De Vananzi, 2005).

Women/gender development policies have been affected significantly by the shifts in international economic systems that have both opened up opportunities as well as created challenges (Jaquette and Staudt, 2006, p 37). The dependency theories of the 1970s called for the redistribution of resources from the richer North to the poorer South. Spheres of women's emancipation like public sector services in health, education and opportunities for income-generation benefited from flows of aid. The open market ideology of the monetarist phase introduced by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s saw institutionalized, deregulated markets that corrected oversized public sectors reproduced into the Third World through the Bretton Woods' Structural Adjustment Policies (Rahman and Andreu, 2004). The cut-backs in public spending and liberalization of markets reversed many of the gains in health, education and economic well-being of both men and women in the Third World. The 1990s saw the disintegration of the Soviet bloc. The adoption of market reforms in these regions and China have produced an integrated international finance and trade system that reinforces the market model, increasing the competitive environment that many in the developing and developed world endure. Jaquette and Staudt (2006, p 39), suggest yet another phase in the international system marked by the 9/11 events that will be at the centre of international issues as the 'war on terror' curtails civil liberties and impacts immigration and integration policies. Alternatively Clark (2006, p 728) explores this current phase in terms of

globalization; how the nature of an order developing in the post Cold War era is distinctively shaped by globalization. He contends that although there is intense debate over the precise meaning of globalization, there is some kind of transformation happening; globalization may well be one of the features among others of the post Cold War era. Though the study of the post Cold War era is indeterminate as 'we are still too immersed in living it to give it any real sense of perspective' (Clark, 2006, p 278), individual aspects of the present order identified by Clark and relevant to this work are concerns with ethnicity, identity, integration, and the 'war on terror'. On the interdependency underlying these, Clark (2006, p 72) notes 'that international and transnational connections are a very important element of contemporary order because of currently high levels of interdependence'.

International and transnational connections and interdependency are evident in the discourse on the 'war on terror' where the convergence and 'consensus' over global security issues raise questions over culture determinism and dominance and in turn the issue of managing cultural pluralism through multicultural policies. Since 9/11, in many Western countries, multiculturalism is seen as a failing policy that threatens national culture and values.

Theories and praxis of gender-focused development are directed towards non-industrialized, developing countries however, the premises of gender inequality and women's empowerment on which they are formulated are also applicable to the West. Networks of activists and researchers suggest that the problem of development is not unique to the Third World; that within the developed nations too there are groups marginalized by the processes of development; whose voices are little heard in the dominant discourses (UNDP, 2004). Further, gender mainstreaming as growth and development praxis has become the major instrument for implementing gender equality in international organizations as well as on national levels⁹ (Malhotra et al, 2002; World Bank 2002). Gender mainstreaming is defined as, '...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels, it is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political,

⁹ Personal communication with Khofifah Indar Parawansa, a former minister for Women's Empowerment in Indonesia at a seminar revealed how the strategy has been adopted and customized for relevance within the largely Muslim country.

economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality' (UNDP, 2000). In Australia, this includes advancing opportunities and choices for women to ensure that they are able to realize their full potential and participate in the economic, social and political spheres. These take into account the particular disadvantages women from minority groups' experience (UNIFEM Australia, n.d; HREOC 2008).

Gender disparities common to the realities experienced by women globally are shared by Muslim women. However, the liberal dominated discourses allow little opportunity for bringing on board issues that affect faith-centred women. Predominant feminist discourse originates mostly from the writings of European and North American women whose generalizations are grounded in their experiences of lifestyle and living (Spivak, 1988; Chisti, 2002; Walters, 2005). Therefore the perception of female empowerment in international discourses is established within a secular referent model of gender equality. A model that distinguishes an empowered woman as an independent, modern, educated and sexually liberated woman, to which others, uniformly powerless and vulnerable women aspire (Mohanty cited in Marchand and Parpart 1995).

In dealing with 'how what exists may be known' as well as 'assumptions of existence' (Higgs, 2001) overall the study is embedded in epistemic and ontological underpinnings. It is conducted in the tradition of post-modernist¹⁰ critique - it attempts to extend the standard categories of knowledge by including perspectives from the subjects of the discourse themselves. In emphasizing particularities and differences, post-modernist critique calls into question meta-narratives and universalist claims to knowledge (Marchand and Parpart, 1995). In social scientific research, post-modernism informs shifts in thinking from universal, positivist standpoints to those involving 'voices from the margins, speaking from positions of difference' (Storkey, 2001, p 161).

The ways in which gender oppression is embedded in societies and how it manifests differs from and within societies. The process of enhancing women's abilities to resist, challenge and reduce discriminatory practices has to be meaningful to their cultural identity.

¹⁰ As a linear chronological term this denotes a discontinuity, but its theoretical definition suffices here.

Repressing cultural identities or critiquing them from a secular viewpoint mutes the voices of Muslim women and fails to draw out some of the important sociological challenges that they face. The testimonies of lived out realities of minority women are a key contribution to understand ‘where they are coming from’ and what determines their lifestyle choices. The objectives of the study are briefly outlined here:

1.4 Objectives of the study

The thesis argues for a reconceptualisation of the category ‘Muslim women’ in the frame of paradigms of economic systems and current discourses, as well as the role of culture in these. Through the narratives of the women it aims to:

- Provide some insight into the demographics and diversities of Muslim women
- Discover how global economic paradigm changes manifest in the lives of the women and how they respond to these
- Reveal what are the changes and challenges these present at the individual household and societal levels
- Learn how the gender focus of Islamic revivalism as a counter influence affects Muslim women’s access to and role in the public
- Determine the global nature of the discourse of the ‘war on terror’ and how Muslim women respond to the cultural divide created within
- Uncover the views of the women as to the veiling practice, and
- Find out how current discourses are perceived in the multicultural settings as Muslim minorities in the two very different contexts.

The study also puts forth how cultural dispositions play a role in the above. It makes a case for consideration of frameworks within which Muslim women’s practical interests are contexted to inform policy. While gender equity policies aim to meet the strategic needs of women through state intervention, they have to match practical interests (Alsop, 1993) within the scope of national legal frameworks. Strategic needs vary in the context of particular national settings and include issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, population control and more. Meeting such needs helps to achieve better prospects for changing the subordinate position of women, but these top-down interests have to be

harmonised with practical interests like cultural expression of target groups. Balancing the two is an important aspect of informing and conducting policy in achieving better outcomes in gender empowerment. While strategic issues relate to the broader macro policy goals, practical issues are derived from everyday situations lived out in the frameworks women find meaningful for themselves. The two together are closely linked, in that practical interests can help inform strategic interests to ensure intervention is meaningful. Some of the ways this can be achieved is highlighted within the responses in the primary research. The following section describes the primary research.

1.5 The primary research

Although various accounts deliberate on the status of Muslim women, their self-perspectives and own outlooks are inconspicuous and limited in Western scholarship. The epistemic of depiction outlined previously is a derivation of an entrenched representation from outsider perspectives. Given the diversities of economic, social and political settings, a self-perception on the dynamics at play in their lives is warranted to provide an ontological reality to differentiate between ‘appearance’ and ‘existence’ (Higgs, 2001). The primary research thus focuses on obtaining views of Muslim women on the issues and challenges they face especially in the post 9/11 era through their narratives.

The study makes a comparative study of perceptions on the six identified domains of enquiry related to the thematic context of the study stated before. Forty Muslim women, twenty from Perth in Australia and twenty from Mombasa in Kenya were interviewed on these areas and their responses analyzed to understand how their identities and outlooks are shaped by the influences sketched out above. The participant groups are Sunni Muslim women in a contemporary, urban environment. The Sunni sect has the majority following at about 85% of Islam globally (Esposito, 2002) and is the majority population of all Muslims in both Australia (Saeed, 2003) and Kenya (Oded, 2000). The research methodology is discussed in detail and the criteria elaborated further in Chapter 2.

The areas of enquiry covered in the interview schedule aim to give an understanding of how Muslim women are responding to contemporary issues presented in the processes of

globalization. As indicated earlier, the purpose is to draw the similitude and differences of experiences; the premise being that globalization affects all societies today. It is hoped that this will help bolster the knowledge and understanding of the circumstance of change happening within these societies. In attempting to draw out the complexities and a range of standpoints, the findings of the work it is anticipated will be a springboard for further investigation into related areas.

The following are the reasons for choosing Muslim women from communities in Australia and Kenya:

- As observed in the preface, foremost my own experiences as a Muslim woman in Kenya and Australia,
- My knowledge of the Muslim communities and accessibility to contacts willing to take part in the research, as well the availability of other sources and resources through various networks in both locations,
- As an element of the Muslim diaspora, both groups are part of minorities in their respective countries and share an Islamic worldview in general,
- Some Muslim migrant communities in Australia come from developing countries that share characteristics similar to Kenya in colonial and post-colonial experiences as well as in development trajectories. Most countries have invested in women as catalysts in economic growth. Although not the same, the Kenyan context is useful in providing an approximate backdrop of the colonial, post-colonial experiences of Muslim communities,
- In a globalized environment, both communities are a part of a pan-national communications space in which political, social and religious discourses are shared and have a bearing on individual lives.

Situated within the broader enquiry of the challenges they face, the primary research plays a key function in gathering the ‘voices’ of Muslim women on their outlooks positioned within their social and cultural settings. In opening up a window for insight into lived experiences, personal views and testimonies, the study adds to the readings of the cultural depiction of the ‘Muslim women’ stereotype. Through these it attempts to reclaim some marginalized

representation and add to women's policy initiatives in a multicultural society. Struggles for empowerment are often understood within frameworks of legal, economic and political systems, yet both the personal and collective have linkages to these frameworks which can be comprehended within the subjectivities of the self produced in relation to broader systems.

Although the scope of the study is limited to two geographic locations, Australia and Kenya, in topical relevance the focus on Muslims is timely both in terms of contemporary relations, as well as the demographic expansion of Muslims in the West and the projected increases of Muslims worldwide in the 21st century.

1.6 Relevance of the study - Culture, multiculturalism and social development

In adding to the corpus of literature on Muslims and Muslim women, there are a number of contributions this study attempts to make:

- It contributes to the study of globalization and cultural change in the context of gender (Muslim women in this case) development
- The study adds to the corpus of studies on Muslim women in the aftermath of 9/11, both as experiences in a Western and non-Western society,
- In making a comparison with Muslim women's experiences in Kenya the study contributes to the scant scholarship on Islam and gender in Kenya and especially in the aftermath of 9/11,
- Providing perspectives and views from 'below' it provides the space for marginal voices to be heard and contribute to gender-related policy through the proposals the study makes,
- The nexus of culture and development slowly gains recognition in development discourse. There are few studies focused on these and on the whole non-existent as a comparison between two distinctly contrasting locations.

Culture is a multidimensional concept subject to change in historical and social contexts. These two interrelated definitions capture its essence. One that culture is the 'social

production and transmission of identities, meanings, knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, memories, purposes, attitudes and understanding’; the other that ‘it is a way of life of a particular set of humans: customs, faith and conventions; codes of manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, science, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, tradition and institutions’ Hawkes’ (2001, p 3). The first convey the inherent qualities that help us make denotation of life, in how we comprehend things and how we sense their significance. The second communicates the manifestations that help us implement comprehensions or how we go about doing things. Its theoretical importance in development is highlighted in a report prepared under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the Pro Cultura Charter¹¹ that include the following:

- One of the chief aims of human development is the social and cultural fulfillment of the individual
- Access to and participation in cultural life being a fundamental right of individuals in all communities, governments have a duty to create conditions for the full exercise of this right in accordance with Article 27 of the Universal Human Rights
- Harmony between culture and development, respect for cultural identities, tolerance for cultural differences in a framework of plural democratic values, socio-economic equity and respect for territorial unity and national sovereignty are among the preconditions of a lasting and just peace.

Although at the core of human behaviour, at no point in history has culture been as salient and significant in world policy and politics as in the current times. Since the end of the Second World War, and moreso after the end of the Cold War, the reorganization of the world order has followed a pattern where Western hegemony has determined the global social order and results in a universal project that dominates through its model of development (Murden, 2004). Not only do these create the modern nation state, but bring a transnational culture underpinned by the status of the individual and a market model that influences the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of traditional societies. The US and the West have backed the emerging pattern of global hegemony of what Fukuyama (1992) terms the inevitable triumph of the Western liberal democracy and the free market– that the

¹¹ cited in Hawkes (2001, p 49)

liberal idea will be the zenith of political and social development. Yet this triumph seems threatened by the revitalization of Islam. In much of the post Cold War debates about culture, it is Islam that has come into the frame in an essentialist, determinist typology that has ramifications for many in its broader application. Mark Malloch Brown the UNDP administrator (UNDP, 2004) points to the significance of resolving issues over cultural conflicts - 'At a time when the notion of a global clash of cultures resonates powerfully and worrying around the world, finding answers to old questions of how best to manage and mitigate conflict over language, religion, culture and ethnicity has taken on renewed importance.'

Besides the gendered effects of the current polemics outlined above, the relevance of the study is the growing significance of Muslim demographics. With about 1.6 billion adherents, presently, Islam is the world's second largest religion after Christianity¹². The predominant faith in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and parts of South East Asia, there are large and growing Muslim communities in China, the Indian sub-continent, Eastern Europe and the republics of the former USSR. It is estimated that there could be about 25 to 30 million Muslims in Western Europe by 2025 (NIC, 2008). With increasing numbers, 'Muslim-related issues will be a focus and shaper' (NIC, 2008) of global policy concerns in the future. To meet the challenges and opportunities these demographic changes will bring, it is vital to understand key players in the coming global trends. Table 2, overleaf, shows Muslim minority populations in selected countries. These countries mostly in the West are expected to experience increased numbers of intakes from the Muslim world as various elements like economic, environmental and conflict migration bring the world ever closer. Exploring how diversities especially religious diversities can be better accommodated within multicultural societies is hence urgent.

¹² See adherents.com for actual figures.

Table 2: Muslim populations in selected countries

| Country | % of Muslims (2008) | Number of Muslims (2008) | Total Population (2008/2009) | Urban share of population (2008) |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Australia | 1.70 | 280,000 | 21,262,641 | 89.0 |
| Austria | 4.70 | 385,883 | 8, 210,281 | 67.0 |
| Canada | 2.50 | 1,600,000 | 33,487,208 | 80.0 |
| China | 10.0 | 39,111,000 | 1,330,044,544 | 43.0 |
| Denmark | 3.00 | 1,650,153 | 5,500,510 | 87.0 |
| France | 10.0 | 5,980,000 | 64,057,792 | 77.0 |
| Germany | 3.70 | 3,060,000 | 82,369,552 | 74.0 |
| Greece | 1.30 | 139,586 | 10,737,428 | 61.0 |
| India | 20.0 | 154,500,000 | 1,147,995,904 | 29.0 |
| Kenya | 33.0 | 8,000,000 | 39,002,722 | 22.0 |
| Netherlands | 6.00 | 1,002,959 | 16,715,999 | 82.0 |
| Norway | 1.80 | 83,600 | 4,644,457 | 77.0 |
| Sweden | 4.00 | 362,386 | 9,059, 651 | 85.0 |
| Spain | 1.20 | 485,892 | 40,491,052 | 77.4 |
| Switzerland | 3.10 | 235,027 | 7,581,520 | 73.0 |
| United Kingdom | 2.80 | 1,600,000 | 60,943,912 | 90.1 |
| United States | 2.10 | 6,000,000 | 303,824,640 | 82.3 |
| World | 24.0 | 1,456,124,029 | 6,706,993,152 | 48.6 |

Compiled using data from the CIA World Factbook¹³, UNDP¹⁴ and Muslim Population Worldwide¹⁵

The study combines key research interests; those of women, development and gender justice with the current focus on cultural conceptions of Islam and Muslim women using the theoretical framework provided. In the subsequent chapters it looks at the nexus of culture, change and challenge in the context of modernization and the contemporary discourses of conflicting cultures that feature gender. It is hoped that these will provide an insight into the

¹³ From <https://cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>. Accessed September 7, 2009

¹⁴ From http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/buildtables/rc_report.cfm. Accessed September 7, 2009

¹⁵ From <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/index.html>. Accessed September 7, 2009

lived realities of the women and encourage a sustained representation and participation of grassroots Muslim women within the broader discourses of gender struggles in general.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Given the scope, time and resources, the comparison limits itself to the two locations Australia and Kenya. Inclusion of other diasporic Muslim minority communities could enhance an understanding of the contextual reality of how the modern paradigm affects Muslim women in other countries. Additionally including a male perspective would give the study a balance on the gender nuance of paradigmatic change as well as the response to current discourses. This very valuable perspective is regrettably seldom sought within gender development research. Again the limitations are time and resources and also the length of the study.

1.8 Crucial international developments since the start of the study

Crucial national and international events have ensued since the start of the thesis and since most of the interviews were recorded. In Australia, the change in government in December 2007 finds a new tolerance towards ethnic minorities. The move made to reconcile differences with Aboriginal communities in the apology to indigenous Australia is a signifier of the changing tide in attitudes with respect to Australia's Aboriginal population. The government's social inclusion initiative¹⁶ is also a promising move in incorporating disadvantaged or marginalized Australians. The objective of the initiative is a stronger and fairer Australia through opportunities in employment, accessibility to government services, fostering community ties and participation in the democratic process.

There has also been a change of government in Kenya. Kenyans went to the polls on the 27th of December 2007, in which the incumbent Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner. The results were announced three days later on the 30th of December and the president was sworn in within an hour of the announcement of the results. The outcome was disputed by the opposition candidate Raila Odinga who demanded a recount of the votes and a political

¹⁶ See the Australian Government's website at <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/AusGov/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed November 7, 2008

crisis followed; riots broke out soon after. Within six weeks, 1000 people lost their lives and about 350,000 were displaced resulting in humanitarian crises as ethnic violent clashes continued. International mediation by African as well as international leaders like Kofi Annan helped broker a settlement in which constitutional reforms allowed for the position of a prime minister. It was not until April 2008 that the unity government finally agreed on a power-sharing deal and Raila Odinga was sworn in as the new Prime Minister¹⁷.

On the international level, the most significant episode is the change in the United States' administration and the new president's approach in his foreign policy towards the Muslim world. In recognizing the tensions between the United States and the Muslim world, the US President's words thus far indicate a new beginning of mutual respect, peace and harmony. President Obama's speech makes several important observations that indicate some insight into the Muslim world and worldviews. On the issue of women's rights, he not only acknowledges that it is not simply an issue of Islam; that Muslim majority societies have been led by Muslim women; and that the struggle for women's equality continues in many aspects of Western and other countries. Another important issue that Obama comprehends is the challenges that economic development bring to societies, the fear of modernity's influence on traditional ways: '[F]ear that because of modernity we will lose control over our economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities – those things that we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith'. These two issues as noted in the overview are of particular salience to this thesis¹⁸.

1.9 Thesis structure

Reflecting on changing global systems, the thesis is divided into four different parts. Providing the foreground, Part 1 covers the 'technicalities' of the research itself through a discussion of the conceptual, theoretical frameworks, the methodology and demographic profiles of the respondents. Part II focuses on the impact of the pattern of development and modernization, especially the changes these effect at the household level, while Part III deliberates on the challenges arising within the contemporary paradigm of the international

¹⁷ Taken from several sources. For comprehensive details –see 2007-2008 Kenyan crises at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007–2008_Kenyan_crisis

¹⁸ Retrieved from New York Times transcript of Obama's speech in Cairo June 4th 2009 at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?_r=1. Accessed December 4, 2009

system in its focus on Islam and the West. Part IV presents the responses to challenges in the respective multicultural societies and beyond the cultural divide to suggest proposals in policy-making as well as areas of investigation to fill some of the gaps identified in the work. Below is an outline of the structure:

Part I: Introduction, Methodology and Demographics

This contains the preface, the introduction (Chapter 1) the methodology (Chapter 2) and demographics (Chapter 3). These chapters provide the overall scaffolding for the research.

Chapter 1 is an overview of the issue, states the research question and outlines the significance, objectives, historical discourse and methodology as well as gives a synopsis of the chapters.

Chapter 2 covers the methodology used in the study. Some reflections on the processes are included.

Chapter 3 draws up demographic profiles of the women against the broader characteristics of the two communities.

Part II: Changes and challenges of modernization

This part includes Chapters 4 and 5 that look at how Muslim households are responding to changes and challenges to gender relations through the processes of modernization.

Chapter 4 looks at how gender relations in Muslim societies are influenced by modernization and globalization.

Chapter 5 examines some of the opportunities and challenges presented within changing gender relations in the modern Muslim household.

Chapter 6 locates how the localized revivalist gender discourses influence Muslim women's public/private roles.

Part III: Responding to contemporary global discourses

Part 111 focuses on examining responses to the contemporary discourses on the ‘war on terror’ and the Muslim veil.

Chapter 7 establishes how the respondents comprehend the discourse of the ‘war on terror’, what spaces it occupies and, how it affects them and how they traverse the challenges it poses.

Chapter 8 discusses the responses to the homily of the veil, a core issue in the cultural polemic between Islam and the West.

Part IV: Multiculturalism and beyond the cultural divide

Part IV concludes the study, provides recommendations and outlines further research directions

Chapter 9 presents contemporary challenges to multiculturalism in the two countries and draws up a framework for inclusive participation of minorities like Muslims in meeting multicultural ideals

Chapter 10 concludes the study with a discussion of the key findings of the study and puts forth proposals to be considered in Muslim gender empowerment.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY AND SOME REFLECTIONS

The conceptual framework of the primary research is outlined previously in the introduction and its objective is to discover how Muslim women in the two contrasting societies are responding to the dynamics of change accelerated by globalization. This chapter expansively details the design, components, and the analysis process of the primary research. It is essentially a ‘technical’ chapter; in that it describes and discusses the methodology used in the research. It delves into the theoretical underpinnings to explain the general techniques used in the work.

For the most part textual analysis helps to conceptualize the issue and structure the research. The thesis’ line of reasoning rests heavily on the ‘interpreting and synthesizing’ (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p 6) of textual and numerical data. These include scholarly publications, print and Internet journal articles, development databases, various reports, newspaper articles and transcripts of interviews downloaded from the Internet. These sources play the crucial role of defining and limiting the problem, and relating it to the findings of existing knowledge in the area (Murray, 2002). The domains of enquiry pursued in the primary research although stemming to some extent from experiential and anecdotal sources are confirmed with existing scholarship. The domains have been outlined previously in Chapter 1 and are explained further in Section 2.3 of this chapter. The findings of the primary research are triangulated with existing scholarly literature and form the core content of the thesis. These are analyzed and discussed within the remaining thematic chapters. Each chapter focuses on one of the six areas of enquiry and the related literature review is diffused within.

This chapter starts with the theoretical explication of the appropriate methodology best suited to the work, and goes on to detail the primary research design, how the data was collected and analyzed and the ethical considerations of the research. Digressing from the ‘technicalities’ of doing research, the last section reflects on aspects of the research process where some critical moments are revealed.

2.1 Appropriate methodology

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the two main theoretical viewpoints that hold firm ground in social science research are positivism associated with quantitative methods and phenomenology that is related to qualitative approaches. The first tracing its origins in natural science models of research, emphasises some form of measurement and produces data amenable to statistical analysis. The second is committed to the description of social phenomena (Kumar, 2005). Trochim (2006, para 3) distinguishes the one from the other as ‘a willingness to trade generalizability for detail’, alternatively Thorne (2000, para 4), offers a more objective and subjective characterization:

‘Quantitative researchers accept that the goal of science is to discover the truths that exist in the world and to use the scientific method as a way to build a more complete understanding of reality. Although some qualitative researchers operate from a similar philosophical position, most recognize that the relevant reality as far as human experience is concerned is that which takes place in subjective experience, in social context, and in historical time. Thus, qualitative researchers are often more concerned about uncovering knowledge about how people think and feel about the circumstances in which they find themselves than they are in making judgments about whether those thoughts and feelings are valid.’

All works on research methodology like the above present a dualism that differentiates between the two (qualitative and quantitative) and imply conflicting views on their validity (Hamel, 1993). The debate centres on the empirical value of the tools the two methods use in the validation of theory/hypothesis. Advocates of quantitative methods promote numerical tools and a deductive and logical approach as the more superior value of proof. On the other side the argument is that ‘social relationships require description to enable understanding of the meanings social actors assign to their activities and experiences’, therefore explanatory empirical tools are seen as more appropriate (Hamel, 1993, p 31). However, the application of the two is based on the goals of the research or what type of data is required. Where the frequency of incidence or prevalence of phenomena is required for example as a rate of occurrence, statistical strategies are more appropriate. Where the

goal is to establish the operational links between phenomena, a more exploratory and explanatory approach is found suitable (Yin, 2003). The validity is argued along the trade-off between generalizability and detail.

Ray (1994) points out that phenomenological approaches are derived from the works of Husserl on modes of epistemology and the hermeneutical tradition of Heidegger that emphasize modes of ontology. They support strategy for the engagement with data to engender the meaningful, underlying essential that is crucial to understanding human experiences. In Creswell's (2007) definition, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon. In this context a phenomenologist illustrates what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. Adding the hermeneutical approach, he furthers the definition to 'hermeneutical phenomenology' (Creswell, 2007, p 59) as a research methodology oriented towards understanding the lived out experiences (phenomena) and interpreting the texts (hermeneutics). The basic purpose of the methodology is to condense individual experiences to a description of an essence in the effort to comprehend the quality of the occurrence. In this approach, the researcher collects information from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a merged description to obtain the nature or essence of the experience for the collective. The approach basically covers what is experienced and how it is experienced by individuals. The important aspect of the approach is the common grounds shared by the identified groups. In this study's case, the phenomena are modernization, globalization, Islamization and the common grounds shared by the groups at the broadest level is a religious culture. Culture of course is a nebulous term and in dealing with culture, researchers attribute a pattern of behaviour to a group inferred from the words and actions of members of a group and assign these as particular to the group.

To some degree, the broader base of quantitative findings in 'discovering regularities' (Kumar, 2005) are used as baseline information. These provide the demographic data used within the work. In considering the scope and nature of the enquiry, the primary research focuses on the use of qualitative methods and uses case study research techniques in

particular. Here Thorne's observations (quoted before) articulate the essence of the objectives of the research. A reflection of this in Potter's (1996) work is also pertinent.

Potter, (1996, p 15-21) by giving an assortment of definitions to qualitative methods (again contrasting qualitative versus quantitative methods!), brings a broadness that merits its use for this work. Within these, the intangibility of human experience (of qualitative methodology) that helps to capture the nuances of how people view their own lives, finds resonance here. It allows the surfacing of the depth and detail of individual perspectives that cannot emerge in quantitative analysis. In looking at the changing dynamics in Muslim societies, the context of the study focuses on different axes of external and internal challenges related to the faith orientation of Muslim women. These are multi-faceted and complex in character and require an investigation of aspects of living contexts way beyond numerical findings.

The research design, implementation, evaluation, and reporting strategies accordingly find congruence with qualitative methods and case study analysis. Cases study analysis as Yin (2003) explains is more appropriate where 'explanatory' outcomes are required; where the research objectives are 'how' and 'why'. Using narrative enquiry this is what the study aims at revealing.

2.2 Theoretical underpinnings of the methodology

Flyvberg (2004) notes that case studies contain a substantial element of narrative necessary for capturing the complexities and contradictions of real life. In essence, narrative enquiry is the study of 'stories' or 'narratives' that 'account for human experience' (Clandinin, 2007, p 4). Through these, narrative enquiry allows the perceptions and the context of the narrator to contribute to 'distinctive ways of knowing' (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p. 160). In tracing the historical moves towards the emergence of narrative enquiry, Pinnegar and Daynes, (2007, pp 3-34), find four interrelated turns or shifts in ways of thinking about research that have led to its surfacing as a legitimate tool in research methods.

First, they see a reconceptualization of the ‘relationship of the researcher to the researched’ (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p 9) as a departure from the neutrality of positivist research. With objectivity at the centre of its soundness, the positivist researcher has been seen as independent of the researched - the knowledge of the researcher is assumed separate from that of the researched. The reconceptualization of the relationship allows the acknowledgement of the enquirer having experiential starting points informed by the social milieu of the subject (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

The second move Pinnegar and Daynes (2007, p 15) identify is ‘from numbers to words as data’. This repositioning recognizes that numeric data does not capture the nuances of experience or the relationship to particular settings and relates well to the third turn and most challenging (to positivist enquiry) move identified by the authors. They see the focus from the ‘general to the particular’ (Pinnegar and Daynes 2007, p 21) as challenging the generalizability and universality ethos of branches of human science like history, anthropology, psychology, medicine and education. In constructing theories from ‘the careful study and accumulation of facts’ laws could be created based on ‘irrefutable facts’ that would allow the ‘prediction and control of human life’ (2007, p 22). The final turn Pinnegar and Daynes recognize is a move away from a distinct way of knowing the world. Anchoring in numeric data has traditionally been seen as a secure basis for asserting a specific view of the way things are; a move away from this asserts multiple ways of knowing and understanding the world.

There is evidence of Pinnegar and Daynes’ ‘four turns’ in this work. Foremost, regarding the researcher and research relationship, the impulsion for the research charted at length in the preface initiates from experiential and anecdotal evidence that goes on to locate these within the wider discourse of Muslims and Muslim women. This relational position emerges in the work as ‘existence in a time and particular context’ and brings with it a ‘history and a worldview’ (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p 14). Second, as stated in the choice of methodology before, the primary research is predisposed towards qualitative methods to capture the diffuse and complex character of the changing dynamics affecting the lives of Muslim women which would not surface through statistical methods or quantification in

other forms that decontextualize representation. This is accentuated in the third turn that emphasizes the ‘particular over the general’. The purpose of the rich detail of phenomena in the narratives of the subjects is not geared to compute aggregate values for application from a sample to the group as a whole. Rather the design of the research is to open up new meanings for understanding the patterning of social phenomena and ways of knowing through the outlooks of the subjects as suggested in the last turn.

Identifying the above theoretical underpinnings of the methodology has been crucial in helping to scaffold and structure the research. Understanding the underlying paradigm has been valuable in mapping the process of the research; as a frame of reference, the theoretical framework guides the coherency of the work. The mapping process not only involves the how, where, what, and why of this research, but also how these fit into existing models of research methodology.

2.3 The primary research and its design

Yin (2003) and Robson’s (1993) definition of case study research is well relevant to this study in that:

- It investigates contemporary phenomenon within a real life context where the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident
- It uses multiple sources of evidence in the form of antecedents, perceptions, attitudes and more to explore contributing causes, determinants, factors, processes and experiences.

The primary research here is forty case studies that seek to understand the issues and challenges from the perspectives of the subjects of the study. It focuses on uncovering information about how the respondents think and feel about the circumstances they find themselves in and understand their perspectives of own belief, cultural, historical and experiential milieu. Though case studies can be studies of individual entities, case study research is not confined to singular investigation and is open to a range of possibilities including ‘social group’ studies (Robson, 1993) as has been applied here. The participants are drawn from the Sunni Muslim communities in Australia (Perth) and Kenya (Mombasa);

they are chosen for the common features of faith orientation (explained further in the research design). The design and process of the primary research is detailed in the following section.

Robson (1993, p 150) identifies a conceptual framework, a set of questions, a sampling strategy and instruments of data collection as key components of case study research. As a comparative analysis an additional component here is the study locations. The conceptual framework of the research has been covered in Chapter 1, the rest of the components - the set of questions, the sampling strategy, and the instruments of data collection are detailed and explained at length below.

2.3.1 Selection criteria of the participant groups

The sample parameters are broad and applied to both the Australian and Kenyan participants. The following are the criteria:

- **Sunni Muslim women:**

The participant groups are Sunni Muslim women in a modern, urban environment, aged above 18¹⁹. The Sunni sect has the majority following at about 85% of Islam globally (Esposito, 2002) and is the majority population of all Muslims in both Australia (Saeed, 2003) and Kenya (Oded, 2000). This was to maintain singularity in faith orientation. Although in most facets the Shia faith, the second largest group in Islam has the same religious foundations, their belief in the succession of the Prophet²⁰ confers a distinct theological system. Their experiences in aspects of creed are likely different from those of Sunni Muslim women and for the purpose of this work, particularly with regard to Islamic revivalism. No distinction was made in terms of the practice of Islam and the recruitment process did not particularly seek those wearing the *hijab* or not. The fact that the women identified themselves as Sunni Muslim women was taken as given. Although no variation corresponding to Sunni Islamic identity was actively sought, a few presented this difference

¹⁹ In both contexts parental consent is not required.

²⁰ Throughout the study the term ‘the Prophet’ is used for the Prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam, the final Abrahamic faith.

in both their physical (through wearing the *hijab* or not) and religious outlooks (through varied views on religious themes of the research). The criteria however included at least five years stay in the respective country. The length of stay was included to establish a sufficient length of residence in the country to be aware of the public discourse on Muslims and Muslim women within the region.

- **Urban, middle-class women:**

Experiencing the similar capitalist economic systems, emerging urban patterns show that populations are growing alike in sociological modernization and undergoing the challenges and pressures unique to globalization (Marcotullio, 2003). Australia is a modern, developed nation where as Muslim migrants, the women already have skills acquired in home countries or are able to benefit from the available amenities to develop further. Though mediating differently, urban Muslim women in Kenya also profit from specialization through modern educational systems that offer comparable and converging skills valuable in global transfers. Middle-class in this context is defined in terms of educational and occupational categories. The status that education awards helps individuals to move from primary occupations into industrial and service sectors. While the middle class is much smaller in the developing world, it is comparable in the openings that globalization offers (Birdsall et al, 2000) and many with transferable skills take these up in economic migration.

- **Proficient in the English language:**

To ensure consistency, both for the queries and in interpretation of the data, the participants were chosen for good proficiency in the English language. As English is a national language and the medium of education in Kenya, the research did not require extra interpretation skills for any participant there. This also helped capture a good level of literacy.

2.3.2 Recruitment strategy

The sample groups are drawn from personal contacts, contacts within different Muslim welfare organizations and Muslim social networks. An initial screening process through

close consultation with community members was made to identify potential willing participants. The study uses a purposive, snowball sampling (Mack et al, 2005; Kumar, 2005) in the recruitment process. Purposive sampling is a common sampling technique. It matches the objectives of the study through selected criteria to collection of data from a sample. Mack et al (2005) define it as a strategy that groups participate according to preselected criteria relevant to the research question. Snowball sampling also known as ‘chain referral’ (Mack et al, 2005) is a form of purposive sampling. Here participants or contact persons using their social networks refer the researcher to those who could potentially participate or connect with other participants.

The recruitment strategy required an initial introductory contact to gauge awareness on willingness to participate and also to ensure that it would be understood that participation would be voluntary. Participants were approached through various contacts to partake in the interviews. The sample size was set at 20 participants in each location, but took into account an expansion at a later stage if needed and was decided considering two elements:

1. The purpose of the study is not to extrapolate the findings to validate experiences of a larger population, but to showcase fittingness within the broader paradigms. Also the nature of the study requires in-depth data in narrative form, and generation and analysis of these is more manageable and appropriate with a smaller sample size.
2. The time limits of the doctoral study and resources availed confined the periodic stretch in which the data could be collected.

2.3.3 Study locations

The study locations are metropolitan Perth in Australia and metropolitan Mombasa in Kenya. Short synopses of facts and figures on the two countries are presented after this chapter. The basis for the selection is premised on contrast and similarity in the context of Muslim minorities as a section of the population. According to the ABS Yearbook for 2008 (ABS, 2008), there were about 340,000 Muslims making 1.7% of the total Australian population. Data on Muslims in Kenya varies from a modest approximation of 8-10% in

official government figures to a substantial 30% estimated by Muslim organizations (Bakari and Saad, 1995) and possibly above as other data sources show (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). Kenya does not officially recognize the need to manage its plural society that consists of about seventy ethnic groups including non-indigenous nationals. Australia on the other hand has actively implemented a multicultural policy since the 1970s to cope with its growing diversity. However, both are secular democracies that accommodate religious diversity in their national make-up.

A significant reason for the choice of Mombasa is my own knowledge of and accessibility to resources within the two areas under study. My connection with Mombasa as a place of origin enables a familiarity with the Muslim community and access to participants through personal contact. Further, the coastal region where the town of Mombasa is situated is a distinct contrast location as a Muslim majority region in a majority Christian country. It has a unique history in terms of the presence of Muslims in the region. Earliest evidence of Muslim presence in the region dates back to the 8th century. Colonization by the Portuguese, the Omani Arabs and the British and the presence of Asian settlers gives it a largely distinct culture very different from the rest of the country. Historically, Muslims in the region have been very apprehensive of the Western style modernization pattern that has evolved in post-independent Kenya. This uneasiness is exacerbated in the globalized environment.

The choice of Perth in Australia is explained in the preface. As an insider within the Australian Muslim community, I was also able to approach and gain access to participants with relative ease.

2.3.4 Research instrument

The research instrument is a semi-structured interview question schedule. The questions are based on the themes relevant to the study. Mostly open-ended, these are designed to explore the perspectives of the women on the identified issues. They include prompt probes to encourage generation of detailed information on the areas of enquiry. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.

The validity of the research instrument is built into its link with the objectives of the study. Validity (Kumar, 2005) refers to how the specific instrument reflects the concept that is under study, both in logic and in assessment. The choice of the data collection instrument is guided by the theoretical orientation of the study and its thematic content. As noted before, the objective and the themes of the study are outlined in Chapter 1 and the aim of the primary research is to capture these in the narratives of the participants using a question schedule. The six identified themes as drafted in Chapter 1 are:

- Demographics;
- changing gender relations in Muslim societies;
- perception of the global focus on Islam;
- the localized impacts of Islamic revivalism on individuals and communities;
- the perception and the focus on the veil as part of an Islamic identity; and
- perceptions of being a part of a culturally plural society.

The six areas of query are detailed below:

Demographics – Information obtained covers six areas – age, ethnicity, education, employment, marital status, and family size.

Changing gender relations in Islam - The questions within this section seek to discover how gender relations have changed in Muslim societies over time and how they are perceived by the participant women themselves.

Perception of the global discourse on Islam - The impacts of the focus on Islam, on Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular are ascertained here. The probe questions seek responses on the sources of discourse and impact on the individuals.

The localized impacts of Islamic revivalism - The questions here attempt to capture the local impacts of Islamic revivalism. They are designed to reveal particularly the effects of proselytizing on gender roles especially that of a domesticated role for Muslim women.

The focus on the Muslim women's veil - The inclusion of this line of enquiry was seen imperative in light of the disproportionate focus on the Muslim veil. The section considers the focus on the types of responses the veil elicits both within and outside the Muslim communities. It also enquires about the reasons why individual Muslim women veil.

Perceptions of being a part of a pluralistic society - Here the questions relate to views on multiculturalism and inclusiveness in the two multicultural societies. The term multiculturalism is unfamiliar to most people in Kenya, the phrase 'different ethnic groups living side by side' was used instead.

The questionnaire was trialled for reliability beforehand to gauge the interpretation of the questions by the respondents. Two colleagues at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia were asked to participate in a mock interview to determine how the questions would be construed by respondents and changes were made accordingly for a better comprehension of these.

The process for formulating the questions was similar to that outlined in Kumar's (2005, p 139) guidelines for constructing a research instrument. The underlying principles according to him are relating the questions to the objectives of the research and relay these back to the research question. The study's research question relates to discovering how Muslim women are responding to contemporary challenges in a globalized world and is aimed at discovering how they are influenced by modern living, as well as by the current forces of modernization, globalization and Islamization. The queries in the interview schedule are formulated in relation to this.

Kumar's (2005) strategy devises the research instrument using four steps in the construction:

1. Step 1 considers the objectives of the study
2. Step 2 reflects over the associated research queries
3. Step 3 looks at the information required, and
4. Step 4 formulates the questions based on the above.

This linear development of the questions is exhibited in Table 3 below using Kumar's (2005) guidelines to construct the research questions.

For each of the questions, the objectives of the particular area of enquiry (Step 1) are considered first and after much reflection the associated queries are identified and defined (Step 2). Following this, the process looks into what particular information would be required (Step 3). This ultimately helps in the formulation of the questions themselves (Step 4).

Table 3: Formulation of the questionnaire

| Step 1 Research objective | Step 2 Associated question/s | Step 3 Information required | Step 4 Questions |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. To provide demographic information on ethnicity, education, employment, marital status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ethnic mix comprises the Muslim communities in Australia/Kenya? • What is the level of education, age, employment, marital status, family size of the participants? | Personal details about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Marital status and children • Education • Employment | Can you tell me about yourself? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your age • your ethnicity • your marital status and children • education • employment |
| 2. To understand how Muslim women view gender relations in the household | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are Muslim women's view of gender relations • Are there perceptions of change across time? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perceptions of gender relations in Muslim societies as viewed by Muslim women. • Perceptions of changes in gender relations in Muslim households over time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you perceive gender relations in your household? • Have gender relations changed in Muslim communities over time? |
| 3. To establish whether the current focus on Islam has an impact on the lives of Muslim women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the contemporary focus on Islam have an impact on Muslim women? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the focus on Islam on Muslim in general, Muslim women in both the public and private spheres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the present focus on Islam have an effect on Muslims? • What is the source of your perception? • How does it affect you and how do you feel about these things? |

Table 3: Formulation of the questionnaire (continued)

| Step 1 Research objective | Step 2 Associated question/s | Step 3 Information required | Step 4 Questions |
|--|--|---|--|
| 4. To establish the presence of revivalist movement/groups and if there is an imposition of a conservative stance on women's roles in Muslim societies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a presence of revivalist groups in these societies? • Do such groups/individuals influence how Muslim women view gender relations? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of the presence of revivalist groups. • The influence of the proselytizing activities of such groups/individuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of different groups within Sunni Islam? • How do you perceive people or leaders in the Muslim community that would insist on a purely domesticated role for women? • How do such views affect your life personally? |
| 5. To ascertain perceptions of veiling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of responses the veil elicits? • What is the significance of the veil to individual Muslim women? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of responses the veil elicits both within and outside the Muslim communities. • The reasons why individual Muslim women veil | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does veiling (or not) have any bearing on how you are perceived within the Muslim community and the mainstream community? • Why do you veil./not veil? |
| 6. To establish views on inclusiveness within plural societies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do participants view multiculturalism or pluralism? • How included do individuals feel about being a part of their overall society? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of inclusiveness in the societies that participants live in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your views on multiculturalism as a policy? - Australian question schedule • What do you think about 'different ethnic groups living side by side'? - Kenyan question schedule • Do you feel included in the general Australian/Kenyan society? |

2.4 Data collection

There were three stages to the data collection; the recruitment of participants, the actual interviews and then the processing of the data collected. The recruitment strategy was covered in Section 2.3.2, but a brief elaboration follows. Being based in Perth, the interviews here were conducted over a longer period (over 2007 to 2009) than in Mombasa. The interviews in Mombasa took place in November and December of 2007, and continued in December 2008. The last two meetings scheduled for after the elections had to be cancelled due to the disputed outcome of the Kenyan general election in December 2007 that triggered riots in the country. Data collection from Kenya was completed in December 2008 and in Australia in January 2009.

In retrospect, overall there was a lot of enthusiasm with the women eagerly ready to take part and at the end of the interview keen to pass on other contacts. However, there was a degree of reticence from a few women approached in Kenya. Four women did not reply straight away and responded later only to decline to being interviewed. As mentioned before the interviews in Mombasa were also disrupted by the post-election riots of December 2007. One contact in Kenya who was departing for the *hajj* pilgrimage wanted to partake even though she was leaving the next day. Towards evening she called up to say she could not make it as she was visiting relatives²¹, but promised to do so immediately after she came back from the pilgrimage. This time overlapped with the post-election unrest and over three days we tried to get together (as I was leaving to come back to Perth) and gave up in the end because of the unrest and insecurity as the election outcome was undecided for nearly three days. This interview was then completed in December 2008 when I was back in Kenya and was one of the most dynamic in the lot.

The second stage was the interviews themselves which took place at various locations convenient for the participants and include homes, restaurants, offices, malls and a clinic. These were enthusiastic interactions full of hearty conversations that took lively, vibrant courses in which the participants took whole-hearted interest. After initial introductory

²¹ It is customary of Muslims going on the pilgrimage to meet especially the elderly before leaving.

comments, the individual women were oriented to the research through an explanation about the purpose. They were briefed on what sort of questions they would be asked, the time it would take, protection of their confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation, setting the groundwork for the interview. The questionnaire was made available beforehand to those who requested it before commencing the interview. A request for taping the interview was made and taping commenced only when this was obtained. In addition, the interviewed women were given an introductory letter that contained this information as well as contact details for the researcher, supervisor and the Research Ethics Committee's contact details. The participants were explained the contents of a consent form and requested to sign it or indicate that they had perused it. Although all participants did not feel the need to sign the consent forms, they did examine it and noted down their names on it. One woman however, did not feel the need for formal consent and declined to give it, but agreed to take part in the interview. In between these 'technicalities', the process was interspersed with lively exchanges. The conversations were spirited and digressed at some points, but the narratives were so engaging that in some facets these were a bonus to the general purpose.

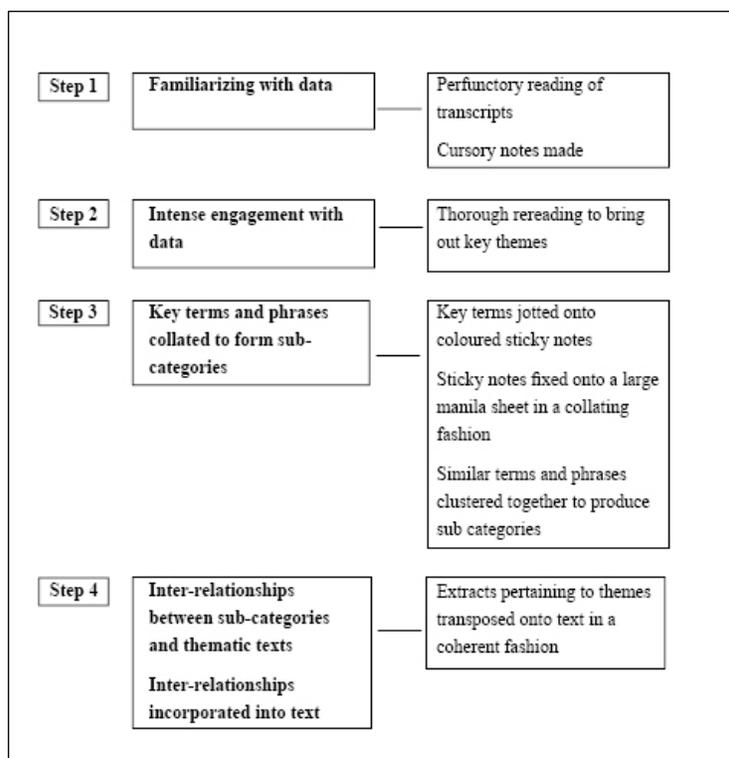
All except three interviews were taped using an audio digital recorder. In two instances this was because of the reluctance of the interviewees to have their voices recorded and in one due to a technical hitch – running out of batteries! These interviews were transcribed directly on paper. The interview times varied a lot ranging between an hour to two and a half hours (probably longer in some instances) for the different participants and included introductory exchanges and some debriefing at the end. However, the actual recordings or noting was limited to the responses to the question schedule.

The third stage of the data collection involved processing of the data. The interviews were downloaded onto a computer and saved as Microsoft Media Player files. These audio files were afterwards individually listened to and thoroughly transcribed, typed and saved as Microsoft Word documents with each interview given a numerical identity. Later, each of the documents was printed onto A4 paper for an in-depth visual perusal of hardcopies to enable the analysis of the data.

2.5 Data analysis

Although interviews can be analyzed individually, for the purpose of this work's continuity and coherence, the analysis is a collation of the narratives for exploring the research objectives and fits into the process of domain analysis. Atkinson and El Haj (1996) drawing and adapting from Spradley's (1979) work identify four steps to data analysis in qualitative research using this approach. It involves the identification of main issues or domains that surface in the analysis of data, grouping these together to construct a taxonomy of sub-categories, a specification of what was said and finally a construction of an overall picture through exploring inter-relationships. This method applies to sources of data that are unstructured and aimed at allowing participants to identify the issues of importance (Atkinson and El Haj, 1996). The method merits use in this process where though focused, the questions are open-ended and allow for exploratory responses. As there is limited literature on guidance in processing data analysis in qualitative research, I had commenced prior to coming across these studies. My own approach called collative transcript analysis is illustrated in Figure 1 below and follows a similar process that corresponds to the domain analysis theoretical method.

Figure 1: Collative transcript analysis



At Step 1, a perfunctory reading of the transcripts allowed for familiarizing with what was being said. This was accompanied by some cursory notes within the margins of the documents. At Step 2, there was a more intense engagement with the data. A thorough rereading of the scripts brought forth key recurring themes (or domains in Atkinson and El Hajj's language) and the analysis at this stage involved observations, remarks and commentary in the margins. The key terms and phrases that surfaced were jotted onto coloured sticky notes with the numerical identity of the interviewee next to it, in Step 3. These sticky notes were then fixed onto a large manila sheet in a collating fashion; similar terms/phrases were clustered together and sub-categories emerged with specific components. Each of the sub-categories was then given an ordinal merit depending on how recurrent the sub-category theme was, and titled onto a sheet of paper with phrases from the interviews and the interviewee identification adjunct to this. At Step 4, the inter-relationships between the sub-categories were established within the thematic text and these were incorporated coherently within the chapters using the extracts from the transcripts.

The transcriptions were verbatim, but their extractive use in the study has been corrected for grammar. Apart from proper syntax, I have also added words to give clarity to sentences; here my interjections within the extracts are bracketed and in italics.

This four step process was followed for all the questions except for the first part of Question 1, where demographic data related to the specific domains of age, education, employment, etc are presented in a quantitative form. Here the data was input into the tables straight from the transcripts.

2.6 Ethical issues

In keeping with requirements of thoroughness in research, ethical approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Murdoch University. Ethics approvals granted in any Western Australian University are recognized by all other Western Australian Universities which simplifies the process of inter-institutional research and links. The permit was granted in February 2006 and renewed in February 2008. The research was initially

approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee and this approval was then officially recognized by Curtin University of Technology. Mack et al (2005, p 9) highlight three core principles that form a universal acceptance of research ethics - respect for all persons, beneficence and justice. Respect requires a commitment to ensuring the autonomy of the research participants. Beneficence involves a commitment to minimizing risks associated with the research and justice to ensuring a fair distribution of risk and benefits resulting from the research.

To ensure autonomy as noted above, both an oral and written request was made for participating in the interviews and commenced only after this was obtained. Given the nature of the research no risks were perceived at the time of commencement and again as noted above, a few women declined to be interviewed and this was duly respected. A non-disclosure of identity and confidentiality of the research data was assured. During the interviews there was no hesitation to respond to any of the lines of enquiry except for one instance where the participant did request stopping the recording to clarify an issue of identity. The session only continued after she had talked about it (she did want to talk the issue, but did not want that particular segment to be recorded). This request was also respected; in that the data does not include that portion of the interview. The participants were made aware of the dissemination of findings at conferences, within publications as well as a part of the PhD thesis and access to it upon completion in the University library. On the whole, in providing a means of having Muslim women's voices heard, it is hoped that this research will benefit Muslim women in general.

2.7 Resolving critical moments- reflections on the methodology

In presentation the process of research described above appears linearly progressive and carefully assembled, however the reality has been fraught with what Byrne-Armstrong et al (2001) call 'critical moments' that are often sanitized out of the research process. In looking back at the process of thesis mapping, in both the plan and the procedure, I relate well to these critical moments described by Byrne-Armstrong et al, as 'the unspoken and unacknowledged' (see their preface) instances that lie unilluminated in the work of research. Within my own work I find comparable moments noticeable more like of waves of

wavering that befit the implicit instances of irresoluteness over aspects of the work. Here I recount one of my main critical moments.

A major critical moment relates to the conceptualization of the methodology. The search for a genre that was expressive of the processes that brought me to this enquiry and led to the methods I adopted in this work took a long time to conceptualize. The examination of literature on research methodologies left me somewhat frustrated in that I could not locate the course of action I had employed and therefore found it challenging to communicate and convey the approach I was immersed in; in coming from the place of the 'self'; until I came across Etherington's (2004) work on reflexivity in research.

My passage in coming to this enquiry assembled as a self-narrative in the preface is an integral part of the mapping of this thesis. The elements of investigation are drawn from own life experiences that confer a sustained zeal and interest in providing an alternative voice. Finding my work, as well as everyday living flowing and entwined in the theoretical framework that would provide the basis for the study, how was I going to draw the explicit boundaries that would fit into the mould of good research which is normally seen as objective and devoid of self identity and subjectivity? In trying to balance this self-indulgence with conducting objective academic research, I became aware of the tension between the subjectivity of self-disclosure and the theoretical authenticity of good research. Yet, I found myself in an unavoidable heuristic process where self-experiences served as stimulating interest as a means of furthering investigation on the lives of Muslim women. What genre in research methodology would allow this engagement? Some of the resolves lay in Etherington's (2004) observations of emergent changes in research paradigms that I later found reflected in the works of others like Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), Ellis (2004), Davies (2008) and Clandinin and Connelly (2004).

The reflexive process reveals how the inclusion of the personal, social and cultural background led to the study and how these provide a backdrop for the context in which the data is situated. Although there is considerable debate on the value of reflexivity in research as it encourages self-exposure, it is increasingly emerging as an important methodology in

social science research. Its value in interpretation according to Etherington (2004) is appreciated as a validation by the audience through understanding the position the researcher adopts in relation to the study. On the development of research practices, Etherington (2004, p 19) observes that ‘with the challenges created by feminist and new paradigm research methodologies, the use of the ‘self’ has become more and more legitimate in research’. She also notes that, ‘gender, culture, history and the socio-political context’ (p 22) impact how we ascribe meaning to experiences. Whereas traditionally academic research has been seen as an objective exercise that in its thoroughness distances itself from the study at hand, new paradigm methodologies and feminist research influenced by ideologies such as post-modernism and social constructionism allow for openness in methods of enquiry that include situating the self within the research. In offering an alternative method of enquiry, post-modernism largely characterized by globalized, information-based societies encourages ‘other ... marginalized voices to be heard alongside those of the dominant Western discourses...’ (Etherington 2004, p 21). Social constructionism popularized by Berger and Luckmann (1966) considers how social phenomena develop in particular social contexts and challenges accepted knowledge of grand narratives by deconstructing fixed beliefs and inviting other ways of thinking (Derrida, 1981).

Herein I find support for my methodology as well as recognize how it fits within genres that incorporate elements of one’s own life experience in research (Ellis, 2004). Juxtapositioning my narrative at the start of the work has helped illuminate the broader social and cultural assumptions and processes that impel a search to make meaning out of these and to discover how these play a role in the lives of Muslim women through their narratives.

Following are two factsheets that give a snapshot of the two locations, Australia and Kenya. Subsequently Chapter 3 draws up the profiles of the two participant groups.

Factsheet 1: Some facts and figures on Australia²²

Figure 2: Australia – States and Major Cities



Source: Vectored using template from www.greenwichmeantime.com

History:

Although the first recorded European contact with Australia was in the 17th century, it wasn't until 1770 that the east coast of Australia was claimed for the British Crown and colonized. In the early years, the settlement was a penal colony; later free settlers arrived. There was a massive depopulation of indigenous Aboriginal people both through exposure to new diseases and forced assimilation. An alliance of the six colonies formed a federation in 1901 and became the Commonwealth of Australia. The country remained largely a white settlement and it wasn't until 1966 that the White only

²² The information presented here is mostly from Australian Government websites, however some is also retrieved from CIA-the World Factbook – Australia at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html> Australian, as well as from the Country Profile: Australia on the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress website at <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Australia.pdf>. Accessed January 27, 2010.

Australia policy on migration was dismantled and allowed in other non- Europeans. However, assimilation within the mainstream European society was still maintained. The last vestiges of the White Australian policy were removed in the 1970s and from then onwards, migrants from other backgrounds have been accepted. Official policy also recognized that large numbers of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds experienced hardships as they settled in Australia, and required more direct assistance. Expenditure on migrant assistance has risen sharply in response to these needs.

Economy:

Australia has a stable competitive economy that has enjoyed average growth of about 3.3% over the last 17 years. Recent growth has been boosted by demand for commodities from markets in China. The country has low barriers to trade and investment. Since a wave of micro-economic reform in the early 1990s, competition policy has been a key ingredient of the economy’s continuing success, including areas such as transport, telecommunications, electricity and gas. While its economic success has been based on agricultural, mineral and fuels resources, it is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based economy.

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| GDP per capita | \$38,500 (2009) |
| Growth rate | 0.8% (2009) |
| Inflation rate | 1.9% (2009) |

Population:

In 2009, the total population was 21,262,641. 18.6% were aged under 15, 67.9% were 15 to 64 years of age, and 13.5 % above 64. Most of the population lives on the two coastal regions of the East and the South-West of the continent in urban regions.

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Total Population | 21,262,641 (July 2009) |
| Urban | 89% of total population (2008) |
| Growth rate | 1.195% (2009) |
| Fertility | 1.78 children born/woman (2009) |

Education:

Education has a three-tier model – primary, secondary and then tertiary. From age six to sixteen, education is compulsory in some states. It is primarily the responsibility of the states. Public schools are free of charge. A number of independent schools are run by religious groups.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Female literacy | 99% (2005) |
| Male literacy | 99% (2005) |
| Government spending on education | 4.5% of GDP (2005) |

Health:

With the government's total spending on health-care and a well-developed health-care system, Australians enjoy good health and have one of highest life expectations in the world. The government funds a national health-care system and around 40% have added private health insurance cover. The leading causes of death in cancer and cardiovascular diseases. An estimated 14,000 people live with HIV/AIDS.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Life expectancy at birth | 81.63 years (2009) |
| Infant mortality rate | total: 4.75 deaths/1,000 live births (2009) |
| HIV/AIDS incidence | 0.2% (2007) |

Welfare:

Australia has an extensive social welfare system that addresses education, health-care, housing and income needs of its citizens. Welfare programs are also designed to include family, youth, student, child-care, disabilities, and support for the aged.

Religion:

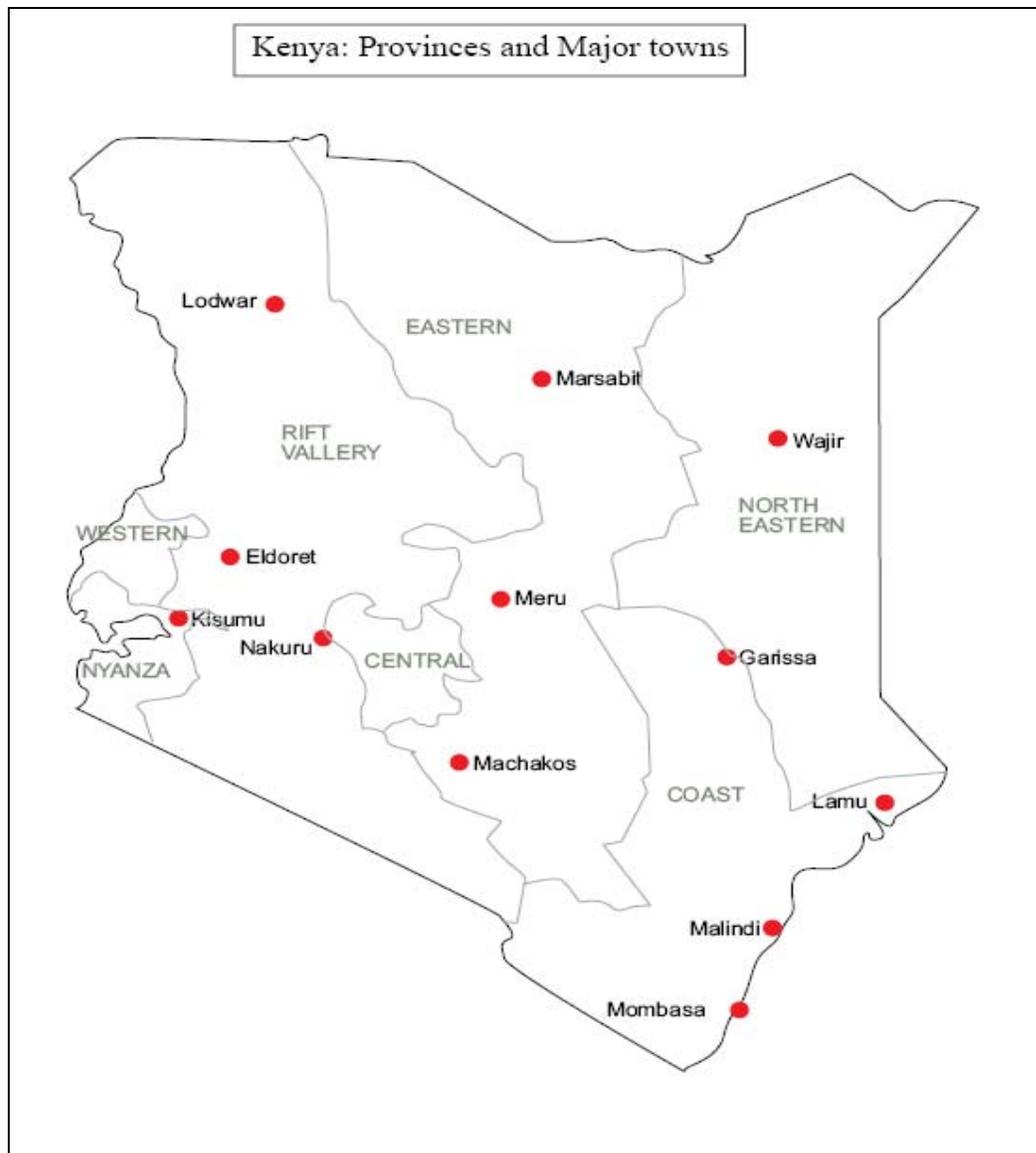
The country had no official religion, but it is predominantly a Christian country, however other religions are also practiced. Around 64 per cent of all Australians identify as Christians. Most other major faiths are represented. 2.1% of the population are Buddhists, 1.7% Muslims, 0.7% Hindu and 0.4% Jews.

International Relations:

Throughout its history, Australia has been a close ally of the United States of America. It continues to maintain a close political, economic and military relationship. The country participated in the US led military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also has close relations with China, Japan and Indonesia.

Factsheet 2: Some facts and figures on Kenya²³

Figure 3: Kenya – Provinces and Major Towns



Source: Vectored using template from www.greenwichmeantime.com

History:

Kenya's colonial history begins with the partitioning of East Africa into mostly British and German spheres of influence. British rule was established in 1920 when Kenya

²³ The information presented here is retrieved mostly from the CIA- the World Factbook –Kenya at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html> and the Country Profile: Kenya of the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress at <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kenya.pdf>. Accessed January 27, 2010.

became a Crown Colony. This opened up the fertile highland to white settlement. Africans and other groups were dispossessed of land and restricted to reserves. Kenya became independent in 1963 under the Kenya African National Union with Jomo Kenyatta as its first president. While Africanization following independence transferred land and opened up opportunities for many, successive governments have privileged a section of the society.

Economy:

Concentrations of wealth and an extremely high rate of population have created wide per capita income disparities. A market-based economy, its dependency on agriculture and the tourism industry makes it vulnerable to both seasonal and international cycles. This was worsened by the suspension of aid pending political and economic reforms and improvements in human rights and corruption conditions in the 1990s. Kenya presently has one of the worst performing economies in the world.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| GDP per capita | \$1,600 (2009) |
| Inflation rate | 20.5% (2009) |
| Growth rate | 1.8% (2009) |

Population:

Kenya had a population of 39,002,772 in 2008. 42.3 % of the population was below 15 years, 55.1% was between 15 and 64 years and 2.6% over 65. Since the 1970s fertility rates have dropped and current estimates are 4.56 born per woman. Kenya was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to adopt a national family planning program. Less than a third of the population lives in urban areas.

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Total Population | 39,002,772 (2008) |
| Urban | 22% of total population (2008) |
| Population growth rate | 2.691% (2009) |
| Fertility | 4.56 children born/woman (2009) |

Education:

Education is a three-tier system with eight years of compulsory primary, four years of secondary and four of tertiary education. The medium of instruction is English language. Though the government offers free primary education, the quality of education is relatively poor due to limited public spending. The country has five public universities and many private institutions of higher education, but these are often not accessible because of affordability.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Female literacy | 79.7% (2003) |
| Male literacy | 90.6% (2003) |
| Government spending on education | 6.9% of GDP (2006) |

Health:

The country battles with life-threatening diseases that can be prevented with the right combinations of education and resources. Among the major health problems are tropical diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. In recent years HIV/AIDS has been on the rise and become a severe problem. Estimates show that prevalence doubled from about 5.1% in 1990 to about 10.6% in 2002. About 70 people a day die of the disease.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Life expectancy at birth | 57.86 years |
| Infant mortality rate | 54.7 deaths/1,000 live births |
| HIV/AIDS incidence | 6.7% (2003) |

Welfare:

Estimates for people living under the poverty line vary from 55 to 60 %. Per capita incomes have been declining and there are growing disparities in income and wealth. Social welfare reforms have only been prioritised in the last few years. Up till now the country had no social welfare and minimal protection for workers, or any form of provision. Supported by international aid agencies, new reforms underway appear promising.

Religion:

About 66% of the population is Christians. Estimates for the number of Muslims are disputed, but range from 10% to 30%. About 1% are Hindus. The Kenyan Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. *Shariah* courts, called *Kadhi* Courts are given jurisdiction over certain civil matters such as divorce and inheritance under the constitution. The constitution also recognizes Christian, Hindu, Muslim and African customary marriages.

International Relations:

Since independence, the country though non-aligned has been pro-Western and seen substantial foreign investment and significant amounts of development aid. Its long-standing ties with the USA make it a vulnerable target of terrorist activity. In 1998, the American Embassy was attacked. With assistance from the US, counter-terrorism efforts have intensified after these attacks.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

Within gender development, changes related to modernization register in aspects of life related to empowerment of women, both within and outside the home. Falling fertility rates, education enrolment and workplace participation are domains of empowerment that influence increased agency and life choices for women (Malhotra et al, 2002). Gender development theory posits that on the personal level these are associated with a better quality of life for women, on the national level to development goals of economic growth and progress.

Although it is hard to generalize about the Islamic world in collective, literature and empirical data on women in Muslim societies show a trend of continuing sociological modernization in these societies. With regard to demographics including health, education, and reproductive behaviour, in significant measures Offenbauer (2005, p 3) notes that Muslim women are becoming evermore like other women. Similarly studies on Muslim societies (Kandiyoti, 1991; Ashrafi, 1992; Hoodfar, 1997; Kabeer, 2000; Falah and Nagel, 2005 for instance) also indicate a modernizing influence on marriage age, family size, education, family planning, and economic life; that women are marrying at a later age, having smaller families, going for higher education and participating in the workplace. Others like Roy (2004, p 139) observe these transformations in migrant populations in Western nations - '[I]f one considers the sociological evolutions of Muslims, whether in countries of origin or among migrants...most data show an increasing sociological [W]esternization. Almost everywhere fertility rates are falling to European levels (Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, and of course within immigrant community)...' Demographic changes related to development levels are observed across most Muslim societies. These are also noted in Table 10 in Appendix 1. The table shows selected gender-related indicators for Muslim majority countries. There are notable differences in levels of literacy, labour force participation, fertility and life expectations at birth. Many of these relate to levels of HDI²⁴;

²⁴ Human Development Index - The index adds aspects of social development including a healthier life (measured by life expectancy at birth), knowledge (measured by adult literacy rates) as well as a decent standard of living (through GDP measures)

the countries represent high, medium and low HDI levels. Some anomalies present in countries where the HDI is low especially in sub-Saharan Africa, yet there is high female labour force contribution.²⁵ Other irregularities are noted for many of the Middle Eastern countries where both the HDI and literacy are relatively high, yet female workplace participation low²⁶.

Interventions in gender-focused development have generally been concentrated around:

Education - A development initiative, as well as a key strategy in poverty eradication, education contributes directly to the growth of national income through productive capacities. Literacy is associated with women's participation in labour force and therefore to national income as well as contribution to household income. As female education rises, there are improvements in child mortality and family health as well as population growth. Educated women are likely to be better informed about family planning, nutrition as well as about their legal and other rights (Roudi-Fahmi and Moghaddam 2003). Two Millennium Development Goals focus on gender empowerment and equality through female education. (See Appendix 3 for the MDGs).

Economic empowerment: The rationale behind economic empowerment through employment and income-generation is financial independence resulting in women's ability to influence or make decisions through a better status in the household. As women are disproportionately affected by poverty, gender development policies have focused a lot on income-generation for women in poverty alleviation, based on the fact that the spread of benefits are likely to go towards food, education and medicine and much more than if focused on men. Economic empowerment goes beyond merely employment; it includes issues such as legal reforms in property rights, as well as engagement in gender advocacy to alleviate gender discrimination.

²⁵ This could be explained by the rural component of labour force participation where women work alongside men in subsistence farming.

²⁶ Possibly due to the socio-economic conditions and cultural norms. Many of these are rich oil-producing countries where high household incomes do not compel female's productive roles and at the same time domesticated roles for women fit cultural norms.

Population: Population policies have helped in demographic transition - where countries move from high fertility and high child and maternal mortality to lower birth-rates and lower mortality. The focus is around maternal health and family planning. Contraceptive technology and family planning help determine the spacing between children. The basis is that a smaller number of children eases the pressure on women in terms of energy and health.

Such societal makeovers manifest strongly in enlarging women's choices and extending their public lives into the market and civil spheres. The contemporary integration of local spaces into the larger global economy expands possibilities even further. Locating how empirical evidence of changes is reflected in the narratives of participants, the analysis in this chapter examines their responses to queries on demographics. The interview questionnaire uses some of the most commonly employed aggregate level indicators on gender development - family size, education, and labour market participation²⁷ that render women human capital - contributors to the modern economy's development, to examine localized experiences. The respondents were also asked about their self-perceived ethnicity; how they describe or define their ethnicity. The imperative for including ethnicity is viewed in light of the discourses on national identities in the aftermath of 9/11, a theme discussed further in Chapter 9.

In its initial plan, the chapter was meant to be just a quantitative inspection of the data that would give a demographic snapshot of the two groups. The intense and detailed narrative that came to the fore in the examination obliged a modification to a deeper analysis locating the narratives in their social milieus. Within the question, the prompts were designed to establish mostly empirics of demographics and ethnicity. The narratives went further to include aspects of social and cultural influences of their settings surfacing in how the women described themselves when asked to 'tell me about yourself'. In the self-perception of ethnicity, while the question drew mundane responses from the Kenyan group, the

²⁷ Other indicators like health, nutrition and basic needs are salient. In the context of the thesis, these however, are not seen as relevant because of the sample criteria – urban, middle-class women. It is assumed and was observed during the interviews that the women are in general good health and of good physical means.

Australian responses were intense about their experiences as a minority and migrants in the country. The Kenyan responses were more enthusiastic about commitments of the women revolving around the processes of development. The last parts (3.1.5 and 3.2.5) of the profiles therefore discuss how identity and ethnicity is bound up with the migration experience of the Australian group and how women in the Kenyan group are engaging with issues of social development respectively.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first two (3.1 and 3.2) draw up general synopses of the two groups. Each synopsis begins with a table presenting numerical data on age, marital status, educational qualifications, employment, place of birth and ethnicity, followed by a discursive analysis that presents these in a qualitative profile. The qualitative profiles are developed against the spatial backdrop of the broader Muslim communities in the two countries, with some briefs on the historical presence of Muslims in each, as well as current statistical data. Where the rich narrative is seen relevant in the discussion, excerpts from the transcripts, quoting the women directly have been added. The last portions of these profiles cover the two significant, but different issues that surfaced. In the case of the Australian group the significance of ethnicity and acculturation emerge much more in how the women perceive their 'self'. For the Kenyan group, identities are integrally connected to the complexities of change, both in the development opportunities availed nationally and through insertion into the global economy.

Section 3.3 drawing from the two profiles locates the identities within development discourse and how these are changing within their social and economic environments. It also fleshes out the broader influence of culture in the personalities of the women and the last section (3.4) presents the key findings for the chapter.

3.1 General profile of Australian respondents

3.1.1 Muslim women in Australia

The presence of Muslim women in Australia follows the pattern of Muslim migration in the country. Even though early Muslim existence in Australia dates back to the 17th century, the transient, work-related presences of fishers from the Indonesian archipelago left little social influences. Stevens (1993), writing about the later more enduring existence of Muslims in Australia notes that this was largely all-male communities of Afghan cameleers. It wasn't until well into the 1980s that the numbers of Muslim migrants increased and with it the presence of Muslim women (Cleland, 2001; Kabir, 2005). From 1996 to 2001 the number of Muslim women increased by 39.3% (Yasmeen, 2007).

The diverse ethnicity of the twenty women who participated in the study in Perth, Australia is an element of the wide varied backgrounds of Muslims in the country. Muslims in Australia come from about 70 countries, from different parts of the world. About a third of the Australian Muslim population were born in Australia, approximately 28% in the Middle East or North Africa, 16% in Asia; 9% in Europe, 4 % in Africa (excluding the North) and 3% from Oceania excluding Australia (HREOC, 2004).

Among the participants in the study, five women were born in Australia, three in Malaysia, two in Singapore, Somalia, Afghanistan, and South Africa, one each in Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea and Indonesia. Of those born in Australia, three are second-generation Australians whose parents were born outside Australia, one a third generation Australian of Anglo-Celtic parentage, and one a fifth generation Australian also of Anglo-Celtic parentage. The Anglo-Celtic women are both converts to Islam, the rest are all born Muslims. The birth-places of the women are noted in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographic profile of the Australian participants

| Participant name | Age group (yrs) | Marital status | No. of children | Qualification level | Education field | Employment field and type (FT or PT) ²⁸ | Self-identified ethnicity | Place of birth |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| Rahila | 20-30 | Single | - | Bed | Maths and Science | Education FT | Australian | Malaysia |
| Huda | 20-30 | Single | - | BA and DipEd (enrolled) | Anthropology and Education | Office Reception PT | Muslim Australian | Australia |
| Nasrin | 40-50 | Married | 3 | PhD and DipEd (enrolled) | Accounting, International Relations and Education | Education PT | Bangladeshi | Bangladesh |
| Nurzati | 40-50 | Married | 1 | BSc | Nursing | Medical FT | Singaporean | Singapore |
| Raffiah | 50-60 | Married | 4 | Diploma | Legal practice | Legal PT | Singaporean Australian | Singapore |
| Faiza | 50-60 | Married | 2 | Year 12 equivalent | General | Community volunteer | Malaysian | Malaysia |
| Mansura | 20-30 | Single | - | BSc | Biology | Social work FT | Afghan Australian | Afghanistan |
| Eesha | 30-40 | Married | 1 | PhD (enrolled) | Physics | Education PT | Egyptian American | Egypt |
| Attiya | 30-40 | Married | 3 | Yr 12 | General and Islamic studies | Mental health PT | South African Australian | Australia |
| Saida | 20-30 | Married | - | BA | Gender Studies | Refugee settlement PT | Eritrean | Eritrea |
| Razia | 40-50 | Married | 2 | MBBS | Medicine | Community welfare PT | Afghan | Afghanistan |
| Annam | 20-30 | Married | 1 | BA (enrolled) | Politics | - | Asian Australian | Indonesia |
| Rosmina | 40-50 | Married | 5 | Diploma | Personal training | Health and fitness | South African Australian | South Africa |
| Rabiyya | 50-60 | Married | 5 | LLB equivalent | Law | Retired community volunteer | Somali Australian | Somalia |
| Fatima | 20-30 | Single | - | BSc (deferred) Diploma | Naturopathy and Psychology | Health FT | South African | South Africa |
| Norma | 40-50 | Divorced | 2 | BSc | Engineering | Education PT | Malaysian | Malaysia |

²⁸ Full or part-time

Table 4: Demographic profile of the Australian participants (continued)

| Participant name | Age group (yrs) | Marital status | No. of children | Qualification level | Education field | Employment field and type (FT or PT) ²⁹ | Self-identified ethnicity | Place of birth |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| Tanya | 20-30 | Married | 1 | BA | Media | Media PT | Australian | Australia |
| Maryam | 30-40 | Married | 5 | BA enrolled) | Community Development | Disability services PT | Australian | Australia |
| Fardaus | 20-30 | Single | - | BEd (enrolled) | Education | Community welfare PT | Somali | Somalia |
| Naheed | 20-30 | Single | - | MBBS | Medicine | Medical FT | Australian | Australia |

²⁹ Full or part-time

3.1.2 Age and family patterns

The ages of the women range from 20 to under 60 years. At the time of being interviewed, eight women were aged between 20-30 years, three were between the ages of 30-40, five of ages between 40-50 years and four were between 50-60 years in age.

Thirteen women are married, six single and one divorced. Twelve of them are in cross-cultural marriages; of which four are married to men of Anglo-Celtic background who have converted to Islam. The others are married to Muslim men of different countries of origin. The two Anglo-Celtic participants, both converts to Islam are married to Muslim men of a different ethnic origin; one from Pakistan and the other from Fiji.

The highest number of children for the participants is five; three women said they have five children. The average number of children for the group is 1.75³⁰. Only one has a grandchild. Their household sizes range from one to five members of the immediate family. In the case of the older women, some of their children are married and have left home. The six unmarried women live with their families and the divorced lady on her own.

3.1.3 Educational qualifications

There is little methodical research on the educational achievements of Muslims in Australia and therefore limited data available on the qualifications of Muslim women. However, general facts on Australian Muslims suggest that 13% of overseas-born Muslim women and 18% of overseas-born Muslim men hold a Bachelors degree (HREOC, 2004, p 214)³¹. Kabir and Evan's (2002) study on Muslim labour market participation shows above national percentages in qualifications among Muslims for Bachelor and higher degrees. Based on 1996 ABS Census data, their findings point to a Muslim total of 6% in comparison of

³⁰ As the sample size is too small, comparison with the Australian fertility rate which in 2005 was 1.81 children (ABS, 2008) is not attempted here.

³¹ The question on religion is optional in Australian census data, the precise numbers are to be understood with care. HREOC uses unpublished data from the 2001 Census of Australia. See endnote, page 212 in HREOC, 2004.

the national total of 2% as having higher degree qualification and 16% compared to the national total of 12% in Bachelor's degree qualifications.

Reflecting high Muslim female educational attainment, six of the participants have completed Bachelor's degrees. Four are enrolled in a Bachelor's program, one in a doctoral program and one has deferred study to become actively involved in youth related social issues. One woman who has a PhD in accounting, unable to find employment in her chosen field has decided to reskill by enrolling in an education diploma program. Two women have completed the equivalent of Year 12. Two are medical doctors; one having recently completed study in Australia is doing an internship at a local hospital in Perth. The other, who studied in Afghanistan has not been able to have her qualifications recognized in Australia and has reskilled through various short courses. The rest have attained tertiary qualification at a diploma level.

With a mix of science and arts, diverse fields of education are represented in the educational pursuits of the women. Some of the women have moved between fields for a number of reasons including pursuing different interests and a competitive job-market. Most of the women born outside Australia have undergone part of their education abroad; four obtained their first degrees outside Australia.

All of the women indicate having completed Islamic education at various levels; one has formal training from an Islamic institution in India. Three of the younger participants aged between 20-30 were educated at both primary and secondary levels within an integrated curriculum school at a local Islamic school in Perth³². The narratives of the two convert participants suggest an understanding of Islam through reading as well as attending various forums for Islamic education.

Upholding of religious values, norms, and customs throughout Muslim societies is through religious education that varies, but has the basics of learning to read the Qur'an in Arabic. This is evident in the narratives of the women who have been socialized in Islamic culture through formal and informal learning and knowledge about it. Imparting this education to

³² Since the 1980s Muslim communities have established a number of schools that combine the public school curriculum with Islamic religious education. At the time of writing there were three integrated curriculum schools in Perth.

children is an integral part of sustaining the practice of the religion and integrated curriculum schools are an option that provides this choice³³.

3.1.4 Employment

Again there is very little specific research available on Muslim women's participation in the Australian workforce. Two data sources computed using ABS statistics (McCue, 2008 and Foroutan, 2006) show increased workplace participation of Muslim women in the last three decades. According to McCue (2008), Muslim women's participation in the labour market increased from 26.3 % in 1991 to 30% in 2001. This resonates approximately with Foroutan's (2006) findings that 31.1% of Muslim women participated in the workforce in 2001.

Within the study group, six women indicate that they are working full-time. Twelve are in part-time or casual employment; of these, five are also studying at university. Two women are 'full-time' volunteers, availing themselves as and when needed for community work. One, volunteers generally in the community; another, a retired lawyer now helps refugee women in her Somali community to settle in Australia. The women work across different areas including medicine, education, legal, health and fitness, media and community welfare in both the private and public sectors.

In its theoretical basis, Fouroutan's (2006) study on the economic behaviour of Muslim women assumes significant impact of Islamic ideology on the economic behaviour of Muslim women. It also assumes potential obstacles to working through family formation. Although religion does not feature as a possible obstacle to workplace participation in the experience of the women, family priorities appear relevant in taking up full-time work. Annam aged twenty-two, for example, who has a three year old son, prefers to work only two days a week as her priority is looking after her son. Tanya, also a young mother of a baby girl sees her main role as centred on her family life and her little daughter, chooses to work around these commitments.

³³ Clyne's study on the integrated option in Australia as a culturally appropriate education expresses opinions articulated by Muslim parents as having a choice in school curricula that encompasses both religious and a secular learning. The preference is based on combining learning appropriate behaviour, having respect for Islamic values, fostering an Islamic identity with providing the basis for good citizenship (Clyne, 2001, p 119).

While religion does not feature as a deterrent to workplace participation, there is evidence of migrant disadvantage in fully utilizing educational achievement and skills. The impacts of labour market disadvantage (Kabir and Evans, 2002; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007) common to many migrant workers in Australia are displayed in Razia's account, a qualified medical doctor displaced by the war in Afghanistan. A lack of English proficiency and non-recognition of qualifications have prevented her from finding gainful employment. This leads to poor self-esteem and a lack of confidence. In addition to the social and economic issues of displacement, depression has also adversely affected her employability.

As revealed in Razia's account the migratory experience affects issues of relocation, it also influences how the women see themselves in relation to the mainstream society especially as a minority Muslim, migrant group in Australia. The following section highlights the ways in which migration is bound up with the ethnic identities of the women.

3.1.5 Identity, ethnicity and migration

Migrant entrants to Australia generally arrive as part of three broad streams – family, skilled or humanitarian migration. Ten women have come to Australia as part of a family group to settle permanently within the last three decades. Four (aged between 20-30) were born to parents who are economic migrants. Australia also runs a humanitarian program for resettlement of displaced people. Five women have come on this program in the last twenty years; three have migrated with their families and two as single women were sponsored by their siblings. The remaining two, as third and fifth generation Australians of Anglo-Celtic ancestry have lived all their lives in Australia. All of the women have been in Australia long enough to be socialized into its society, as well as have an awareness of its social, economic and political environment. The varied ways in which the women self-identify their ethnicities are presented in Table 3.

As relatively new arrivals in the migration history of Australia (most having come in the 1970s and 1980s), Muslims still maintain strong cultural ties with countries of origin that surface in how they express ethnicities. Aitchison et al (2007) in an anthology of geographies of identities, explore complex hybrid cultures that have developed across diasporic Muslim communities. Such hybrid cultures blend the old with the new. Although

in most cases ties are maintained with countries of origin, identities are also influenced and fashioned by new networks, as well as the social and economic milieu of the new countries of residence. In the case of the study respondents, although many of the first generation women define their ethnicity in terms of their country of origin, those that have been in the country for very long display confidence in adding 'Australian' to their self-defined ethnicity.

Examining findings on multicultural Australia, Ang et al, (2002) observe that the sense of Australian identity increases considerably over time. Despite this, ambivalence over belonging and acceptance is also present when there are strong cultural differences as in the case of Muslims and the mainstream culture in Australia. In the home, lifestyles may be modeled on conservative and traditional lines, yet the sway of the more liberal thinking of the general community influences how one perceives things. Attiya, born in Australia, talks about such quandaries as she shares her self-identity.

How I identify myself is a bit hard. I was brought up in Australia, so I feel that I have adopted some of the Australian culture - in how I think, but in my lifestyle I am like my family is - South African. I struggle with that and I guess a lot of people who are born here do; in that we do not fit in, not a 100%. I don't identify entirely with my family because they see me as very much Australian and in the Australian culture I guess I am not entirely Australian either. I am a bit in between...

- Attiya

Similarly, Annam, born in Indonesia and who came to Australia as an infant reveals an increased Australian identity over time layered with both cultural and religious influences that have been contested and resisted. As she reveals it, her early life experiences were blemished by racial discrimination that made her family seek identification with an 'in-group' – the Muslims. Over time Annam has developed an assurance of belonging as she finds a balance in religious and cultural influences. To her, her religion, cultural heritage and belonging to Australia are all significantly important in how she identifies herself.

When I was growing up, say up until twelve, I really identified myself as an Asian, an Indonesian who was Australian. But even while growing up we had groups saying things like Asians - bad and so I felt discriminated against because I was Asian, not because I was a Muslim... We started identifying more with Muslims when I came to Perth, had more contact with the Muslim community, ...and started identifying myself more with Muslim

than being Australian. Now I feel that there is a balance between all areas. You have to take pride in your cultural heritage and I believe that my religious identity is my defining identity and everything is just incidental; that is not to say that I don't take pride in the incidentals. So I would identify myself as an Asian-Australian girl ...

- Annam

The role of religion in giving both a moral direction, as well as a guide for conduct in the material world has bearing on identity formation. Depending upon how religion and religious sentiments are seen as shaping one's identity (Roald, 2001). For some these are the key constructors of the sense of self, for others only to be raised in particular circumstances. For Huda (in her twenties), born in Australia, her identity is shaped primarily by her Muslim faith.

How do I see myself? – I would call myself Muslim-Australian. Muslim first, because that is what I use to shape my identity, to shape who I am. Like everyone whatever they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim they will use anything they can grasp like religion or spiritually to make them become better persons. I was given Islam ... so I would call myself Muslim first and then Australian because I grew up in Australia, I was born here.

- Huda

Association with a faith identity can also come through conversion as one adopts the values of a religion and gets acculturated to it. Tanya, who is of Anglo-Celtic background, identifies herself primarily as an Australian. Having converted to Islam recently, she adds Muslim to her identity 'portfolio' as does Maryam, a fifth generation Australian of Anglo-Celtic parentage. Being married to a Pakistani Muslim and with a daughter who is half-Pakistani, Tanya also relays a connection to Pakistani culture. Maryam married to a Muslim from Fiji, however does not register any association with her in-laws, but links her identity more with her roles as a carer and an advocate for disability services in the Muslim community.

I am Australian-Muslim no doubt about that, the other thing is I am a carer. I am a mother, but my other role is that I am a strong advocate for disability services in the Muslim community.

- Maryam

Other influences common to most migratory groups like language, acculturation processes, global and regional ties also play a role in the configuration and reconfigurations of the participants' identities. As Eesha born in Egypt reveals, her parents' ambitions for further studies meant a move from Egypt to America and with busy study schedules little emphasis was put on her learning her mother tongue, Arabic. Residence in Egypt, the USA and now Australia has added layers of different cultures to her identity, all of which she embraces as her own and feels 'pretty mixed up' when she describes herself.

Ethnically I would say that I have a very diverse background because my parents even though they are both Egyptian went to the States when I was very young. ... My childhood until I was almost thirteen was all in America. ... Because my parents were both studying, they were too busy and I only knew English. When I went back (*to Egypt*) I did not even know how to speak with anyone (*in Arabic*)... It took me a year and half or two to feel comfortable with my Egyptian heritage. So when I describe myself, I feel pretty mixed up actually. Until twelve and half or thirteen, we were in America and then I stayed over my teenage and university years in Egypt. Then I married and came to Australia ...
- Eesha

Acculturation processes for many migrants are an important facet of adapting to life in secular Australia and for some Muslims this has meant negotiating their 'Muslimness'. Humphrey (2001) describes this negotiation in terms of issues related to marriage, divorce, burial and religious congregational gatherings and other needs associated with Muslim public and private life. In some circumstances these face reorientation from the public to the private space as revealed in Fatima's response. Fatima's sentiments expose the debility of feelings of not belonging and having to negotiate aspects of culture that are a part and parcel of Muslim lifestyle. Fatima, from South Africa came to Australia as a teenager. In addition to relating the stress of the loss of her 'comfort zones', she also recounts feelings of 'cultural loss' regarding the centrality of the mosque as a social need and the relegation of the religious festival of *Eid* to the private sphere. *Eid* is a festival celebrated throughout the Muslim world in the likeness of Christmas; it is a national holiday in many countries.

The move initially was very, very hard because I didn't want to move here. I really, really didn't want to move here... I guess I didn't have a choice and that was one of the problems that I had... So I think I came into the country hating it before I actually even landed... I missed my friends, I missed my comfort zone, *and* I missed my social life. One of the big

ones was the mosque. We had a mosque across the house. Not like I noticed it when I lived there, but not hearing the *azan*³⁴ everyday it was so weird...*Eid* was so bad, my first *Eid* was miserable. We went to work and it was totally taboo from that what we were used. It was so foreign, total foreign concept and after that we had people come over that night because we had invited them over, but then the workload. Hardly anyone even said *Eid mubarak*³⁵. It did not even feel like it was *Eid*. It was so strange, it was so strange...It was my lifestyle; it was a completely different lifestyle. So it was hard to adjust to that. A big culture shock, big culture shock...

-Fatima

However, this narrative also discloses that identities are susceptible to shifting and growing over time through incorporating wider networks of interaction. Identities are worked and reworked as individuals go through life within a process of 'being and becoming'. 'Being and becoming' are also linked to 'belonging' in the significance that people relate to being grounded in their environs with a sense of acceptance by others within it (Quality of Life Research Unit, n.d). Through time and space, social relationships are mobilized or grow distant. In Fatima's case, her bonds with South Africa thinned over time as her attachment to Australia grew.

South Africa was home irrespective of the fact that I was living here. It was home and I wanted to be there, not here. But once you get used to it then you can see the benefit, once you let go, you have to actually let go of that to realize the benefits of here. And then going back to South Africa on holiday I hated it. ...I guess the thing is that people had changed. Or I thought that they changed, but I think it was me who changed, now in hindsight, I think it was me who actually changed. My best friends - they weren't the same, things had changed. ...I don't think I was expecting that, I was expecting to go back and love it. I was expecting it to be normal like how I had left it and it isn't the same as how you left it.

- Fatima

Acceptance by the broader community is significant in the feeling of belonging. As 'Muslim issues' gained momentum in Australian politics in the aftermath of 9/11, there is growing debate over the term Australian – who is Australian? In terms of ethnicity, the expression still refers to Anglo-Celtic Australia. Jenkins (1996, p 23) looking at models of ethnic identity proposes that sending a message about identity is not enough; that the message has

³⁴ The call to worship is audible in most neighbourhoods in Muslim countries. The call to pray is made five times a day, in the morning before sunrise, at noon, in the mid afternoon, after sunset and at night.

³⁵ This would be the equivalent of Merry Christmas within Christian societies

to be 'accepted by significant others before an identity can be said to be "taken on"'. Other groups may desire to be known as Australian; despite its multicultural stand on embracing others, Australian ethnicity has largely evolved as white Anglo-Celtic and is still accepted as such. Tanya, of Anglo-Celtic background reflects on this.

I find it very tricky because I am Australian even if we go back three generations, all born in Australia. If you go right back to..., obviously I am British. I think it is hard because Australian culture is very new, so when you say Australian..., but then Aboriginals are Australian and they have got much more ethnicity than I feel that I do...In some ways like having a daughter who is half Pakistani and being involved in that part of my new family, like I said I have a little bit of relation to that as well. I would describe myself as Australian-Muslim, but Muslim is not necessarily an ethnicity, I am Australian.
- Tanya

The term Australian is used to describe the majority group in Australia - people of Anglo-Celtic descent and is established as the norm. The racial or ethnic attributes of Australians of Anglo-Celtic descent are thus seldom referred to, whereas those of other groups are emphasized to the exclusion of other, more relevant features (University of Technology, Sydney, 2008). As observed before, these issues are discussed further in Chapter 9.

The perception of resistance to modernity has resulted in increased pressure on Muslims to adopt Australian values and integrate fully into the society. Humphrey (2001) sees the perception as interpreting Muslims as culturally resistant and potentially subversive and therefore needing some form of 'normalizing'. An example of 'normalizing' the Muslim woman image as fitting the model of the Australian modern young women is recounted here.

There is a big thing about asserting your Australianness. I do not feel like I have to assert my Australianness. I was interviewed by ... and they described me as: 'This is... She is an Arts student, and she is Australian born. She is gum and she goes to the gym to keep fit and drops words like, 'like, you know, and stuff' ... When I read that, I was like, is that how I am? She was writing it so that she could make me more normalized when I never thought that I was not normal!... Second year onwards in university, I joined the public affairs council and directed different things...I did things on the guild. Throughout university, straight after high school, I did lots of community work. So I built up a lot of confidence through the things I had done. I was the host of the launch of the interfaith forum at university so things like that made me feel that I was a good person like ... *Hijaab* never crossed my mind except when I would fix it up. It didn't make a difference to me. I have a lot of friends that know me, other people know me, the staff know me, and the lecturers

know me, everyone... so I never felt 'not normal'. When I read that article, it made me feel that to other people it is surprising that I do fit in because I wear a *hijab*, or I am a Muslim or whatever! ...I try the best as a person and there are so many people in situations like me.
- Huda

Even though the outward appearance of Muslimness is not an issue of fittingness for the women themselves, a 'universal' perception of their cultural backwardness initiates an attempt to make them fit into a particular model of the modern Australian woman. Despite her many achievement in various social and public events, it was her Australianess that was of greater interest to the interviewer than her accomplishments³⁶.

As in Huda's case, the participants share a positive outlook towards engaging with the wider community and carving a niche for themselves as Australians in Australia.

3.1.6 Profile summary of the Australian group

A diminutive fraction of the broader Muslim community in Australia, the participant women are varied in age, marital status, and mostly ethnic backgrounds. They come from Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Africa, Egypt and Australia and are first, second, third and fifth generation Australians. While they share the commonalities of the Muslim faith as a compass reference, there is considerable ethnic variation in the group. This transports with it different ways of engagement with lifestyles in Australia, mostly in acculturation³⁷ processes that influences how they see themselves as Muslim women in Australia. Although all have been in Australia for a long time, in their self-definition they present linkages to countries of origin, ancestry, and religion as ethnic qualifiers to distinguish themselves from the mainstream Australian community.

The women have high educational credentials that suggest their potential employability in mostly white-collar sectors, as well as abilities of agency to facilitate good participation in a modern economy such as Australia. Their narratives do not indicate any barriers to

³⁶ Several other experiences of 'unfittingness' were revealed in the narratives, these are examined in Chapter 8.

³⁷ For the two converts to Islam, this has been in the change in cultural behavior and thinking through marital ties with Muslim men

educational pursuits. On the contrary they have continued to pursue educational interests at higher levels in all probability because of tertiary opportunities available both in the form of state and private bursary support, as well as infrastructure availability. This perhaps explains why despite high educational qualifications many are still employed part-time. Contrary to a general perception that religion is a barrier to workplace participation, within the group, it does not play a role in their working patterns. The availability of part-time work possibly features in balancing educational and home commitments.

Although facing some contestation as to their presence and belonging to Australia, overall the group appears to identify positively as Muslims in Australia. They are actively engaged in developing their capabilities in education and participate in the economic and social spheres.

3.2 General profile of Kenyan respondents

3.2.1 Muslim women in Kenya

Muslim women in Kenya are an element of the Muslim population of Kenya approximated to vary from a modest 10% in official government figures and CIA data, to a substantial 35-45% estimated by Muslim organisations³⁸. As early established settlers at the coast of East Africa, Muslims have ‘impacted Kenyan society at the linguistic, cultural, political, economic and social levels long before the dawn of European colonization’ (Bakari and Saad, 1995, p ix). The earliest presence of Islam and Muslim settlement in Kenya is believed to date back to the 8th century (Lodhi, 1994). Through coastal trading activities with the Arabian Peninsula, the infusion of Arab culture into the local as well as intermarriage with the indigenous population produced a distinct ethnic and cultural group - the Swahili, who are mostly Muslim, domiciled along the coast of East Africa. In Kenya, they are largely concentrated in the coastal towns of Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu. However, they are not the majority Muslim group; African Muslims, members of different tribal groups form the bulk of Muslims in Kenya (Oded, 2001). Other Muslims in the country are the Arab communities mostly descendents of Hadrami and Omani people who are strongly linked with the history of the East coast of Africa; as are the Asian Muslims mostly from the Indian sub-continent. Their presence through the trading communities that plied the Arabian Sea and the Indian

³⁸ See CIA Factbook: Kenya (CIA, 2009) and Oded (2000, p 11).

Ocean from as early as the 14th century³⁹ and more recent migrations are also a part of the Islamic ethnoscape of Kenya. Other Muslim groups are the Somalis of North-Eastern Kenya and the more recently settled refugees from Somalia.

³⁹ Earliest evidence of their presence comes from the records of Arab travelers like Ibn Batuta, who on visits to coastal towns of Kilwa and Sofala documented their encounters with traders from the Indian sub-continent (Salvadori, 1983)

Table 5: Demographic profiles of the Kenyan participants

| Participant name | Age group (yrs) | Marital status | No. of children | Qualification level | Education field | Employment field(FT or PT) ⁴⁰ | Self identified ethnicity | Place of birth |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| Amenah | 50-60 | Married | 3 | BSc | Nursing | Self owned medical clinic FT | Yemeni/ Kenyan | Kenya |
| Fatma | 30-40 | Married | 2 | Diploma | Travel | Retail Administration FT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Sabrina | 20-30 | Married | 2 | Yr 12 equivalent | General | Home baking PT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Sauda | 30-40 | Married | 2 | Diploma | Medical Science | Medical Laboratory FT | Somali | Kenya |
| Asfiya | 40-50 | Widowed | 1 | Diploma | Education | School FT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Firoza | 20-30 | Single | - | CA | Accounting | Management FT | Indian | Kenya |
| Muneera | 50-60 | Married | 2 | BA | Literature | Education counsellor PT | Kenyan/ Indian | Kenya |
| Khairun | 30-40 | Married | 2 | Diploma | Medical Science | Medical laboratory FT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Noora | 30-40 | Married | 2 | Diploma | Medical Science | Hospital FT | Yemeni/Kenyan | Kenya |
| Tayyibah | 40-50 | Married | 5 | MSc | Medicine | Paediatrics, Medical lecturer FT | Omani/Kenyan | Kenya |
| Habiba | 50-60 | Divorced | 3 | Diploma | Montessori Education | Nursery education Retired | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Rahma | 50-60 | Married | 3 | BSc | Nursing | Nursing Retired | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Zohra | 40-50 | Married | 4 | Diploma | Hospitality, Community health | Community health FT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Amriya | 20-30 | Married | - | Diploma | Management | Finance development project FT | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Tahmin | 20-30 | Single | - | <i>Alimah</i> ⁴¹ | Islamic theology | Religious teaching FT | Kenyan | Kenya |

⁴⁰ Full-time or part-time

⁴¹ A qualification from an institute of Islamic education

Table 5: Demographic profiles of the Kenyan participants (continued)

| Participant name | Age group (yrs) | Marital status | No. of children | Qualification level | Education field | Employment field(FT or PT) ⁴² | Self identified ethnicity | Place of birth |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| Sanna | 30-40 | Married | - | Tertiary | Home sciences | Self-run classes in craft work FT | Asian/ Kenyan | Kenya |
| Naima | 50-60 | Married | 3 | Diploma | Education | Nursery education Retired | Kenyan | Kenya |
| Fahima | 40-50 | Married | 4 | Tertiary | Accounting | Home maker | Indian/ Malawian | Malawi |
| Safiya | 40-50 | Married | 2 | Tertiary | Tourism | Family business PT | German | Germany |
| Zainab | 30-40 | Married | 3 | BA enrolled | IT | Family business PT | Kenyan/Indian | Kenya |

⁴² Full-time or part-time

The varied ethnicity of the women who participated in the study in Mombasa characterizes the diversity of the Muslim communities in Kenya. These comprise of indigenous as well as established migrant groups. All the participants except two were born in Kenya and have lived most or all of their lives in Kenya. Safiya, born in Germany is a convert to Islam after marrying a local Muslim man, had been in Kenya for twenty-two years at the time of the interview. Farha, born in Malawi came to live in Mombasa after her marriage and has lived for the most part of her twenty-five year married life in Kenya. All except Safiya are born Muslims. Consistent with the historical and contemporary trail of Islamic presence in the region, their varied self-defined ethnicity bears out diversity with a mixture of origins and linkages with countries like Yemen, Oman, India, Somalia, and more recently Europe. Below are some of the ways in which the women describe themselves.

Originally my grandparents are from Yemen, so I am an Arab by origin, South Yemen, but born in Lamu.
- Aamenah

I am from a mixed family which is an Arab and an Indian. My father was an Indian and my Mum is an Arab. I am a born Kenyan.
- Fatma

Our tribe that is al-Mandhry from Muscat originally, but our great, great, great grandfathers and mothers were in Lamu.
- Habiba

I am Somali, Kenyan Somali. I was born in Kenya, I come from the Garissa in the North-Eastern province.
- Sauda

I am a Kenyan citizen by origin I was born here in Kenya and I have lived in Kenya...
- Khairun

I was born in Kenya. We have been here for a very, very long time, my great, great grandfather came down to from India and settled here and then my grandfather, my father and we were all been born here.
- Tahmin

3.2.2 Age and family

The ages of the Kenyan participants also range from 20 to under 60. Four were within the ages of 20-30, six were aged between 30 to 40, five were between 40-50 and the rest aged above 50 at the time of the interviews. All except four women are married; two are single, one divorced and one widowed. The average number of children across the group is 2.15⁴³; and two women have grandchildren. The process of urbanization in Kenya has brought changes to household organization that although moving towards a modern nuclear model, still maintains degrees of extended kinship organization⁴⁴. Five women indicate that they live within an extended family of immediate members. Social and cultural reasons are indicated in these arrangements. Two are single women living in their parents' homes; one married participant also lives with her parents awaiting a visa to go to the United States to join her husband. Another chose to be divorced in order to look after her elderly mother.

Kenya has a relatively limited welfare system and reforms promise some easing with regard to income support measures and protection to workers. There is also little provision to facilitate and ease economic independence of young people or support for senior citizens. The care of the elderly is mostly the joint responsibility of offspring or other kinship. Most young people live with their families until they get married. Such family living arrangements are both culturally appropriate and economically sound. Levels of autonomy are however exercised within the social and economic constraints as indicated in Firoza's narrative. Firoza is a young thirty year old woman, who was educated in Kenya, but spent one year in the UK. She has taken up the opportunities availed to her to advance her career.

I am the kind of person who likes to be independent...I am enjoying my job.... At the moment since my General Manager is not there, basically I am doing the managerial stuff. So I am being exposed to a lot. I have learnt a lot and I feel satisfied in a way that I know things now. I like it. I would like to go on and do more and more - why not if given the opportunity, why not?
- Firoza

⁴³ Kenya's total fertility rate in 2009 (CIA, 2009) was 4.56 born per woman.

⁴⁴ Given the disparities in income, it should be noted that there are various types of household organizations in Kenya very different to those found in Western countries. Here, because the reference is to a middle-class, socio-economic group, there is significant evidence through personal observance that urban families include mostly immediate family members.

3.2.3 Education

All of the participants have an equivalent of a Yr 12 education. Most of them have tertiary qualifications at professional level that have assured active participation in the workplace. There is no specific data available on Muslim female literacy rates in Kenya. However, anecdotal data suggests that the availability of female-only institutions has increased the numbers of secondary school enrolments; primary education is compulsory in Kenya. The lack of tertiary establishments at the coast has meant travelling upcountry or overseas for many school-leavers to obtain further education. With limited places in national universities, education in foreign establishments is an expensive option where traditionally males as main income earners have ranked higher in priority. However, a break from traditional set-ups in educational attainment of females is indicated with many of the participants leaving home for further studies.

All of the women except one indicate that they have completed studies. One has Master's level in paediatrics. Two women have a Bachelor's qualification in nursing, one a Bachelor's in literature and one in accounting. Nine have attained diploma levels in various fields. Having completed their secondary education, four indicate they have additional training in their fields of expertise that is not accredited. One mother of three has enrolled to do a Bachelor's degree in information technology through distance learning. And one young woman after completing part of her secondary education is an *alimah*⁴⁵.

Islamic education through the *madrassah*⁴⁶ system is an integral part of elementary schooling for children in Muslim societies. Whereas once this education was informal and availed in an unendorsed manner, Islamic institutions of learning are now more structured and recognized as formal establishments of learning⁴⁷. Higher institutions that offer the equivalence of university learning in Islamic studies are offered in *darul-ul-ulooms*⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ A qualification from an institute of Islamic education includes a sound knowledge the Qur'an, *hadith*, *fiqh* and Arabic.

⁴⁶ The English transliteration of the word is school.

⁴⁷ As cultural salience becomes accepted in development, the incorporation of Islamic syllabi in secular curricula gains recognition even in the West.

⁴⁸ Transliterates as a 'houses of learning'.

Tahmin was educated at a *darul-uloom* in South Africa and is qualified as an *alimah* and now teaches at a family established *madrassah*.

3.2.4 Employment

Again, no data is available for Muslim women's workplace participation in Kenya. In the participant group, twelve women work full-time and four part-time. Of the four that work part-time, two are retired women who have re-entered the workplace, one as a home-based health product consultant, and the other as an educational counsellor. Only four women indicate that they are not actively participating in the workplace. One is a retired nursery school teacher who is now a full-time carer of her elderly mother, another retired school teacher now enjoys just being a grandmother and another two indicate they are just 'housewives'. However, one takes casual orders for home-baking which is her hobby and the other is occasionally involved in the family business.

3.2.5 Engaging with social development issues

Modernization, although inconclusive in economies such as Kenya brings levels of infrastructure in health, education, transport, commerce and communication that even though of not as high a standard, to a great extent are commensurate with the economies of the West. The diverse professions the participants are associated with are situated within the domains indispensable for economic progress of the country like health, education, training, and business. With its markets now open to the international movements of goods, capital and human resources, the country is positioned to engage on an international scale with other regions. This engagement facilitates professional and business opportunities taken up by some like Rahma who was a nurse and now operates a health care product business from home. Her experiences also give insight into how despite structural differences, skills from developing countries are transferable in the globalized environment.

I am a nursing sister; I am a qualified Kenya registered nurse, midwife, public health and family planning ... trained in Nairobi. At the moment I am dealing with Chinese herbal medicine. I also do home-based care for patients who cannot afford to be admitted into hospital...I worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (*and*) that was a multinational hospital.

Their hospitals are more equipped than ours. Our standards of nursing at that time I was training were very high. They were not different from international standards. In fact whatever they could do (*the staff at the multinational hospital*), I could do more competently because here we work under a lot of hardship. We work under circumstances under which we don't have running water, we don't have electricity, and we don't have the proper equipment. There everything is automatic; here everything is manual and hard so we are actually more competent than them in terms of practical work.

-Rahma

An overlap of macro social, economic and political dynamics is manifested in the employment fields indicated by the participants; those who work are mostly employed in the private and NGO sector. Dire economic conditions following structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and the health needs of Muslim women impelled one participant to open up a maternity clinic. Despite her own economic situation; by combining entrepreneurial skills, compassion for the women's needs for appropriate services with religious motivation, Aamenah helped start up a Muslim community owned hospital and now provides pre and post natal care to needy mothers at her own clinic. Her innovative approach shows a resilience that women have developed in the wake of structural adjustment policies in the country that have rolled back public spending on basic necessities like health. Rakodi et al (2007) note that despite the population growth very little investment has been made in primary health care in the region. Shortages of qualified staff, funding constraints and poor management have led to a deterioration of public sector services. The deficit in primary care though addressed by donor agencies has been insufficient in providing such basic services and community-based organisations attempt to cover the shortfalls as do individual initiatives. Drawing on her professional experience, Aamenah set up the clinic initially in her own home and has gone on to establish a small facility that caters for women from low-income households. In a holistic approach, she also provides marriage counselling to women who come to her clinic.

I started this clinic in my own house because I had no facilities, no finance, I was not able to rent a place and that (*home*) was my clinic. ... I have since managed to raise for the house and the clinic... There is a great need is what moved me... One the cost was too high for them, (*for the patients*)... They normally attend the municipality clinic that doesn't have the facilities for the laboratory and they don't have any drugs... What I discovered is that we can afford by charging them a little money. I can take care of them, they don't waste a lot of

time here because my clinic runs from 8 am to 7.30 pm... There is no clinic that would attend to ante-natal mothers at that time of the day. So I give them the whole of the twelve, eleven and half hours to be attended ante-natally and also if they have any problem like a marriage problem...
- Aamenah

Three women work in a community owned and run hospital. Personal communication with the administration revealed how the hospital project started as a Muslim welfare venture to help the local impoverished, largely Muslim community residing in the area. Donor financial support from the Middle East, a core element of funding for the institution has since 9/11 continued to diminish as Kenya gains salience in the United States' counter terrorism efforts.

Activism in attending to social issues also features in both paid and voluntary community work some of the women are involved in. Aamenah quoted above has been dynamically engaged in various areas through her medical background and religious commitments. Her commitments include mentoring young people with regard to health and hygiene. She is also active in supporting women in prisons and recently helped in compiling a pamphlet on HIV/AIDS awareness in an Islamic framework. Another participant, Zohra works on a professional level in awareness campaigns over the disease. HIV/AIDS is a pandemic affecting about 1.2 million Kenyans in 2003 (KFF, 2005). Zohra, particularly passionate about the issue relates the experiences of personal tragedy that have led her to becoming a community HIV/AIDS officer. The challenges she faces make her steadfastly determined to keep working in the field.

I lost four of my relatives ... I was trained as a community health worker on HIV ... Working as a community health worker is not taken easily in the Islamic community because they do not want to disclose (*AIDS incidence*), they don't want to talk about it and you will be told it's a curse or you will be told you have done adultery because most don't have an idea how you can contract HIV. There are so many reasons. We asked the Kenya Red Cross to train the *imams*⁴⁹, ...they started preaching the right way in the mosques, but before they used to say - do not commit adultery. These were the things they were saying - if you are HIV positive that's what you have done! But at least now the word is going around, but the stigma is still there...
- Zohra

⁴⁹ Islamic prayer leaders.

As the narratives show, the women are actively involved in many aspects of the civil and social life both in living out their aspirations as well as contributing to the broader society.

3.2.5 Profile summary of Kenyan group

The participant women in the Kenyan group also vary in age and marital status. Their ethnic backgrounds reflect the established presence of Muslims in Kenya. These have been reproduced in the participants' definitions of their ethnicity; the women include association with regions their forefathers originated from including Yemen, Oman, India and Somalia. There is also evidence of more recent incorporations into the Kenyan Muslim society through global connections and conversion to Islam.

With many of the participants leaving home for further studies, a break from traditional set-ups in educational pursuit for females is indicated. Most tertiary institutions are based in the capital city of Nairobi and to pursue further qualifications many of the women had to leave home and in some cases further, overseas to achieve these.

The majority of the women are well educated in diverse fields and indicates effectively putting to use their skills through workplace engagement. Nearly all are actively participating in the workplace through salaried workforce, family enterprises, and self-employment. The nuances of their workplace participation also reveal the intricate weave of economic, political and human factors that disadvantage sections of the Kenyan community in issues like poverty and the AIDS pandemic. Their responses to these are engaging to help the less advantaged through their professional as well as religious and cultural skills.

3.3 Identity, culture and the modern Muslim woman

Development discourse in the gender context is related to empowering women through providing them with the tools and opportunities to enhance capabilities. These capabilities expand the range of choices and agency (Malhotra et al, 2002) that women can exercise to lead potentially productive and fuller lives in accordance with their needs, interests and aspirations. Elemental to capabilities for human development are: to have healthy lives,

literacy and knowledge, opportunities for access to the resources or income needed for a decent standard of living, and to be able to participate and contribute to the larger community. As humans are not just economic entities, other domains of 'being' like aspirations, community affiliations and associations that emerged in the analysis are included in these profiles. In this context it is worth pointing out that the human development index, developed by the UNDP goes beyond the traditional indicators of per capita income in giving a measure of the quality of life of a country's citizens. The index adds aspects of social development including a healthier life (measured by life expectancy at birth, knowledge (measured by adult literacy rates) as well as a decent standard of living (through GDP measures) in its measure of development which nation states are obliged to ensure. While on one level the index is criticized for technical deficiencies; for example, arbitrary weightings, relative ranking of disparate economies and a static annual measure (Rao, 1991; Mc Gillivray, 1991; Hopkins 1991), others are more concerned over how development itself should be defined and considered. In Basu's (2005) criticism for example, the material indicators of the index tell little about other aspects of development. Basu is especially reproachful over the index's lack of computation of spiritual and moral development; that although material assets are a necessity, they are not sufficient for development. He reminds that human development is 'psychological, ethical and spiritual development'. In essence human development is about creating an environment in which people are able to develop their potential. To lead more productive and creative lives in according with their interest, other facets are also conducive to enlarging people's choices.

It is only in the past few decades that culture is considered an essential aspect of how expanded capabilities are realized and utilized. Cultural elements surface a good deal in these narratives and feature both in the physical and social identity, as well as the histories of the women. Although cultural freedom is seen as an important part of manifest identity, it plays a profound role in the context of how people socialize, perceive and fulfill aspirations as observed here. As the analysis indicates it is difficult to disassociate identity from cultural factors.

The context of their capabilities and choices is Islamic culture; the most discernable feature of which is the veil. Most of the women in both groups wear the veil in various forms. This

is discussed further in Chapter 8. Another distinguishable cultural element observed here are the expressions in Arabic. Most Muslims use these within speech, their context conveys honoring and praising God and acknowledging 'bounties', be they success in work, home or other aspects of life. These are memes stemming from the Islamic worldview that advocates a relationship with God. Although most of the women in both groups are from non-Arab backgrounds they use both greetings and invocations that are figures of speech specific to Islam.

On the whole, several salient persuasions are observed as influencing the identities of women including their faith system, nationality, ethnicity, employment prospects, educational aspirations and achievements and cultural mores that are enmeshed in everyday experiences and perplexities of life. As social and spatial shifts have implications for broadening the lives and lifestyle choices of the women, patterns of modernity cross-cut with other factors that have a bearing on the women's identities rendering them multidimensional. As the women respond to changing social and economic environments, their identities are also undergoing transformations, reinterpretation and renegotiation.

3.4 Key Findings

- Although their lives are lived out in spatially and structurally different economies, their capabilities to potentially live fulfilling lives are similar. The profiles indicate that the women have extended choices in terms of their means and are participating in the public arena much like other modern women especially with respect to education and the workplace.
- Identities in the above profiles are intricately woven into the broader processes of national issues and globalization. In the case of Australia with the issues regarding migration and in the Kenyan context with development and liberalization.
- There is indication of evolving identities over time.
- Cultural elements surface a good deal in these narratives and feature both in their physical and social identity, as well as the histories of the women. The context of their capabilities and choices is Islamic culture.

- On the whole, several salient persuasions are observed as influencing the identities of women including their faith system, nationality, ethnicity, employment prospects, educational aspirations and achievements and cultural mores that are enmeshed in everyday experiences and perplexities of life.

PART II: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES OF MODERNIZATION

CHAPTER 4

MODERNIZATION, CULTURE AND MUSLIM GENDER RELATIONS

As noted in the previous chapters, literature and data on Muslim women reveals a transformation of society through the influence of major macro factors such as urbanization, education, reproductive health, legislation and more in the global environment. These transformations have worked to empower women on many levels of society including the private domain of the household. Ideological changes at the international level trickle through policy measures at national and regional levels. These transmit changes in household dynamics through interlinkages between the political, economic and social spheres. As Moore (1998, p 73) notes, '[m]icro-processes are undoubtedly linked to macro-processes and in the case of the household and the family, to the wider regional, national and international processes – social, economic and political within which they are embedded'. As the wider processes register into their lives, the struggle for Muslim women has been to find the balance between modern lifestyles and faith following.

Studies on Muslim attitudes and household workings inform a varied transition and a move away from a multiple family, male-headed household model (Ashrafi 1992; Hoodfar, 1997; Roy, 2004; Offenbauer, 2005) to nuclear units comprising immediate members. The status of women is considerably different across generations. The historical accounts of state-implemented policies (see Kandiyoti 1991, for example) impacting women in the course of development lend a broader context to the changing gender relations found in the narratives of the participants. This chapter examines these transformations through the shifting gender role boundaries within intergenerational change and contemporary gender relations. In the Australian context, Muslims are a migrant minority that comes from a plethora of different backgrounds representing countries of origin at different levels of economic growth and development, shown in the data in Table 10 in Appendix 1. A common feature of these societies of origin is the transformations concomitant to the global trajectory of capitalist development. The intergenerational changes are compared across and within the socio-

economic conditions of countries of origin as well as experiences in Australia⁵⁰. In the case of the Kenyan group, revision in household dynamics is explored as part of the post-colonial development process itself. Situating these within the impact of development and economic progress, the chapter examines the nexus of culture and modernization operating at the household level.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 below, examine the intergenerational shifts in gender roles and contemporary household relations for the two groups Australian and Kenyan respectively. Section 4.3 followed by key findings for the chapter in section 4.4, sums up the examination in how the interaction of modern economic conditions with Islamic culture affects or influences existing gender relations in Muslim households. The analysis also reveals challenging and sustaining factors that influence female emancipation. A discussion of these follows in the next chapter. The two groups are analyzed separately and the concluding section looks at how the groups compare in their experiences.

4.1 Shifting gender role boundaries in the household: Australian responses

4.1.1 Intergenerational change:

The narratives of the Australian group reveal contexts of female empowerment from regions of the world at varying levels of development. Development investments in most societies have strategized female enfranchisement and advancement through macro-economic policies focused on gender education and workforce opportunities. The narratives reveal three significant elements of change observed across generations touching personal lives as macro policies filter through to influence the household level:

- empowerment of women
- attitudinal changes towards the enfranchisement of girls and women, and
- changes in gender roles across generations

Two respondents allude to state-implemented policies benefiting and empowering women in the process of nation-building. Significant moves to include especially urban women in the

⁵⁰ Except for the two Anglo-Celtic Muslims and the European respondent in Kenya whose narratives make for a comparison between Western and non-Western experiences.

state-building process are reflected in the words of Eesha originally from Egypt. Her mother won a scholarship to go to the United States to study further and her father had no objections to her studying abroad. On the contrary he supported her mother by accompanying her to the United States at the cost of his own employment.

I get very upset when people tell me that in Islam or in the Middle East a woman's role is in the house. That she is not allowed to do this and that, and that the man pressures her. My mother is 65 and she is the one that got the scholarship to go to America, not my Dad. And that was in 1974, so we are talking about a long time ago... if you look at Egypt from 1970 there were so many women that were educated, that were learning, that had high degrees that their husbands were saying that we will go with you. My Dad did not have a degree; my Dad did not have a scholarship when he went to America. He actually did study and then got a scholarship in the university there. So he wasn't being paid. He actually stayed home for the first half a year or a year. ...he did have to sacrifice his position in the company so, no I don't see that. I don't see that at all.
- Eesha

Egypt has an early and sustained history of modernization and women's participation not only in its economic and technological transformation, but also within a strong feminist movement (Badran, 1991)⁵¹. This opened up educational and employment opportunities for women relatively early resulting in a rise in single women and a decline in fertility rates. Badran, (1991, p 219) notes that, 'as the 1960s and 1970s unfolded, the number of women university graduates continued to increase, as did their entry into various sectors of the labour force'.

Such state-building policies are also significant in the case of Bangladesh where two participants originate from. The trends in development were influenced by the integration of women in the development process. Strategic interventions as part of the broader paradigm of women and development (through aid-dependency in the case of Bangladesh) saw a large number of women being educated and participating in the public sphere (Kabeer, 1991, p 126). The history of urban female empowerment and women's participation in Bangladesh registers in Nasrin's (in her forties) comments.

⁵¹ In the context of the country's development needs, its 1962 Charter stated that, 'Woman must be regarded as equal to man and must therefore shed the remaining shackles so that she might take a constructive and profound part in shaping life' (Badran, p 218).

If you look at Bangladesh for the last ten to fifteen years, it has been a woman who has been the Prime Minister. We have had two women successive prime ministers. If you look at any sphere of life in Bangladesh, women are coming forward and they are getting good results. When I was doing my honours, the five top positions in the university were taken by women...My mother was a doctor and my father was also working, but my mother was working more than him. My mother was doing three jobs and my father basically gave all the money to my mother. This is in Bangladesh. And we being four girls, no boys in our family, all my sisters were educated. I have a sister who is doctor, another who is a principal...
- Nasrin

While not uniform across Muslim societies, flowing on from macro-economic reorganization, changes register in expectations from the female child and the investments households are willing to make in ensuring a better quality of life. An example is from Raffiah's story. Raffiah, born and brought up in Singapore recalls her family situation and finds a difference between her own marriage and that of her mother. Her comments display a significant difference in the household size; her mother had ten children, Raffiah has four. Other noticeable difference is in the treatment of and opportunities availed to girls related to elements of modernization – education and urbanization.

I have ten siblings, two of them are males and they were treated differently. There is a difference between my mother's marriage and mine. The difference could be accounted for by time, to education, the people's sophistication (*urbanization* ?) I would say is different than before and I think people now are more open to changes ... the dynamics around it for the siblings have changed. For example, I have two boys and two girls and I treat them differently as to how we were treated when we were younger.
- Raffiah

Likewise, Fardaus in her twenties from Somalia notes the change in her home country. She believes that there is more emphasis on girls' education now than in the past. Fardaus lives with an older sister in Perth while the rest of her family is in Somalia. Even though she has not 'lived in that situation' she surmises a change in attitudes towards female social expectations with the changing economic times. Whereas outlooks favoured boys as breadwinners and the role of women was more home and family-oriented, this has changed over time as women also go to work and contribute to the family income.

... with my background in Somalia they talk about ages ago how education was only for boys... but now, even in my own sisters' case, the girls used to go to school; education was allowed. It was really open for girls. I haven't lived in that situation, but still you can see that the priority was given to the males. The perception people had was that boys are better off studying, they are the ones who are going to work, in the workforce and they always said that the girls will end up in the house and raise children ... They used to think it was a waste of time - she will end up cooking and cleaning... the boys are better off, going off and doing some studies so that they can go and work.
- Fardaus

Other respondents see their mothers mostly as homemakers and the household having clearly defined roles of mother-homemaker and father-provider. Exposed to a more egalitarian lifestyle, younger women find their own relationships with their spouses very different from their mothers. In comparing her marital relations with those of her parents, Saida discovers a difference in household communication as well as the division of household chores. She finds that unlike her husband and herself, her father has a traditional bread-winner role and her mother that of a homemaker and roles being marked the way they are, there is no shift in crossing the boundaries.

... men and women's roles in the household or home, it is totally different...(*across generations*). At the moment, myself and my husband, we both work. We come home and we cook together, we both clean together, - I can actually see it in my parents. Like the way they deal with each other and the way they work together. It is totally different from my relationship with my husband. I don't think my Dad would get up and cook or do something. My Mum would probably be the housekeeper and the cook and everything. My Dad would be the breadwinner. It is very different from the way we are, even the way we communicate.
- Saida

Similar dynamics are presented in the way other respondents describe their household relationships.

4.1.2 Contemporary household relations

There is a general perception of the husband as the figurative household head, but the respondents point out that the roles of men and women are reciprocal, with joint responsibilities for the well-being of family. As Raffiah characterizes it, the roles of men

and women are different, yet alike in sustaining the family as the primary concern. In the contemporary economic times there is pressure on both parents to ensure the long-term provision, safety and security of the children. While the male-headed household model applies, the dynamics across individual families depend on sub-cultures dependent on factors like countries of origin, individual personalities and other influences within the relationships. The core family value systems when compared with other groups are seen as similar in the way families are organized generally in Australia. However, as Muslims, most women feel that the basic foundation of the household relations is its structure, based on the guidelines in Islam.

...I am married and the father is still the head of the family. That is because of Islam, and that is what we believe in... so regardless of all the modern changes that basically does not change. From my observance of the Muslim community in Perth I find that the man is still the head of the family, but of course now women have got more say in family matters. ...I believe that in contemporary times gender relations are being challenged; that there is extra pressure on the family and especially on the man as the leader of the family...as parents they have to make sure that the family is safe, that the children do not get influenced, that the family is safe and that the children will get an education and enough life skills in order to survive and survive for themselves when they are out there in the great world.
- Raffiah

In comparing with the mainstream some perceive the fundamentals of family life as similar. The core values in Muslim households compared to those of non-Muslim Australia are similar; the main difference observed is the sanctioned role of the male as family head.

From what I have seen and talking about my personal relationship with my own friends, most of them are non-Muslims, the core values are pretty much the same when it comes to marriages. I don't see much difference at all. The only difference maybe would be that within the Muslim marriage the man is the household head...I suppose there has to be one head, you can't have two heads. Someone has to be the head of the family, but generally in a Muslim situation, the family is the crux of everything and so you tend to work as a couple more than anything else.
- Rosmina

Like Rosmina, other respondents also find this symbolic arrangement suits the collaboration to maintain the family. She shares that the family as the 'crux of everything' is a unit, where you 'tend to work as a couple more than anything else'. This is highlighted in most of the other responses. Islam stresses the role of the family as the foundation of society in which

values are inculcated into offspring to foster an upright society. Its importance as a building block for society is emphasized in Islahi's (2001, p.117) enunciation that, 'a stable and well-organized family system is a prerequisite for the birth of a righteous society'. In referring to male-headship both the above women's accounts refer to the concept of *qiwama*; an order stressed for the Islamic household according to the Qur'anic verse 4:34. The common interpretation of the verse bestows a responsibility on men to provide for their families and conveys a leadership role. Roald's (2001) examination finds various interpretation of the precept of *qiwama* in gender relations. In some cultural contexts she finds an authoritarian element; where men have authority over women; in others a benevolence where a man has the role of protector of the family. One interpretation from Roald's study is:

'The family institution is a social institution and like every social institution the family is in need of administration. But like all administration of social institutions the family is also in need of consultation (*shura*). Islam rejects individual administration, and particularly dictatorial administration...*Qiwama* is therefore a leadership which has rules and which is built on the Islamic principle of *shura* as stated in the [Qur'an]...' (Sheikh Rashid Gannoushi quoted in Roald, 2001, p 159).

The concept of *shura* referred to here is a consultation in decision-making. The implication within the quote is that men are the heads of the family, but there have to be consultations within household decision-making, and therefore this dissolves authoritarian tendencies. However, the strain between a theological concept, its interpretation and its practical application presents itself in how the women relate these in their daily life. In the examples below there are obvious modern influences on the practical levels in applying both.

Faiza in her fifties and now a grandmother reflects on her marriage as a shared responsibility that does not necessarily favour one gender over the other. She points to her own case where her daughter thinks she (Faiza) has been the major decision-maker in the family. Faiza also emphasises the variations within individual households. Reflecting on her parents household arrangements, Naheed in her twenties echoes similar sentiments. She feels her mother has more say in family decisions. While both parents work and study, she believes her mother

has more say in the household decisions. In her opinion, modern lifestyles activate the negotiation of traditional roles and arrangements like these are a normative of contemporary Muslim societies in the West.

Women have mostly a different role from their husbands; not so much superior as both have a role to play. That is - as a father figure for the husband, but it does not mean that they (*husbands*) are the decision maker... My daughter says that I am the one that 'called the shots' ... It's different from couple to couple, from family to family.
- Faiza

There is a stereotyping that the man is the household head. Like my Mum has more say than my Dad... They both work and study, that is the way society is now; both parents work, do the housework, different proportions in different families... Modern lifestyles applies increasing pressures to have two incomes, more opportunities to develop, study, so there has to be a compromise of traditional roles. Women want to become professionals at the university or do something.
- Naheed

Ideally, in Islam, the man is provider of the household, but with changing times women increasingly take up the role. The ruling on provision is such that an Islamic court can annul a marriage if there is failure of provision⁵². Most respondents agree that economic pressures of a modern lifestyle compel women's participation into the workforce, both in Australia and in home countries. The rising costs of living, globally, mean women have to share the load of providing for the family. The respondents' examples show that in some cases women have to take up work due to the husband's inability to provide and become sole providers, while in others they are encouraged to take up employment to supplement incomes. Huda in her twenties puts it down to modern, materialistic lifestyles that Muslims have yielded to.

⁵² Whatever the financial position of the woman, the man is in no way released from the responsibility of maintaining her. The duty of support covers food, clothing, housing, medical treatment and 'such expenses as considered necessary pursuant in Islamic law'⁵². According to Siddiqi, (1984, p 71), in the case where a husband refuses to provide economic sustenance to his wife, there are two courses open to the Muslim court. If the husband is able to make provisions for her needs, but does not do so, the Muslim court can bring pressure to bear upon him for her needs and force him to look after the needs of his wife. Should the husband still refuse, the court can issue a decree of separation and the marriage will be dissolved thereafter.

It goes without saying that it is among Muslims and non-Muslims - like the two incomes, no kids' lifestyle has hit in because people are now more materialistic. They want more land and property these days, so people need jobs. It is a reality!
- Huda

For other respondents it is a matter of affordability; one income is not enough to provide the basic necessities of the times and the pressure to maintain the family falls on both spouses. Eesha finds that the changing economic times are affecting social expectations amongst Muslims. Within her response, she shares how one income is not enough to sustain a family; and Muslim men encourage their women to go out to work. She feels marriage criteria on the part of Muslim men now include women who can jointly provide for the family.

I definitely think that one income is not enough to run a household... I have examples of the man actually telling the wife, 'Why don't you work, you have a degree why don't you work? You don't have to stay at home'. ...Now one of the prerequisites that the man wants is that she (*the prospective wife*) should have a job because it is so difficult now for people to live on one income. The man who wants to get married who wants a nice girl, he'd really like her to have a job because he knows that he cannot sustain a family on only one income. So I think times are changing dramatically. A long time ago, the man did want the woman to stay at home. I don't think he does anymore; I am talking about Muslim men!
- Eesha

Such changes are unsettling the dynamics of household relations. The normative of tradition and ideals are male headship, but the realities are removed from a prescriptive model. In household budgeting and spending decisions, as working women, the respondents feel a sense of shared decision-making in which some domains are handled by one spouse or the other. There is a collaborative approach with conjoint, as well as discretionary decision-making. Capital purchases are mostly joint decisions, but in areas such as education many of the older women spell out an unwillingness to negotiate easily on their choices. Nurzati, a nurse, is passionate about her daughter's education and has taken great care in ensuring she goes to the best school that the couple can afford.

For my husband and me, we do have equal say. I would not decide on capital aspects of household spending like buying the house, but day to day - the small matters he and I sort it out. There is no question of inequality, we do have discussion. When it comes to big spending, we both sit down and sort it out. So I would say that there is participation from both sides, from both genders. In my household it is equal... My daughter's education is important and my husband knows about that. He would go along with that because I did a

lot of 'studies' on which school I want my daughter to end up in.
- Nurzati

As the sole income earner in the family Nurzati describes her situation as a role reversal. An educated woman she took over to provide for the family when her husband was diagnosed with a chronic illness. Although these circumstances change their family roles, decision-making in her family is still a shared process.

I have got a reversed role... I am educated and I have a professional background. I have the earning capacity so when my husband can't work, I take the role up because he has a medical problem.
- Nurzati

Changes in household responsibilities also register where men work away from home. Nasrin has the responsibility of running the household while her husband is posted in Adelaide. In her case also, the children's education is a priority that she is adamant on and makes decisions over. In other areas she feels their decision-making a joint effort with consultation over issues.

...when it comes to many decisions in life especially with children's education because we women from Bangladesh are very, very concerned about our children's education and we really want the best for my children. I got the tutors. I had to look around as to where to put them in school or whatever, which tutor to get, how many places do I send them to, to get the best education. It was on the top of my mind. Now that my husband is living away, working in Adelaide I am the one that makes most of the decisions, but I also ask him. With regard to my children's education I make the decisions, he accepts my decision. With other things I would ask his advice and it's more like - I don't feel that he is dominating me.
- Nasrin

The outcome of these role complexities is the ambiguity of defining gender hierarchies. While the older respondents accept and negotiate differentiated roles, younger women question incongruities and notice complications in practice. As liberal influences impact on household roles, the responsibility of the provider is not as clearly marked as for the older generation.

Three women all in their twenties speculate on some of the complexities of contemporary situations. Their narratives reveal the intricacies of new arrangements in gender relations as traditional setups erode or are plainly unavailable in the process of migration. The lack of fit in the roles and responsibilities of males and females as prescribed is a source of confusion as they try to follow the Islamic rules as best as they can. In Mansura's view these cause tension as well as conflict as no role models are available to set examples for 'acceptable' behaviour.

Generally we are told that the man is the head of the family, but then again that hasn't been clarified and debated as to what that means in terms of economic provision. In a lot of the family homes now, there are double incomes. You need the double income to survive and you have a mortgage and this and this and this to pay. So I think things have changed a lot and does not matter what the tradition, it is very different and it's very diverse... Let's face it because even men and their responsibilities have been challenged in many societies and it is no longer very clear as to what they are responsible for. A lot of the younger couples that I see there is this confusion of what is the man's responsibility, what is the female's responsibility. It is causing tension sometimes and conflict within the minds of young men because it is not defined, not only defined, but often they don't have role models to see that as a man this is how I am meant to be acting, and this is what I have to do, and this is how I have to be within the family.

- Mansura

I have a friend who wishes that her husband would feel that responsibility more; that he would be proud to be the provider. Like he does work, but does not feel the responsibility. She feels that he should be proud of being the provider... she works to help pay the bills... I can't see her as a stay-at-home mum; being at home. I cannot see her not doing things - she has to work.

- Rahila

I think sometimes when you have grown up in the Western world, you feel that you adhere to the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, it still does not provide you with enough reference because it is like, this is what the Qur'an and the *sunnah* says, but how do you put that within your culture, how do you interpret that, it is really confusing...

- Annam

Given the need (desire?) for two incomes, many women do not have the choice of being able to stay at home. With the strong focus on women's participation in the workforce to facilitate gender equality, there is little state support in Australia for homemakers. For those who can afford to be supported by husbands, the choice can be facing up to societal

pressures. The roles of motherhood and home duties or housework do not have economic value nor obtain financial returns, and in modern societies lack the social status for full engagement. The strain is then choosing between discretionary spending power and dependence on a providing husband. Although she would like to be a stay-at-home mum when she has children, Saida in her twenties thinks she would not like to be restricted to being just at home. Earning an income in her view gives women degrees of influence and power in the household that those not contributing may not have. In Norma's opinion, while undervalued household duties are largely a Western phenomenon, she also feels that earning enables women to be independent of their husbands and exercise discretion in their spending ability.

You see for me I would like to be at home. I would like to have that because I can't work full time for the rest of my life. I would like to be able to make choices at the same time if I don't work. I don't want to be restricted to the home and just have children. Of course, when you have money, you have an income. As a woman then you do have an influence in the home and you do have some sort of power, but if you are not working you don't.
- Saida

In the West, you are nobody unless you are working. You always have that feeling and even if you stay at home it's like, it's not important. Household duties are looked down upon. If you go to work you can be earning money and you can buy – you have your own money to spend to buy things and you don't have to ask your husband. You feel that, 'oh I am working; I am not just staying at home'.
- Norma

The value of women's roles as householders also emerges in Maryam's comments. As an Anglo-Celtic Australian she has experienced both a Western lifestyle and Muslim after her conversion. She looks back to how attitudes towards women's home duties changed while she was growing up and recalls the worth of professional careers and workplace engagement became favoured over housewifely duties.

...it was a social concept that people wanted to change. It was, especially for us at school if you could say, 'Oh my mother works'; it was like you were classed as more successful than someone else. So that was where the social status was coming from and families were like that generally. One major incident - I think I was in Year 8 at that time and the teacher had asked us – 'What do you want to do with your life?' ...and everyone was mentioning all the things they wanted to do. You know doctor, nurse and the girls were saying these things - high profile careers, but then one girl just stood up and said I want to be a housewife and

everyone in the class laughed at her and that really gives you an idea of what the social value was for women at that time.

- Maryam

On her part, Maryam endorses distinct roles, finding them ennobling and to be valued for their own sake. Based on a doctrine of creation, there are demarcations of gender specific roles and responsibilities in Islam. The defined role of woman as a homemaker gives Maryam a clear framework within which to organize family life. Brought up in a Western culture that little differentiates between genders, the weight given to the family bond and the division of duties in the roles of the husband and wife, help raise the worth of women as care-givers. According to her, though clearly marked, these do not avert participation in the public sphere.

After converting, I slowly learnt that there were distinctive roles men and women would need to play and learnt to appreciate that value more – (*you value that more?*) – exactly, when I was younger, having that freedom, it was very confusing because at the end females are built differently to males – Yes, men cannot have children - physiological differences... With Islam as I have come to learn and appreciate, Islam enables it, it says: its ok. The highest priority is to be the parents, you know, be the housewife and that's a very valuable role. Before it wasn't a valuable role for us and with that valued role you can work, you can get extra value, but don't forget the value of your natural instincts. They are worthy as well! ... Because you have a clear role, you know where you are heading, you know what you are doing and the thing is, it's a clear path. Ok, this is what a woman should do and this is her preferred role in Islam, but at the same time there are enough leniencies. You can negotiate if you work with your partner and say ok, look I need to work. I want to do other things and you can negotiate that through. But, at least you have this kind of framework to work with, so you can guide your identity and your path through that framework as something to work from...

- Maryam

Closer examination of the narratives above shows that while the household structures are within an Islamic framework, the hierarchies of a conventional patriarchal model are absent. Though men remain the figurative household heads, gender relations are complex and the nuances reflect the changes of contemporary influences through modern, capitalist lifestyles. The narratives also reveal that household decision-making is a conjoint process where as empowered women they are taking an active role. Clearly this does not rule out conflict or disagreement within the processes themselves, but rather that women are exercising higher

levels of agency within the processes. As they enjoy aspects of modern lifestyles, most of the women are unwilling to relinquish the level of autonomy and discretion, earning power bestows on them.

The section below analyses the narratives of the Kenyan. These narratives also reveal a move away from conventional household relations, related to development strategies as the above.

4.2 Shifting gender role boundaries in the household: Kenyan responses

4.2.1 Intergenerational changes

Despite early resistance to modernization, Muslim communities in Kenya have also tended towards modern lifestyles as structural changes to the economy challenge traditional ways of life. Oded (2000) observes significant factors for the slow participation of Muslims within development initiatives. For instance apprehensions over the intent of Western education systems arose from suspicions over the colonial authorities aims at stopping the spread of Islam. Thinking that a Western education would erode Islamic values, Muslim leaders dissuaded the education of both males and females. Although post colonial Kenya's education system has been linked to development ideals, Muslims have been slow to participate in the course of progress until recently where the momentum in the globalized world increases as new avenues open up.

In narrating their experiences, the older participants disclose a measured transition. The fear of women being influenced by Western culture has been a major impediment in letting women be educated or join the workforce. As female education was not likely to bring economic returns, girls expected to marry early were only schooled up to primary level. Although some parents and elders saw the benefits of a secular education for progress, community pressures restricted the utility of learning and other skills. Female financial dependence on men as the norm, did not to change until major structural shifts to the economy weakened male earning power; forcing women into the labour market to

supplement household income and/or earn a living. The stories below denote changes related to structural changes over time registering in individual households as:

- changing attitudes towards female education and employment
- opportunities for females to access education and make lifestyle choices
- changes in gender roles across generations

Habiba in her late fifties shares changes of attitudes towards female education. While there was no expectation from her mother to be working or financially contributing to the household, Habiba was encouraged and supported to complete her education and secure employment. Her father saw the advantages of schooling in opening up economic opportunities soon after independence and used the contacts he had to help her expand these opportunities. This has helped her sustain a long-term career in infant teaching. Advised by some expatriate ladies teaching in the country, she trained for a Montessori diploma in childcare and went on to have a career spanning thirty four years in the sector.

Because she was never educated, she never went to school; just went for *madrassah* classes, my mother never thought of going to work... My father did not want her to work - never thought of her working. I went to school at ... Primary school and then my father was transferred to Nyeri. That was after independence when I did my Montessori. There was a community lady who was working with my father. She suggested that I should go for this course – child-care, so I went to Matuga... I came back and taught in Lamu, in a small nursery school ... Then I got a chance to go to teach at ... Nursery School, that's where I worked for 34 yrs. Now I am retired, early retirement and I am at home at the moment.
- Habiba

In her story, Naima (also in her late fifties) shares the course of lifestyle changes since the 1970s. Living in an extended family where male members had a lead role in major decisions, she recalls a lot of support from her paternal uncle in stressing female education. The preferred role for women however, was home duties and girls in her family were not expected to work, but get married early. As her story recounts the inflationary trends following structural adjustments to the economy, particularly in the 1980s changed the financial standing of many families and women slowly started entering the workforce.

...Women were not going for higher education - very few were. See in our community when they reach Standard 7, that was the maximum... After I had training and some others in Nairobi (*girls started going for higher schooling*). Then the inflation started and people knew that now they have to let the girls get educated...My uncle had educated my cousins, but he never allowed them to work. So education was for when the need arises. They (*the cousins*) got married, but one was not and when the father was going down in business, that's when he allowed her to work... We were in a joint family and I think my uncle really wanted us to be educated because he was educated and I think he knew how education helps...

-Naima

The changes in outlooks towards female access to education, as well as the public domain have given girls more opportunities in terms of the lifestyle choices they are making. Their preference for delayed marriage, taking up education opportunities and a competitive attitude in achievement finds congruence with contemporary trends of female empowerment. These are summed up in Khairun's words as due to the shifting attitudes of families and the ambitions and aspirations of young Muslim girls themselves.

...it is the thinking of our parents that has changed. (*Back then*) like our parents would say - it is a waste to educate the girl-child. After all, the girl will grow up and get married and stay at home. The attitude of our husbands has also changed because in the past, there was an emphasis whereby even if you are learned, your husband may not allow you to work... but it has changed. The emphasis is growing; it never used to be like that. The infrastructure and the facilities some years back were not there. I think more Muslim women are coming up, more Muslim ladies, girls who want to go to school. They want to reach upto university level and above, unlike in the past where a girl came up to class 8 and then dropped out, maybe to get married, stay at home, have kids. But nowadays I feel that things are changing... most of the top students here in Mombasa would be young girls from our community, young Muslim girls... So I think that nowadays young girls don't want to go into marriage so fast, don't want to stay at home, they want to study and be recognized, and they want to be something in the community.

- Khairun

A more proactive role in household management is observed, both as necessary in contemporary times, as well as attributable to the life skills that women have obtained. In comparison with their mothers, many find themselves more involved in household decisions. Sanna compares her marriage to that of her mother and especially points out the lack of communication within the hierarchical order of their family. In contrast with her parents, her marriage has a better level of communication where decisions are made together.

When I compare my marriage to my mother's marriage, there is a big gap...I grew up where my Dad was the sole person who made decisions...My Mum, she looked after the house and that was it. There would be no discussions, no sitting down, no asking one another...Where I am today, I think every decision will be taken both together, both of us make decisions together and if we don't like it we talk, come to a point where I give in a little and he gives in a littlethat understanding is there.
- Sanna

Similarly how conventional gender roles have changed following the above changes register in the stories below.

4.2.2 Contemporary household relations

Like the Australian group, the Kenyan participants indicate that the family organization remains a male-headed model as prescribed in the Islamic ideal. Gender relations are idyllically to be modelled on Islamic injunctions and there is also a clear emphasis on the well-being of the family as ordained in Islamic directives.

According to Aamenah, gender equity does not moderate the spiritual equality of men and women before God and is essentially ordained in the Qur'anic verses she quotes. Though these sentiments resonate with contemporary differentiation between gender equity and gender equality taken up within gender development theory, there is an emphasis on primary roles of women as nurturers. Explaining the move from gender integration strategies in development to mainstreaming, the UNDP (2000, p 19) spells out that 'equality does not mean that men and women will become the same', but that men and women's rights and responsibilities will not depend on whether they are male or female. In the Islamic context, the priority is a nurturer role for the woman. Aamenah, a strongly devout and practicing person articulates her practice and perception of the role.

...I don't see why we should change, but there is this you know way of thinking the Western way of thinking, that a woman should be equal to man... The Quran says that in the prayers, the way we pray, we conduct our prayers, the way we believe in Allah, the way we are Muslims, everything is going to be paid as a Muslim woman, as a Muslim man. There is nothing that we compare ourselves with the male counterpart, we cannot compare because

we cannot be like them, and they cannot be like us. We are child-bearing human beings you know, they cannot be that. We should take care of our houses, not that we should not work...I am a working wife, I am a working mother and I work for the community. I have more responsibility in my own house, bringing up my children up, making them good food, giving them a good education. What does the husband do or the father do? – he is a provider. So if he is the provider, what should I as being provided for, do by that whatever is being provided to me financially or supportively, whatever the provision? I am going to make sure that I do the right thing and this is child upbringing, education, cooking them nice balanced diet, make sure that they sleep in a comfortable place, prevent them from diseases, take them for immunization, take them to the hospital when they are sick and of course seeking with your own children, or your own family to show them the right way of life as a Muslim family and this is how I say a Muslim woman should be.
- Aamenah

The joint responsibility of maintaining the household obliges many women to take on financial responsibilities as male earning power is destabilized. Kenya's economic problems are related to Structural Adjustment Policies,⁵³ global competition⁵⁴ through liberalization of the economy⁵⁵ as well as aid suspension. In the early 1990s, the country had its worst economic performance since independence as inflation peaked to 100% in August 1993, and the government's budget deficit was over 10% of GDP⁵⁶. Such deteriorating economic conditions worsen domestic financial situations, impelling women's participation in the workforce. The cost of living in Kenya has increased multifold and women seek to supplement household incomes through various means. As she explains how one income is not enough, Aamenah's story effectively captures the multiplier effects of SAPs and how

⁵³ The impacts of liberalization have been widely studied in development literature mostly in addressing issues of poverty (see Rono, 2002 for example). However, middle class groups are also affected by the reforms instituted in the Kenyan economy.

⁵⁴ On the one hand, global competition destabilizes domestic industries, on the other, it also provides income opportunities.

⁵⁵ Given the poor record of economic growth, since the 1980s and 1990s, liberalization has been the remedy endorsed by the key global economic institutions for most developing countries. These have been heavily criticized as major contributors to poverty in the Third World countries. In the case of Kenya, for example, the International Labour Office's (1996) research found that structural reforms to the economy had serious negative effects on employment, job security and real wages. Free market forces in these economies have encouraged anti-competitive business practises and privileged the elite. With concentrated market shares, multinationals now control Kenya's major sectors of petroleum, telecommunications and banking. This concentration of assets into the hands of few, increases the gap between the rich and the poor. It is estimated that about 55-60% of Kenya's population now lives under the poverty line (Kituyi, 2007).

⁵⁶ US Bureau of African Affairs at <http://www.state.gov/p/af/index.htm>. Accessed January 23, 2010

they impact the general economic situation faced by most Kenyans⁵⁷. As the government rolls back its spending on major social infrastructure, the strains on the private sector impact basic necessities; basic necessities of health and education are costly both to acquire and to provide.

...it is not enough. I mean the way we live in our own country. I would give you my example, I cannot afford with the clinic only. I joined the GNLD⁵⁸ to sell some products so I make a little bit of profit here and there. At least I get more income, but one employment is not enough. If one is employed by the government...suppose I was a civil servant, I would not be able to cope up with the life of today where the economy is really messed up in our country... You cannot feed your children very comfortably with a balanced diet, and you cannot afford the fees. Though, we are being told that education is free of charge, you go to the schools, the government schools where the education is free of charge, there are no teachers, there are no teaching facilities, so like myself I end up taking my kids to private school because I want them to learn...
I feel I should open my clinic 24 hours, but I cannot afford the salary... once I open it full time, 24 hours, I know I need more staff. I myself am working under stress. After 7 o'clock at night, I am on call until morning. So at any time a woman delivers they wake me at night. I have to come out of my house, open the clinic so I can attend to her.
- Aamenah

All participants concur that as women increasingly contribute to the household income, traditional set-ups are susceptible to change. Changes manifest in how women have a say in the overall household decisions including the handling of finances, the day to day running as well as other major decisions regarding the family. Women also play a proactive role in handling and managing family assets.

Gender relations actually have changed a lot because the woman feels she also has a say in controlling the finance in the house and she also has a say in the decision-making and day to day running of the house, expenditure, education of the children, clothing and entertainment as a whole. As far as I am concerned, I think Muslims lives have changed.
- Rahma

Nowadays, women don't expect to be under their husbands... I believe that in my case, my husband would not be able to do without me at his side running the two shops and everything... My husband travels overseas a lot – every two months, three months he is out.

⁵⁷ For impacts on child mortality see for example, Ikmari, 2004

⁵⁸ Branded health products available for marketing from South Africa. In a liberalized environment marketing opportunities for foreign products are increasingly available in Kenya and are suitable for small home-based businesses.

He is overseas, he knows I am here to take care of things
- Zainab

However, the responses indicate different perceptions and opinions over decision-making. Levels of consultation in joint decision-making are varied. In some responses the women indicate that they are comfortable to leave the major decisions especially with regard to capital purchases to the men. Even though income is pooled, decision-making over major spending is still the male domain.

I think generally with working women, roles have changed. Some decisions are made by the ladies and men have accepted it, but generally men tend to make the more major decisions in the house. Like in my house they do. I don't object to it; in fact I feel more comfortable when he makes the major decisions.
- Muneera

Naima, now in her late fifties shares how though the sole breadwinner in the family when her husband got laid off in the 1970s, she helped sustain the family and yet handed the pay packet to her husband in deciding the expenses. She did maintain some discretionary power over her other earnings by retaining income earned by giving tuitions after school. She acknowledges that according to *Shariah* she was under no obligation to do this, but that it was an arrangement between the two.

...what my husband was earning was not enough so I just gave him the full (*pay packet*). You see because I knew its going into running the house, its not going to other spending. Then I was giving tuitions; that I told my husband, 'No, this now I can't give it to you because this is for my kids'... I think there is an understanding between the two ...like I have told my son you see according to the *Shariah* you are not allowed to take the wife's salary. If she doesn't want to give it to you she will not give it and you can't say anything, but if she understands and she wants to share it, well and good...
- Naima

Most responses indicate that contribution to the household income represents degrees of autonomy and appreciation as providers that non-working women may not enjoy. The autonomy derived from being independent of the husband can be a source of confidence and also reduce barriers to move out of an unsuccessful marriage. The added status confers decision-making status and can be a financial buffer in case of separation. Women who find

themselves in a position where they have to leave a marriage are confident of providing for themselves.

...but when you are working at least you can contribute... when you are not working you depend on your husband. So the same applies with decision-making you can say today you want to do this and this and this, because you are contributing, the husband will respect you.
- Sauda

The woman who is working, she sees that even if she is separated from the husband, she is still ok. She is earning, she can take care of her children. She can take care of herself, her parents...where they are separated she can take care of herself.
- Noora

As mentioned before, ideally Islam sets the male as a provider of family and confers the obligation of providing for the wife and children. Islamically there is no compulsion on a woman to contribute to the household. However, most of the women feel a sense of responsibility in choosing to play a proactive role in supplementing the household budget as 'times are hard'. Firoza although unmarried considers her prospective role as contributor to the family income a sign of progressiveness where women actively feel the responsibility of provision.

Say if I get married then Islamically it's the man who is supposed to earn, but I being the kind of woman I am, I would definitely chip in. The world is progressive, it is not entirely upon the guy now to support the house. I will also feel responsible and chip in. Things are very different; one income-earner cannot support the household.
- Firoza

Fatma relates this to the Islamic ethic that one should work hard, rather than wait for handouts.

The way life is hard, you cannot expect to sit down and wait for money to come. You have to try hard and Islam teaches us that we should try and work for it, not to sit down and wait for it (*money*).
- Fatma

Both Amriya and Tayyibah also describe it as sharing responsibilities in help and support to ensure a good future for the children. Tayyibah's narrative reiterates the importance of

mutual support and the primacy of parental duty and obligations to create a better future for the children.

Women - they do contribute a lot when it comes to the financial responsibilities. As much as according to Islam that's not a role of a woman. As time goes by, it is difficult so that's why we are working. If men could provide for us everything why should I go and work? But you find life is tough, so we have to help, we have to help one another...
- Amriya

Life is very expensive and ...like my own example, we work together, me and my husband. There are times – he is a businessman - so there are times when business is low and it is my salary that will run the house ...It's sharing you know. I feel there needs to be that understanding between husband and wife. Like I see the other extreme where the wife works, but the husband says it is his right because she is not supposed to work, so you see he takes the salary. I see it with the economic difficulties now the problem is the two must work together and I think it is with one goal. We are working together to make a better future for our children.
- Tayyibah

The narratives of the Kenyan respondents reveal the interplay between the global, the local and the micro-setting of the household. As shown above, national economic changes register in household conditions impelling women to take up work to supplement family incomes. These in turn affect the dynamics of household relations. The trends show that more women are proactive in household decision-making and exercising agency in their ability to make decisions. There are of course several resulting challenges that ensue; these are examined in the following chapter. The next chapter also considers the opportunities open to women as societies transform. The concluding section to this chapter below locates the experiences of the women in the broader context of women/gender development theory and praxis.

In the narratives of both groups above, there is evidence of investments in social development resulting in demographic change. Demographic changes impact on the social, economic and political⁵⁹ milieu within which households exist, and consequently have a bearing on cultural attitudes towards interpersonal relations. Access to the public sphere through education, workplace and other participation not only increases the bargaining

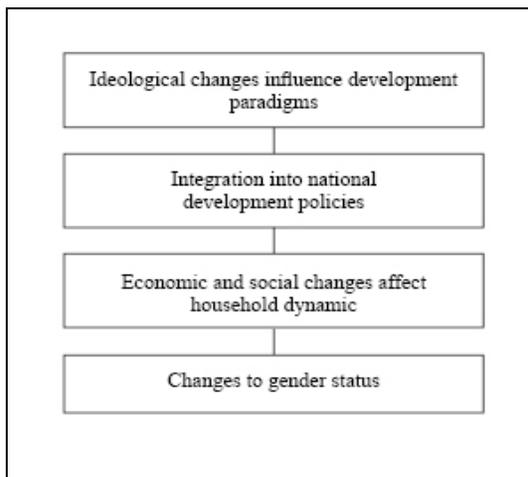
⁵⁹ For example in Kenya two Muslim women have been nominated as Members of the Kenyan Parliament in its current sitting (2007-2012)

power of women, but may also be seen as threatening existing dynamics of household relations where traditionally men have been heads of the household. In addition, as liberalization increases global competition, women have to undertake financial responsibilities and share in household provision, furthering their access to the public space. Literature on resulting changes in household arrangements suggest the emergence of neo-patriarchies displaying a combination of modern with tradition (see Offenauer, 2005 p 56 - 64); where the male is still the head of the family, but where a more egalitarian structure prevails in aspects of decision-making.

4.3 Modernization, culture and gender relations

In locating the experiences of the women in the broader setting of growth and development ideology, the analysis finds two unfolding transformations. One is the top-down linkage between modernization strategies and gender empowerment and consequently, the other a cultural remapping responding to the economic changes at the household level. The figure below traces the top-down linkage – as ideological changes influence development paradigms and are integrated in national development policies, these transmit economic consequences within the household and consequently affect gender status. Ideological changes in gender development are related to integrating women into the processes of development.

Figure 4: Modernization and gender status – top-down linkages



Investments in gender-focused development such as female education, family planning, and other strategies supporting increased workplace participation bring major transformations across generations in the lives of Muslims. Modifications in household dynamics in the areas of gender roles, economic and financial dependence, and weight in decision-making processes are observed in these narratives. In general there is a move away from traditional cultural set-ups as households are affected by the economic imperatives and attitudinal outlooks change towards women's contribution as 'economic agents'. For the Australian group these are revealed across diasporic associations; the women have linkage with countries of origins that are at different stages of development and have been impacted by human development investment strategies in those⁶⁰.

The shifting boundaries of gender roles and relations are discernible across two generations – the respondents and their parents. There is evidence in the narratives of changing configurations with regard to the type and size of the household, social expectations from girls, and outlooks favouring women's education and working outside the home. The changing economic times impel the participation of women in the workforce. Their earning capacities enhance their roles as decision-makers in the family and diffuse strong patriarchal tendencies.

To a large extent the fundamental values still apply, but there is remapping and reformulating of gender roles and relations. Men are still considered the heads of households and child-rearing is an important aspect of householding. Maintaining the family is the focus of household activity within which aspirations and ambitions are organized. Islam gives the overall framework for the organization of the household and family and formulates gender roles and relations. However, a cultural remapping within the parameters of Islamic directives is presented. Lifestyles are far removed from an ideal of male as providers. The material necessities of the times are unsettling the dynamics of the household where women have a proactive role and social status that goes with earning capacities. While older women are content to see these as an extension of their conjoint responsibilities, some young respondents question the status of the provider.

⁶⁰ Table 10 in the Appendix 1 illustrates in a number of indicators including the HDI.

This chapter has examined the links between modernization and culture in the context of gender relations as revealed in the stories of the participants. The themes distilled from the analysis of the narratives of the two groups of women, despite the differences in geographic locations, are comparable. These are not intended to be a generalization or simplification of the normative within Muslim households, but rather the trends of policy changes impacting the groups. The transformations at the household level pose both challenges and opportunities for the women as they balance modern imperatives with their faith orientation. These challenges and opportunities are examined further in the following chapter. The key findings are noted below.

4.4 Key Findings

- There is a top-down linkage with state-implemented modernization policies and gender relations at the household level
- Major transformation across generations in the lives of women are the access to education and workplace participation
- Young Muslim women are making active choices to stay on in education and delay marriage
- There is a move away from traditional cultural set-ups as households are affected by the economic imperatives and attitudinal outlooks change towards women's contribution as 'economic agents'
- The two income household is becoming a normative in Muslim societies
- As economic imperatives set in, there is a modification in household dynamics in the areas of gender roles, economic and financial dependence, and weight in decision-making processes.
- Women are taking up the roles of co-providers and providers of the family income
- A cultural remapping is occurring with traditional roles negotiated within the Islamic framework as women access the public space.
- To a large extent the fundamental religious values on house-holding still apply. The basic foundation of the household organization is the Islamic framework where both men and women have responsibilities towards family

CHAPTER 5

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

The previous chapter finds a paradigmatic shift at the household level related to broader gender policy measures for modernization. Gender development strategies are designed to help enhance women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to them. To what extent are these constrained or enabled in their social milieu? This chapter continues to integrate the discussion of economic processes with culture. It looks at some of the opportunities and challenges presented in the transformations within the modern Muslim household. As women respond to changing social and economic environments, what negotiations do they face; how is women's empowerment sustained or challenged in the paradigm shifts?

The analysis finds several corresponding and cross-cutting factors that the women see as enabling or challenging women's abilities to progress in the modern world. The themes are intersticed into one another and the reflections go much beyond the instances related, the discussion hence follows the two broad issues - of challenges and opportunities. Where some factors are opportunities, in others they are faced as challenges. As revealed in the stories of the women, female emancipation is both challenged and supported at the household, community and societal levels in various ways and the factors that they identify are discussed under the following sub-themes discovered within the narratives:

- **Culture** - is the most frequently cited aspect enabling as well as challenging women's empowerment
- **Education** – the respondents recognize education as a key element in women's participation in decision-making in addition to improving the well-being of the family. The women also find Islamic education an essential part of socialization as Muslims and an obligation in fulfilling religious duties. The lack of both surfaces as a challenge to women's empowerment.
- **Support** - both familial and systemic support or lack of enhance or limit women's advancement.

- **Personal agency** – personal agency plays a role in how empowerment is exercised. Enabling strategies like education only serve to give women the tools to advance self-determination. Applying these is also a function of own choice and drive.

The chapter is divided into four sections; the first two (sections 5.1 and 5.2) examine the narratives for opportunities and challenges respectively for Australia and Kenya. The two groups are discussed individually in these; the order in which the factors are discussed is not the same, it follows their recurrence within the analysis. Education for example featured much more in the Kenyan narratives than it did for the Australian. The third (section 5.3) evaluates the group narratives to find contrasts and similitude within the different contexts of experiences and the last (Section 5.4) presents the key findings.

5.1 Opportunities and challenges -Australian narratives

5.1.1 Cultural aspects

Muslims in Australia come from several different regions of the world and cultural interpretations of gender roles are diverse across these. The narratives reveal the subjectivities of cultural interpretation contexted in geographic differences. While roles are defined and demarcated within the framework of Islam, the actual parameters are fluid across various sub-cultures. Most responses perceive some regional cultures as relatively bounded and circumspect in their views on gender, others are seen as more egalitarian. The domains of gender roles, influence and authority as wives and mothers are also seen varied as observed in these comments below.

When you get into ethnic differences, there will be big difference - the Middle Eastern families will be different to the Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean families, or maybe the African families. Amongst the Muslims, there would be a lot of differences. Maybe the man has more control in some parts of the world, depends which part of the world they come from. ...
- Nurzati

Annam has a 'glimpse' of different cultures through her work in an Islamic school. She finds women from some regions more assertive and having equitable household positions. She also assumes contrasting domains of control - a father's realm of responsibility in one

culture is the mother's in another. In her example, a child from the Middle East would likely be disciplined by the father, while in an African culture, the role would be the mother's.

I have been able to have a glimpse, not that I fully understand their gender relations. For example, with the African groups, I find that the women actually are quite dominant in personality and I find that the men tend to be more accepting... They are more willing to have more equitable relationships with their wives. I know lots of women, they respect their husbands, but at the same time they can live their own lives and their role as a mother is really valued in their culture. I think that it is an African thing as well; it is quite matriarchal. When I was at the school – to an African boy if you want to discipline him, you always say I will call your mother and then he will listen. With the Middle Eastern boy, you will say I will call your father...

- Annam

Contrasting interpretations and expectations also surface in comparisons between Australia and other regions in the following response. Married at nineteen to a man from the Middle East, Attiya who was born and grew up in Australia finds cultural orientation a challenge in her marriage. While she believed that being Muslim would be enough to sustain her marriage, over time, cultural differences create a wedge in the relationship. She feels that regional interpretations often put restraints on women not prescribed in the religion. Her internal struggle is going along with and accepting what is presented to her or finding out what is actually prescribed. The solution as she lays it would be to reject Islam altogether, but that is not a probable resolution to faith-centred women who value their belief-system and seek answers within the faith itself.

When I got married, I very much believed that as a Muslim, that Islam would shape our marriage. So basically if we had Islam, we would be fine. What I find however, is that we didn't realize that culture plays a huge role in how you interpret your religion and how you feel. I didn't realize how that would make such a big effect on my marriage and now nine years later, I realize that it's very different. You cannot say it can't work, it's just that a lot of issues that come up because of that... Yes, culture does play a huge role in our lifestyles... I think cultural interpretation has made woman very restrained in Islam and it becomes a struggle for a woman to believe that this is what her religion has prescribed for her... It is a struggle for me, an internal struggle to find out what Islam is and what Islam has been interpreted over the years. This personal struggle I would rather have than to think to leave my Islam because it is not good enough or go with the interpretation that you are oppressed as a woman.

- Attiya

The responses touch on socializations that condition man as the dominant party in the domestic relationship. The subscribed role of *qiwama* (guardianship) explained earlier in

Chapter 4 can deviate from maintenance and protection to dominance and authority. Annam views this as socialization where men are made to understand their role as controlling causing the loss of women's fundamental rights even in Islam. Razia's comments hold up such perceptions that rights available to women in Islam are denied by some Muslim men. She adds how there is a selective reading of the scriptures to benefit male authority. My own work on family violence within the Muslim community also finds such selective readings, that if not addressed can be potentially harmful to women (Samani, 2003).

In some cultures, it's really unmistakable that the man is definitely the head of the house. He is brought up from the beginning of his life to understand that he is the dominant one in the relationship and that he will be the head of the household, but headship is not always based on Islam. Most of the time it is based on cultural norms so through that relationship the Muslim woman may be denied some of her fundamental rights, and that is because of the cultural way of treating a woman which is not always Islamic.

- Annam

A big problem in some Muslim societies is that Islam gives the rights to women, but men are not giving them... Men accept in Islam what is beneficial to them. In Australia this is changing, women are becoming more confident.

- Razia

Roald's (2000) critical study on the (re)construction of gender roles in Islam draws on the outlooks of Muslims in Europe and includes perspectives of religious scholars from different parts of the Muslim world. Her discussion on Muslim attitudes on gender in cultural encounters confirms the above views; there are regional differences in interpretation of gender relations among Muslims and there is a selective choosing of interpretations from what she calls the 'Islamic basket of cultures' with respect to household hierarchies, economic and social responsibilities and public female participation. However, cultures are not fixed, static or pristine. Roald's work also verifies that attitudes towards gender relations are changing and modified to suit existing socio-cultural situations.

In the Australian context, changes for example, manifest in how acculturation affects people. The egalitarian lifestyle of Australian society influences the ways in which the boundaries and parameters are modified to include the normative of the host culture. The ability to exercise agency is contexted in the liberal outlook of the society that influences how women shape their aspirations, ambitions and expectations. Huda, from a cross-cultural

background, born and brought up in Australia, finds she does not have the set cultural parameters that other Muslim women may have. To her egalitarianism is a reality of many young Muslims. Exposed to other Muslim cultures at university, she discovers considerable diversity in what female priorities across these are and the choices that women are making depending on these. Given her background, she does not feel the need to depend on a man or any pressure to get married and makes the choice to continue with higher studies.

With the Muslim community with my experience it depends on the culture and traditions of the couple. I can talk about the president of the ... at the university. His wife is a stay-at-home lady from the Middle East, covers her face, cooks, and cleans,... whereas someone like me I do not have any of these boundaries ... This is the reality of today... When I went to university (*I learnt*) that it is different in Malaysia, girls study and then get married; that there are women who are thirty and not married. So it differs a lot. I learnt a lot in the past few years whether marriage should be a priority or not and sometimes I would think that, oh, I should get married. It would be easier being a Muslim, but then I thought it would not be the right thing to do because I want to do anthropology... I think it depends on your conditions and culture. If marriage is for them, if they want to be house-bound, see that, that is how they fit into their society, then go for it. I am the type that doesn't fit into any community yet does, because of my mix of background and things, so I am like an open slate about things. I decided to leave that till late.

- Huda

While Huda's comments reveal a consciousness about the freedom of self-determination, it also raises the significant issue of subjectivities of suppression. Young women are more receptive to liberal changes, but older Muslim women are negotiating these within their own ways. Given the age factor, Fatima feels socialization into demarcated roles is intrinsic to self-identity and discomfiting and difficult to change. Tipping the balance towards liberal values can possibly destabilize the sense of self that women have of themselves or how they identify themselves. Her narrative suggests that as much as empowerment is an imperative, how change comes about has to be carefully considered through understanding the social milieu of women themselves.

I do know of Muslim women for who it (*gender relations*) is constricting. I think they cope okay. It's something that they have obviously grown up with, it's expected and I think it is a conditioning - that this is where I am meant to be, this is where he is meant to be and that's it. So in a lot of instances they cope with it without really questioning, but I think the younger generation does question that and I think that's where things change. Whereas with the older generation it is pretty much - it's the done thing. I don't think you would get a very positive reaction (*if you were to tell these women that you have rights and you should fight for them*). That's all they know. You and I are telling them that everything they know is

wrong. This is how they have been conditioned what they believe in and you are now telling them that it's not the way it is.

- Fatima

The other contributing element surfacing in the narratives is education. Most feel that a higher level of education facilitates expanded opportunities in the public sphere and helps in levelling gender status in the household, but it also challenges traditional roles.

5.1.2 Education

The respondents see education and especially higher education as changing the dynamics of the household in favour of women. Economic agency, 'equal footing' and a fairer division of labour is indicated as reconfigurations that favour women in household relations when women are educated.

Education plays a part in this. Definitely I would say that traditional roles are being challenged. In parts where women are more educated, where women are participating in economic part of the household in the family then you see equal roles.

- Nurzati

I think of people from South Africa, Australians, Malaysians, all the couples across the board, the thing that sticks out is the level of education. It allows them to have an equal footing – equal, but different, like fulfilling their respective duties.

- Huda

Norma adds education to acculturation. She finds that traditional roles erode as the younger generations aspire to a Western lifestyle. Given the higher education opportunities, the levels of communication are different from older generations and expectations relatively higher. Her example of young Malays in Australia illustrates changing outlooks that influence gender dynamics and expectations of a fairer division of labour in the household from women.

I think it depends on the level of education of the husband and wife you know if both of them are educated... Just with the Malaysian Muslims here in Perth, I think it has changed. They are often brought up here and they are much more well-informed so they have the aspiration that they are more Western. They are not Malaysian, not Asian as their parents anymore, so the communication is a lot better and expectations are probably high. They expect the husband to help more, to talk to them. I think it has changed.

- Norma

Even as some find egalitarian outlooks in the Western social pattern, others look within Islam itself to discover whether it sanctions unequal gender roles. Not socialized in set gender roles, Tanya finds herself and others questioning the cultural treatment of Muslim women proposed as religiously sanctioned. An outsider to Muslim cultures, her knowledge of Islam is its ideal and that helps see misconceptions around gender role parameters. She finds the contextual realities of gender roles ill-matched with the ideals of Islam; the treatment of Muslim women is not always religious sanction. A lot of Muslim women like her are looking and locating the answers within Islam itself.

From what I have seen in my relationship and other relationships, or other Muslim relationships around me, there is a lot of misconception about what is culture and what is religion as far as the treatment of women or gender relations are concerned. I guess being the ones who are being spoken of, and the ones who have had to be submissive on order or whatever.... For myself, coming from a Western culture, I tend to be quite clear. Like since becoming a Muslim, I have been able to know; see quite clearly the difference in what is cultural and what is religion... A couple of other revert women that I was thinking off the top of my head in a situation like myself and I will have to say that I know of born Muslim women who have done that sort of research themselves as well...
- Tanya

While development strategies at the macro-level like education are designed to make a difference at the micro-level, systemic support factors are a corollary to sustaining empowerment. In macro policies the most commonly recognized for gender workplace involvement are child-care and maternity leave, however support at the household level is inevitably significant to provide moral as well as material backing to female empowerment.

5.1.3 Support

Both household and systemic supports and lack of, emerge as sustaining or limiting factors in attaining personal goals and ambitions. A qualified personal trainer, Rosmina recognizes the liberal outlook and systemic propping of the Australian state system as creating an environment in which personal goals can be realized in good measure. However, she credits her achievements mostly to her husband's backing in helping her develop skills to a professional level and fulfill her aspirations. A mother of five, she has worked around her

family's needs to develop a successful personal training business that she feels would not have been possible without her husband's support.

In fact I have found Australia to be quite an opening for me in the sense that Australia has just completely opened up my life. I have been able to pursue a field that I am so passionate about. If I had lived in South Africa, this would not have been the career path that I would have chosen and probably mainly because of the whole apartheid situation... not at the time when I was actually going through my career... Probably half is due to the Australian way of life, but more so to my husband's thinking. Because of his open-mindedness and his broad-mindedness, he has supported me from the time I got here. I was fairly young when I got here and he helped me follow this career path and if I didn't have his support, I don't think I would have done this. If he had restricted me in any way, this would have been very difficult to follow. He knows what I do. He is very comfortable with it. He has encouraged me, supported me, and he is actually very proud of what I do.
- Rosmina

Systemic as well as family support comes forth in newly married Saida's goals to have children. The availability of crèche facilities increases her options in balancing family and work, but she would rather be a stay-at-home mum for the first few years. With her parents also living in Perth, she believes she has the support network to stop work and give her child the care and upbringing she desires. This would also open up the opportunity to take up post-graduate studies if she wishes.

For me personally, family comes first. I feel this is why I got married and it is a lot of commitment and there are going to be children involved. Like I would love to be working and all, putting the child in crèche or a playgroup is an option and thank God for these childcare providers all around the place, everywhere. Every corner you find a childcare facility, but I would prefer to be with my child for the first two years and then prepare him or her to go to that sort of thing. It's just a decision that I have made - as long as I maintain that sort of kind of lifestyle with a child that I will be ok. I don't think I will just be staying at home. I will be doing some postgraduate studies, whatever I can do. I have a network and social support and family here, *alhamdulillah*. So I think it will definitely help me in helping out with these things you know, to take care of my baby for two to three days for me to go out and do these things.
-Saida

Fatima's narrative touches on elements of systemic support through financial independence. Achieving economic or financial independence is at the core of gender development theory. Financial security in the form of earnings or social security help give women charge of their financial affairs and can also act as a safety net in circumstance where a woman may have to leave a marital relationship. Being able to access both in Australia, Fatima's perceptions of

Muslim women reveal modified relations where women are feeling financially secure. For women who may never have opportunities in countries of origin, going out to work and earning an income means less dependence on the spouse and more autonomy in decision-making, shifting the power dynamic in the household. The financial independence gives women added elements of power that can be exercised in other spheres of their lives.

...in some of the countries we come from women did not out to work and they didn't have their independence. Whereas coming to a country like Australia where you generally do have to go out to work or they (*women*) are going out to work that's now changing in terms of you are. Working you have your own money, you can make your own decisions. So you actually have power you may not have had in your country of origin and we are finding that that's what's happening ... Centrelink gives the woman the money and now all of a sudden, she has got power that she didn't have and she is now exerting that power. So I think that the shift is actually happening and its starting to change. It is (*having an impact on families*), it is having an impact because everything they knew has now changed, the dynamics of the relationship has changed... it is also giving women this ability to turn up and say that I can actually do this, I've got the power to do this. So I think that it's a shift that is going to hopefully eventually come out with a little bit more equality all round.

- Fatima

Even as achieving economic independence is at the core of the gender equality hypothesis, unpaid housework and duties still fall under the female sphere of household labour.

Balancing paid work with household responsibilities is a major challenge for women throughout the world and opens up the issue of - are women really exercising choice or reconciling internal and external pressures taking on added loads when in paid employment? The narratives here resonate with the findings of a human rights' report outlining the major drawbacks Australian women find in work and family balance (HREOC, 2008). Juggling careers with home duties as primary care-givers is a major challenge for modern women. A comment placed in the report states:

'All the women I know who have young children are exhausted most of the time. Feminism wasn't about producing overworked women who are expected to bear children and to work as many hours as they can fit in so the family can survive.' (HREOC, 2008, p 8).

Like the above, Eesha's comments recognize the increasing pressures on women in balancing work and home duties. As modern women, while they are expected to contribute

towards the family income, the burden of housework and childcare remains within the female sphere of household duties. Attitudinal changes towards women going out to work are shifting, but those towards division of labour in the home are slow to come and women feel the burden of additional stresses trying to balance work with family life. Though income earners, they continue to shoulder traditional family responsibilities of cooking, cleaning and primary childcare. Eesha narrates the experiences of a friend in a professional position who finds the duties of caring for a new baby, as well as other house duties unaffected by her employment outside the home and very taxing in trying to balance these with a new baby. As in this example, the traditional expectations of primary care and household work still prevail for many women, whatever their professional positions.

I have a friend here; she is a lecturer at university. He (*the husband*) works in a company from nine to five and she still has to do all the cooking. He doesn't do the cooking and she still has to get up when the baby (*wakes ups*) – the role of a woman... Even though we think that we are giving ourselves a lot of freedom, it is actually quite exhausting. While we have a career, we still have to live up to expectations and yes they might be helping, but mostly the load is on your shoulders and it is not just from a Middle Eastern or an Eastern perspective... It is happening here in Australia and I see it all the time, you know the man does not want to do it (*the housework*) even in the mainstream community.
-Eesha

Newly married Tanya shares these sentiments as she tries to adjust to life as a married woman. The expectations to provide supplementary income, as well as be the primary householder are stressing her relationship. As she shares her frustrations, she deliberates over these comparing her own brother to her husband - both males, but from different cultural backgrounds sharing similar attitudes towards housework.

I don't know if that is religious or cultural or just men. When they are married, their expectations just grow and women as much as they give, men will take and then keep expecting more. For some reason I don't know if that's just the gender or the culture because I think my brother, a Western person is the same... He (*her husband*) also expects me to do all the housework, do all the cleaning. He will help with it, but as long as I am in control of it, keep up to date with it... I do all the laundry. I do all the meal preparation as I said including like the shopping, and any kind of thought that goes into it. He is prepared to do the dishes or help with something as long as I have prepared it for him. Like I will have to say this room needs vacuuming, can you do that or can you please help hang out this washing? I will put it out and tell him what to do, but until I spell it out, he won't do it

because it is seen as my role and responsibility...So these things all cause conflict I must say.

- Tanya

Maryam relates additional pressure that holds back her abilities to pursue goals. The stress of caring for a disabled child adds to the demands of balancing home duties and work. As her passion for working with people with disabilities has helped her advance a career, it opens up professional positions that she has to reconsider as a full-time carer. Prioritizing what is more meaningful for her, she has decided to give up work. Estranged from her own family and no relatives on her husband's side, she finds she has very little in the way of moral and material support.

...I work with people with disabilities primarily trying to help people from the Muslim community and we don't have that support. It's only relying on my husband and me to maintain the family and we have got somebody with a disability... The problem is being a housewife, I can't always achieve what I want to achieve. It's hard, it's sacrificing because one of the biggest troubles I am having at the moment with balancing that role is I have had to quit my work. I was offered a position – full-time as a permanent systemic advocate...I had to stop all that to maintain the family role because at the moment I have got no other support. My son has autism and there are a lot of things that are happening and my role as a mother is that it's primarily my responsibility to sort that out and get resources and whatever is needed and you have to sacrifice at times especially when you have got no other outside support.

- Maryam

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This account also resonates with the human rights report quoted before. Some women are struggling as carers of next of kin. Without the extended networks of kinship of traditional family set-ups, many rely on state support to help with respite in caring for close ones. In Maryam's case, besides the caring, looking for the sources that can provide culturally appropriate services for her son also takes considerable time as she prioritizes her primary duties.

5.1.4 Personal agency

A crucial factor in exercising female empowerment is personal agency. Sen (1993) and Mehra (1997) cited in Malthotra et al (2002) emphasize agency as an element of empowerment. Although there may be an improvement in gender indicators, women

themselves have to be agents within the change and not just recipients of empowerment.

Saida finds many proactive women not necessarily well educated, move beyond the household sphere to be actively involved within a broader range of interests.

Definitely education makes a difference, it does make a difference but there are a lot of women who are not educated, but who are very active, they are very active in the community with their families and... I think personality makes a difference; personality has a lot to do with it...

- Saida

While some women are content to be stay-at-home mothers, others are actively engaged beyond the family and community. Supported within their family background, many women are able to rise above the formal educational proficiency to be active in areas of interest.

The narratives above identify transitive factors of which culture stands out as the most cited in both maintaining and challenging women's abilities in redefining gender roles suited to the modern Western lifestyle in Australia. The women make out regional differences in cultural attitudes and set-ups of different Muslim cultures. They also discern changing dispositions towards household gender dynamics influenced by the liberal, egalitarian, host Australian culture, as well as state policies that encourage female independence.

Nevertheless, for some older migrant Muslim women, traditional roles constructed within the frameworks of culture, gender, religion and social milieu remain persistent in the processes of migration to Australia. The importance of education is highlighted in raising levels of decision-making and household management. The role of individual personalities is also recognized as giving women the added advantage in exercising personal agency.

Family and support networks help to open up and sustain opportunities for women. On the flip side, the lack of these hinders the ability of women to take up the opportunities that may be availed to them. Balancing work and home life nonetheless, stand out as a core issue in the changing gender roles.

Similar factors and issues surface in the accounts of the Kenyan respondents. Their context however, is different to the Australian groups. Below is the discussion of the analysis of the Kenyan respondents' narratives.

5.2 Opportunities and challenges –Kenyan narratives

5.2.1 Education

Like the Australian group, the Kenyan respondents see education as a core strategy in women's empowerment. As seen in the previous chapter, access to education has improved considerably for Muslim women in Kenya. Not only have attitudes toward female education altered, but additionally the availability of integrated options, female-only establishments, concessions on wearing the veil in school, as well as avenues such as distance learning enhance literacy levels. Theoretically, education helps widen opportunities for women and dissolve some of the gender disparities experienced within the household. Educated women are likely to be better informed not only about their productive and reproductive choices, but also be better informed about their rights and exercise them (Roudi- Fahimi and Moghaddam, 2003). As educated women themselves, the respondents are active in promoting its gains and supporting others. Rahma, highlighting the inter-generational struggle over education in her family speaks about her mother's support and articulates the value of its worth. Rahma's grandmother wary of girls' education was determined not to send her to school. On the other hand, her mother though not educated herself was adamant about education. Having no money of her own, she sought bursaries to help Rahma get upto tertiary level.

I was not allowed to go to Form 1 by my grandmother, ... I was told now she is a big girl, if she goes to secondary school she will get spoiled so she cannot go to secondary school... my Mum I can never forget my Mum ...she is the one who told me, you know what, I didn't go to school. I suffered a lot; I suffered a lot because I was not taken to school. I don't want you to suffer the way I suffered, so if your grandmamma does not want you to go to school I will do so, even if I don't have money I will go and get bursaries for you so that you can. She was adamant and she is the one who took me to secondary school ... I think when somebody is educated you are no longer the same person that you were before education – your thinking is different, your reasoning is different and your role is also different.
- Rahma

The value of education is also extolled by Zohra who has worked very hard to get her daughters educated and succeeded through seeking overseas scholarships. One of her daughters is studying medicine in Russia, the other Islamic law in Tanzania. As a patron of different schools and on the board of some, Zohra mentors many girls and encourages their

learning by talking about the benefits of education accruing not only to the individuals, but to their families.

I would say educate the girls because if you educate one child, one girl, you are educating the nation. In our Muslim community here, in Mombasa, now times have changed. *Alhamdulillah* the percentage of girls is going up... I go to schools and I talk to them. Some of the girls write to me. I have so many presents from those I talk to. I don't even remember their faces all have stories of how it has helped them... aunty I am doing this, I am doing my Masters...If all of us could do that... so talk to our girls.
- Zohra

Noting the higher levels of females accessing education, Khairun also endorses the value of education in changing household relations.

I would say education has a big role (*in empowering women*). Maybe if you compare the present times and the past, a woman was not as much educated as now. Now we have access of education via different mediums so *alhamdulillah* that is what I can say, it has played a big role.
- Khairun

Even as there is an active endorsement, there are still barriers to access and gender disparities in literacy levels exist. Tayyibah distinguishes between attitudes amongst the different regional sub-cultures within the overall Kenyan Muslim community. She finds there is no uniformity in how the different ethnic cultures recognize its value. In comparison with other regions, female literacy rates are much lower at the coast and other majority Muslim regions lag even further behind. These observations corroborate with statistical data on female educational attendance and completion rates in Kenya. Data for 2003 reveals that net attendance ratios for primary school education was 67.2% in the Coast Province as compared to a national total of 78.8 % and even lower at 26.5% for the North Eastern Province (Munene, 2003)⁶¹ which has a large concentration of Somali Muslims. The gender gap in literacy in the two regions was also high. Paradoxically, in terms of institutional representation, Tayyibah finds Kenyan Somali woman at the forefront. The other areas she

⁶¹ Primary school education of eight years is compulsory in the country. Enrolments that in the 1980s were at 100% have fallen since the introduction of user fees introduced under donor pressure. Primary school enrolments since 2003 fell to about 75% of children. See page 7, Library of Congress, 2007. Available at <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Kenya.pdf>. Accessed September 17, 2009

identifies represent concentrations of mostly indigenous African Muslims where the levels of education are quite high.

Our religion doesn't tell us not to educate women...I think if you look at North Eastern regions and some parts of Mombasa- because this is where Muslims are mainly concentrated; then you look at like Nakuru, Kisumu; there are a lot of Muslims upcountry. Kisumu has Muslims - the women are educated. It's because of their culture. If you come to the North Eastern, the Somalis are different, a little different to us at the Coast... if you look at the top posts right now they are being held by Somalis and some of them are women. Even in the Human Rights Commission, there is a Somali lady. Then we have a lady ambassador who is now a Permanent Secretary of the Justice Ministry - its a Somali lady ... So you know, they are coming up now and I feel in the North Eastern region - it is culture, it is not religion. I think that's the most important thing that we need to educate the girls, tell them what their rights are because if you know your rights you can fight for yourself... I think its education....
- - Tayyibah

It is not just formal Western education that the women recognize as helping empower women, many see the value of being educated about Islamic values as giving women the knowledge to overcome suppression.

Islamic literature that seeks to inform and educate Muslims on moral conduct and general Islamic etiquette is evermore available through the growth of new technologies. Gender roles and responsibilities in Islam are complemented by gender rights that a growing Muslim feminist scholarship shows as abrogated over time (Hassan, 1995; Wadud-Muhsin, 1992; Barlas, 2002). Knowing about Islamic gender rights, Tayyibah feels can support women challenge their subordination complemented by civil rights. She outlines the rights given within the *Shariah* that women can invoke in improving their status.

Women have rights in Islam; because if you look at inheritance, in Islam women inherit, the wife inherits the daughter inherits... Then once you are married the man must take care of you, that is according to the *Shariah*, Islam...I know my rights I am a woman I have been working for years, my husband works, but he never takes my salary. As a woman now if you are in doubt you can read, you have been to school and religion is catered for in every language now. You just need to get a book and read what women's rights are in Islam are. ..So I feel it is still there, and we can use it. We can educate our women, our children, our girls and make the girls teach their children I think that is the way forward, *inshaAllah*.
- Tayyibah

Education in Islam also appears strongly Amriya's narrative as empowering women to demand for their rights.

Most of us know what the *Shariah* is. What we are supposed to follow in things like divorce, the inheritance and all that – everyone knows that... Previously when women didn't know their rights, they were suppressed by their own brothers or their own husbands or even their own fathers, but now a woman knows my inheritance is this and this and this portion – all that is through knowledge – this education has really empowered women.
- Amriya

Resonating with development theories, the responses also allude to a common Arabic maxim that a 'mother is a school' - educating a woman is equivalent to educating a nation. Primarily referring to Islamic education the responses resonate with development theory that posits educating women has multifold implications. When mothers are educated, children as well as others benefit and making changes in society can be through educating women.

Like the Australian respondents other factors that the women recognize as supporting their bid to balance home and work life include family and paid support that they are able to access.

5.2.3 Support

The availability of domestic helps reduces the burden of work and family responsibilities for many in Kenya. *Ayahs* or housemaids are hired in most households to help with the housework. Many look after children, cook and clean while their employers go to work. Crèche facilities are not a market option available to women when joining the workplace. Many have to trust and rely on paid housemaids to look after their children. Muneera recalls how her work hours were organized around her children's needs as they grew up. Having her mother's support helped balance work and family life as did the paid house-help that cared for her children while she was at work.

Initially it was difficult because of the stress of feeding. I was just working part time, but even that was difficult because I used to be away from home and having somebody good to look after my children. I always used to worry about leaving them at home with the *ayah*,

but I managed it. In the sense, that I had a lot of family support. My Mum used to come down and help me out. When I started working full time they (*two children*) were both at school, so it was easier, but I can't say it was all that easy. It was difficult leading a normal housewife life and being at work the whole day until 4 or 5...I guess here, it's not as difficult as it could have been in the West because we have somebody looking after the house whilst you are at work. Though I always cooked when I came back home. So I managed.

- Muneera

Similarly Rahma shares her experiences of balancing work and home responsibilities. With her husband working in Saudi Arabia, Rahma was responsible for caring for the children while she also worked. She recognizes both her mother's and the maids' help in sharing the additional family roles and in managing a high profile career in nursing.

My husband was in Saudi Arabia, so mostly I have been on my own. It's difficult - in fact the type of work I had was very demanding, very stressful. I was working as an administrator and it was very demanding job. Of course I had a young family to take care of, so I had to use two or three house-help to take care of the children while I went to work.

Fortunately, I was working upto four o'clock. So after four I was free to take care of my family, but you know rather tired. When the babies were small, my Mum was taking care of them, but only during the day. In the evening I was taking care of my own family but during the day because when they are infants you cannot leave them just with the maid so my Mum was there for me *alhamdulillah*.

- Rahma

Other women do not fare as well in balancing career and housework. The struggle to continue working and the weight of housework is a challenge for many who cannot afford house-help or live with extended family where there are expectations to fulfill house duties after work. Sauda tells her story of how she juggles with these responsibilities. Living with an extended family there is little respite for her when she gets home from work. The traditional wifely duties have to be fulfilled inspite of the fact that she works as hard to provide for the family as her husband. As women's work tends to be largely oriented towards the household, this is an important issue in development literature. Women's inclusion in the productive sector of the economy is on different terms from men (Moore, 1988). The responsibilities of income provisions stretch the existing weight of children's care and household duties.

I start my job at eleven. Before eleven I have to do everything at my place. I leave my child, the smallest one with the neighbours. All the other people around have gone to home to

vote⁶² ... I have to take care of everything. In fact when we are all around also; when the husband is there and the two other children, the relatives, we are an extended family you know ... I live with my in-laws so when I go home I don't get to rest. I am expected, my husband expects me to do everything. Despite the fact that we are all working.
- Sauda

Noora's account also reveals the hardship of the double burden of providing and caring. Having a daughter from a previous marriage that she supports, her problems are complicated by the growing needs of the child. There are no financial safety nets for women like Noora; no state provision for single mothers and little enforcement of child support from the divorced parent. In cases like Noora's, the responsibility of parenting falls mostly on the mother⁶³.

I don't have a maid so I have to cook. I have to wash the dishes. I have to wash my clothes. I find it so hard - working and at the same time... because of my first daughter. Her father does not contribute anything since I was divorced. When she was little, I took all the responsibility, he doesn't want to pay anything. So it is a burden on me. You know I have to work. I cannot force my current husband to look after my daughter. That is the main problem I have. As she grows up she needs more....
- Noora

5.2.4 Cultural change

A number of narratives disclose how responses to modern changes manifest in different spheres of life. For some it is experiences within the home where husbands respond negatively to female empowerment; in others these are discernible in the public sphere as a part of gender discourses. The recounts below relate how these are perceived by the respondents. In Zohra's account, it is a concern over the broader community's progress. If attitudes towards women's participation in the economy were supported well and women not restricted from involvement in various spheres of development, Muslims would progress much more. She feels that holding back women's contributions or inhibiting their partaking in the process has meant little improvement for the Muslim community in general.

⁶² At the time of the interview Sauda's family had gone to their home district for the upcoming elections and she had left the youngest child with neighbours when she came to work.

⁶³ There is evidence that Muslim women activists are joining up with others around the world to demand for a review of equality in the family. The Kenyan Muslim Women Family Rights Movement's report shows concerns over inequalities and injustices towards Muslim women and one identified area is of maintenance after divorce. Their report is available at <http://www.musawah.org/docs/research/country-reports/Kenya-report.pdf>. Accessed November 20, 2009

I think men are being threatened by women today. They feel they will get more demands from the women and they fear that the women will be more powerful than them ...I feel that the men read the Qur'an just in the way they want ...We could have had our own buildings, we could have had our own farms, but still whenever you become something or you are promoted, the husband feels threatened. Maybe he will not tell you directly, but he will just say where have you been today, why are you going out? Those are the things he will start telling you...

- Zohra

Rahma's narrative pertains to general discourses where women's empowerment is challenged in the public. Rahma's sister, a Muslim scholar goes on talk-back radio to speak about various gender topics and Rahma finds an attack on selected gender rights' issues. Men calling in, quote verses from the Qur'an that justify the relegation of women to the domestic sphere.

I learn a lot from our radio stations. I am a good listener. There are some topics men will just you know stay back, they will not participate, but if there is topic like for example, today my sister Fatma, she is going to be on the radio at 11...If she talks for example, about the rights of women, you will hear men trying to attack. You feel the attack you know, throwing the spears on the women, so religion is used to put women in place... If you are an illiterate person, you will believe them, but if you are someone who knows something about religion you will challenge them...

- Rahma

Other factors go beyond the household and community to the system of economic development itself in threatening social values. A supervisor of short studies pertaining to medical issues in the coastal region to exchange students from overseas, Tayyibah has insight into some of the statistical information that comes out of the research. Her account discloses disturbing social problems resulting from the current state of the economy combined with a liberalized market system. As a profitable industry, tourism attracts a lot of investment to the coastal region and brings in much-needed foreign revenue. Auxiliary to the tourist trade is the hospitality industry that lures young women. Tayyibah reveals ethical issues around the type of work women are willing to take up to provide for their families. This gives credence to some of the worries Muslims have had – not only the fear of erosion of moral values through the market system, but also how it puts women at risk.

There was a study done on prostitution and AIDS in ...and the results were just shocking. I mean these students just came in about two weeks they went and looked for eleven different study cases and about 90% of them were Muslim. They were girls who were in discos or bars, these young girls were married and divorced...Their work is actually - we call them commercial sex workers, we don't use the word prostitutes any more. So this is what they do and 50% of them were HIV positive through their work ... Yes, we want women to work, but what work are you doing? That is very, very important. You can bring in money, yes the economy is bad, but how are you bringing that money in? As a Muslim you know, you have to feed your children, you have to feed your grandmother; she is ailing maybe at home, but what you are doing is it right as well? Do you need to get that money from any job that is going to be around? ...as a Muslim you need to know what type of work is proper for you... I am also a trustee of the outreach for the anti-drugs campaign, we are finding more and more women going into intravenous drug use, cocaine, and...
- Tayyibah

5.2.2 Personal agency

Personal agency is reflected in most accounts in the ways women have taken up opportunities to advance themselves, as well as created some to help advance the community's general interests. For example, Aamenah started the clinic based on her skills and her ability to meet the needs of the society. Similarly Zohra has pursued her passion about AIDS awareness through efforts to acquire training as a campaign officer. Drawing on her interests Sanna has taken the initiative to built up a career around teaching craft work. She shares how she structures the courses building on the skills she already has.

I structured the courses myself because when I went to learn, I was never satisfied. What I wanted is not what I found out there. When I initially went to learn craft I was not very happy because I just learnt basics and that was it. Then I did a lot of reading. I love reading, it is one of my hobbies, I did a lot of research on the Internet. I put in practice. I get books from overseas ... I just love teaching it's a passion for me. I love teaching and I think there is nothing more than to be able to give knowledge...I have had people ask me if I know how to read and write because I wear a scarf,... maybe - she's married, she's at home, she does not know anything.
-Sanna

Contexted in the different setting, the opportunities and challenges presented in the Kenyan narratives have similarities with the Australian group. Here, also there is an overlap in how some factors manifest as openings for women, while for others confront their abilities to be more in control of their lives and help realize their aspirations. Education surfaces as a

major enabling factor that many of the respondents passionately advocate. There is evidence of sub-cultural differences in the many ethnic groups that make up the Muslim communities in Kenya. Attitudes towards female literacy are not the same and some groups are felt to be discriminating against girls in this. This bears out in some of the available data on literacy in the different provinces of Kenya. However, the respondents find a rise in the numbers of girls going for higher education. There is a strong emphasis on Islamic education in these narratives in giving women an understanding of their rights within Islam itself and to assist them challenge suppressive male behaviours.

While there is increased scope for challenging patriarchal social relations through the process of development, market orientation of female labour can itself be inequitable towards women. In Kenya for example, particularly since the 1980s, as liberalization persists, women's productive contributions increase. The combination of a liberalized market with cut backs in state funding pushes basic social services into the private sector and claims women's contributions to the household income. Evidenced in the narratives are some of the declines in social services that elasticize women's labour as they try to meet the family's needs and for those going beyond to meet the community's requirements. This increases the load of being wives, mothers, providers and community and religiously conscious individuals. In work participation, family and other support is crucial in shedding some of the load of added responsibilities of work and home tasks. While in some cases this is forthcoming through paid help, in others balancing work and home duties remain a strong challenge both because of the culture of male dominance, as well as the affordability of paid help.

The section below looks at how the experiences of the two groups are consistent in how opportunities and challenges are perceived.

5.3 Opportunities and challenges - comparing contexts

ix below summarizes the major factors identified within the analysis as opportunities and challenges.

| | Opportunities | Challenges |
|------------------|---|--|
| Australia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to socio-economic conditions • Education - Islamic and secular • Market and spousal support • Personalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to male household leadership • Lack of support networks • Balancing family and work |
| Kenya | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education as development initiative • Islamic education • Market and household support • Changing attitudes to female empowerment • Personalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of erosion of values • Challenges to male leadership • Balancing family and work |

Education surfaces as the key factor in advancing the social well-being of women as well as in increasing capabilities to benefit the family and community. As mentioned before, it is a crucial development strategy in attempts to improve women's lives. It plays a significant role in women's empowerment, both in helping dissipate patriarchal tendencies as women exercise agency and in contributing to broader goals with participations beyond the household. As a developing nation, the primary benefits of education are more perceptible in the Kenyan context. Though attitudes appear to be changing, the gender gap in female education is still discernible. The Kenyan respondents disclose actively promoting education for girls as a strategy to help the community progress. Additionally, the women in both

groups find Islamic education an essential part of socialization as Muslims and serving to help empower Muslim women through realising women's rights within the faith itself.

Culture however, influences how strategies to enhance women's empowerment are successful. The responses from the two groups indicate diversity of sub-cultures within their societies, and both the context of culture and cultural change as sustaining as well as challenging the advancement of Muslim women. With respect to gender roles although these are formalized within the overall framework of Islam, there are considerable differences in approaches to what domains women occupy. Reflecting the intensity of diversity, in the Australian responses, the women distinguish between macro (Middle East and Africa for instance) regions while the Kenyan narratives point to intra-regional differences. Yet, they also point out that normatives are susceptible to the changes globalization brings. For example, as migrant minorities, exposure to the more egalitarian Australian way of life influences traditional Muslim set-ups and gender roles are changing within the scope of the Western society. In the Kenyan responses changes are observed in the processes of development as well as the conditions of the economy. Having to supplement household incomes, women are obliged to take up work outside the home; there is a revision of norms that allow female participation in the workplace.

While household support is necessary, systemic support also plays a role in shoring up and sustaining women's empowerment as well as contributions to the economy. Such support pertains to workplace participation and financial independence. The welfare system works to facilitate and prop up economic independence of women through its system of citizenship rights, and childcare and the accessibility of other services sustain female workplace participation. Readily available options in Australia are crèche facilities where paid services provide for the care of children while mothers are out at work. As migrant women, options such as familial support are scarce as many Muslim women are on their own in the country. In Kenya, the similar concept is home-based childcare where maids provide the services of caring for children within the home. As women's work tends to be largely oriented towards the household, this is a significant concern in gender development literature. Women's

incorporation into the productive sectors has to be balanced with their reproductive roles (Moore, 1988).

Looking further at opportunities and challenges, women themselves must be the agents of change and not merely recipients of human capital endowments. Education and employment opportunities even when availed do not necessarily empower women to change their lives; they may only help improve lives (Malhotra et al 2002). As the narratives reveal, personal agency plays an important role in how women are exercising their increased capabilities. Playing an active role in the household, as well as in the community, the spread of benefits goes beyond the household into communities and wider networks. In turn women benefit from the support networks that they are situated within. And finally while partaking in the workplace can potentially enable women's empowerment, the existing liberal economic system itself can be asymmetrical in how women benefit. If there are no changes in household division of labour, or little systemic support or the types of sectors that draw female labour are detrimental to personal and societal values, the opportunities that open up for women cannot simplistically be equated with empowerment.

5.4 Key findings

5.4.1 Opportunities

- Different cultural contexts ascribe gender relations in Muslim communities and households; some more egalitarian than others
- Cultures however are not static. Gender roles and relations are continually negotiated within the social milieus.
- Both secular and Islamic education are seen as necessary to achieve gender empowerment
- Systemic and other support networks help women in balancing work and home responsibilities as well as realizing their potential
- Individual personality and agency plays a role in how empowerment may be exercised

5.4.2 Challenges

- Socialization of men as guardians of women goes beyond to authoritarian roles.
Some Muslim men feel threatened by female emancipation
- Balancing home and work puts pressures on women since division of labour in the household remains little changed
- Lack of support networks and resources hamper balancing work and home duties
- Women can be at risk in the market system through the types of work drawing female labour.

CHAPTER 6

ISLAMIC REVIVLISM: RETROGRESSIVE DISCOURSES OR EMPOWERING DEBATES?

The previous chapters have discussed the influence of the modernization paradigm and the transformations at the household level. Moving beyond the household, this chapter looks at how the counter discourse of Islamic revivalism has a bearing on Muslim women's public roles. Although Islamic revivalism is viewed as mostly a political dissent towards Western hegemony, debates internal to Islam form a basis for motivating activism in shaping the communal or public Islam. Using amplified mediums of dispersion in a networked world, a reconstruction of Islamic identities is taking place in many Muslims societie; a reconstruction that presents differences over literalist forms that offer a 'back to basics' ideology and other positions conforming to the demands of modern lifestyles (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Lahoud and Jones, 2005; Saeed, 2006). While the implicit principles of female modesty within these are on the whole consensual, the interpretation of female emancipation remains a contested issue. In re-evaluating the relationship of Islam to modernity, literal interpreters advocate constraints over the public role of women through limitations on education, workplace and public roles. The most damaging examples have been the Taliban regime's severe strictures against women in Afghanistan that put many women at risk. From most Western viewpoints, revivalist groups not only advocate restrictions, but also influence social control over Muslim women, challenging the liberal intent of empowerment. Mediating through ideas of curtailing female emancipation, from a gender empowerment perspective, Islamic revivalism proves retrogressive for Muslim women. In reality however, there is a continuum of understandings of Muslim gender private and public roles invoked in the current debates. These range from secular feminism, rereadings of the Qur'an and *hadith* literature and literal interpretation that endorse seclusion (Mernissi, 1985; Wadud-Muhsin, 1992, Moghaddam, 2000; Roald, 2001, Barlas, 2002).

This chapter examines how the participants perceive and view the revivalist discourse. Do extreme views on public access or roles exist and if so, how do they affect or influence the

individual women? The chapter examines this in the regional context of the two groups in Australia and Kenya.

The impression of Islamic revivalism heightened globally after the 1979 Iranian revolution. Events like the Salman Rushdie affair, the Gulf War, and more recently the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq exacerbate the Islam and the West divide, and reinvigorate an increased Islamic identity. In the West, this has largely been construed as a move rejecting modern values including that of a public role for women. However, Islamic revivalism is not just repudiating modern values, but also characterized by reproof of elements deemed to taint Islamic ideology and culture from within its own ranks. Islamic activism through various groups calls for a reflection on what ‘true’ Islam is and encourages an increased understanding of its principles. The role of women and gender relations is an integral part of this ‘better understanding’ and influences how Muslim women see themselves fit into the modern world.

The examination of the narratives attempts to capture the local persuasion of Sunni revivalist activism on the individual women. It looks at the localized bearing of revivalism in the context of the public-private role of Muslim women. In this attempt it studies two elements of influence:

- The presence of revivalist movement groups and their influence over Muslim women. Whether there is pressure or promotion of a domestic role for Muslim women, and
- Whether the broader meta-narrative of Islamic revivalism is a terms of reference in how the women position themselves in balancing modern lifestyles with faith propriety.

The analysis is divided into these two related areas. The first, knowledge of or an awareness of different proselytizing groups or individuals and whether the respondents identify with particular groups. Consequently, the second covers how these or the broader narrative of Islamic revivalist discourse affects Muslim women’s lifestyle.

The chapter is divided into five sections; the first (6.1) presents a historical overview of Islamic revivalism. The second (6.2) and the third (6.3) sections examine the responses of

the respondents from the Australian group and the Kenya groups respectively. The fourth (6.4) discusses whether revivalism is retrogressive in the experience of the two groups and the last (6.5) lays out the key findings.

6.1 Brief overview of Islamic revivalism

Although revivalism is rooted in the early history of Islam, the well-known Sunni movements are relatively recent. The genesis of contemporary Islamic revivalism lies within struggles against colonial powers. Since the 17th century, the process of Western colonialism in its economic, political and military interventions subjugated what had been traditional Islamic socio-political systems in the Middle East, Persia and the Indian sub-continent (Donohue and Esposito, 1982, Lombard, 2004, Saeed, 2006). Reacting to these, an influential resistance to Western supremacy and secularism comes from the Muslim Brotherhood created in Egypt in the early 20th century ((Bagader, 1994, ICG, 2005; Ernst, 2005). The group in its many derivative forms had a significant impact in promoting opposition to colonialism and continues to take a part in propagating revivalist reform. According to Roald (2001), as well as a significant spread in the Middle East, the movement has a presence in Europe and members work actively at bringing about a change in Muslim societies through proselytising and other activities.

Equally, the Deobandh movement in the Indian sub-continent was a reaction to British colonialism. The Deobandhi *ulama* encountering British imperialism and subjugation felt the need to preserve and transmit traditional Islam (Metcalf, 1982). In a milieu where the threat was not only perceived as hostility from the British, but also from modern Muslim leaders and influential thinkers, the risk to Islam was found to be extreme (Naeem, 2004). The view that the reach of secularist concepts of rationalism and notions of progress would result in an adulteration and dilution of the Islamic faith and principles, prompted a response of returning to the original doctrines of Islam. The missionary activities of the *Tablighi Jamat* founded by Maulana Mohammed Ilyas, a Deobandh scholar, spread the doctrine to transnational destinations (Ashik Ali, 2006). At the same time the Bareilvi movement now known as the *Ahle-Sunnat* was also committed to the correct interpretation and purification of faith from 'defiling' elements. It took a different stance by defending and justifying

mediation practices deeply influenced by Sufi traditions. Even though the Bareilvi approach was also an inward focus in valuing religion as the imperative element of identity, the external threat was both the colonial secularist thrust, as well as the opposing Islamic ideologies (Metcalf, 1982).

Viewing Western secular values as the root of decay in Islamic societies, these factions have promoted a revivalism of Islamic values and a return to the pristine sources of Islam. The reformist groups in their many derivative forms have a significant bearing in upholding opposition to Western hegemony. However, reformist⁶⁴ ideologies are not just confined to the sources above associated with resisting colonial powers, but also include other influential movements like the *Wahabi* and *Salafi* sects who call for a revival of correct Islamic beliefs based on the practices of the early Muslim society. In current global discourses the focus being the political contestation of modernity and Western influence, their appeal to redefine personal Islam is less understood in the convergence of the regional economic and political factors (ICG, 2005).

Interpretations of gender roles within these ideological groups are varied. For instance the *Tabligh* group's activities are directed towards males; women are expected to stay in their homes. The Muslim Brotherhood on the other hand encourages the education of women in colleges and universities. Although segregation is encouraged, women take an active part in the public activities of the group. Using theological arguments, the movement's policies recognize the rights of women to vote, to hold public office and work outside the home in general (Roald, 2001, p 42). The teachings of the *Salafi* movement rooted in *Wahabi* ideology are much stricter. In searching for a single true Islam they reject the *madhabic* systems⁶⁵ (that have been associated with Sunni Islam for very long) entirely and have very exacting positions with regard to women's roles such as mosques out of bounds for women,

⁶⁴ The terms reformist and revivalist have been used interchangeably in the sense that the ideologies are derived from the original intent of the early teachings of Islam. Some commentators would clearly distinguish between the two, as reform can be viewed as rereading of the Qur'an and *hadeeth* scriptures.

⁶⁵ Different regions of Sunni Islam follow one of the four *madhabs* – *Maliki*, *Hanafi*, *Shafi* and *Hanbali*. The *Maliki* school prevails mostly in Northern Africa; the *Hanafi*, in the Indian sub-continent, the Balkans, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Turkey; *Shafi* mostly in South-East Asia and *Hanbali* in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates (Hussein, 2004). The four theological Sunni schools of thought follow the same basic belief, but differ in practice and implementation of certain rituals

strict segregation, encouraging women to stay in their homes and insisting on the face veil. The choice of Muslim reform thought is not limited to these more well-known ideological movements. Early and contemporary scholars call for a revising of development that disengages with the current capitalist economic system. Turning inwardly, they offer views on the reapplication of Islamic values in promoting a more humane concept of development (Kamrava, 2006; Saeed, 2006; Donohue and Esposito, 1982, Bugaje, 1999). Their works look at paradigm shifts from rationalism and individualism of the modern capitalist organization of society to one in which the redistributive and philanthropic elements of Islam should be included in social, economic and political arrangements. Some have focused a good deal on the role of women in their visions of Islamic development.

The following section examines the responses of the Australian participants as to the presence of revivalist movement groups and their influence over Muslim women.

6.2 Narratives of the Australian group

6.2.1 Sectarian groups and the revivalist discourse

The presence of revivalist groups surfaces in academic scholarship (Akbarzadeh and Yasmeen, 2005; Ashik Ali, 2006; Saeed, 2006), as well as the general discourse on Muslims in Australia (ABC, 2008). According to Ashik Ali, sympathizers of different international groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Tablighi Jamaat* are present in Australia, and 'find a place in functions at mosques, schools, youth groups and other community activities' influencing intra-community discourses. Ideological groups are not the only means by which conservative views are incorporated into Australian Islam. The social mobility that increases the numbers of Muslims in Australia also brings in religious leaders that espouse revivalist views.

In the experience of the Australian respondents familiarity with groups or understanding of particular ideologies is diffused and none of the women articulates a belonging or a sound knowledge of particular reformist groups. However, many are aware of the four Sunni schools of thought or *madhabs*. The geographic regions that many of the migrant Muslims communities come from represent different *madhabic* orientations in Islam. Until recently,

unreserved *madhabic* following was a normative within most Muslim societies (Saeed, 2006). With globalized interactions and communications these adherences have been opened up to review by proselytizing groups. Although some sectors of Muslim society retain strong *madhabic* affiliations, over time, strict following seems to be declining. This appears to be true for Australia for two reasons. One is the diverse make-up of the Muslim communities; the migration process has brought together various *madhabic* groups and certain practices or rituals have been compromised to maintain unity. The other is the influence of *Salafi* and *Wahabi* ideologies that are against the development of theological thought past the first few generations of Islamic thought after the Prophet. For the *Salafi* and *Wahabi* groups therefore, the existence of *madhabic* schools is void (Mousalli, 2009).

A Muslim for eighteen years, Maryam feels that when she converted to Islam, *madhabic* following was more emphasized and an element of the internal Muslim identity in Australia. Over time, it has weakened as other Islamic groups have filtered through. While her practices are commensurate with *Salafi* ideology, she does not see the need to follow a particular school of thought and chooses to practices from the four schools.

... the closest thing I suppose would be *Salafi* ...and I like to take what I feel is best for my practice in Islam. Allah is the judge in the end, but what is best for my practice of Islam I like to take from the choice of the four. I have to do what I feel is right and if it is wrong then it is upto Allah ...Going back eighteen years ago definitely it was accentuated.... There are more groups coming up...
-Maryam

How *madhab* following is an integral aspect of internal Muslim identities comes up in Mansura comments. Muslims from ethnically and culturally consistent regions find the diverse practices foreign to their customary rituals. Religious practice and rituals like those observed in prayers, are dissimilar to what is practiced in the home country. Mansura from Afghanistan, unfamiliar with other sectarian groups except the Sunni and Shia, found the sheer diversity of Muslim sects quite overwhelming and disorienting in terms of her practice of Islam. In her narrative, she alludes to the *Shafi* ritual of females covering the feet during prayer which is not the normative according to the *Hanafi* school.

When I first came here, in terms of people praying differently and all of that, for me it was like, 'Oh what's this, this is funny man! That's weird!' I hadn't seen that diversity in Afghanistan and here because people are coming from all these different cultures and then you get the full range... You get the *Salafis*, the *Hanafis*, you get the God knows what! It causes some confusion as to what is the opinion, but you have to understand that these differences are not in terms of doctrine. In practice whether you wear socks, when you pray or you pray this way or that way ...so I think yeah it can cause confusion...

- Mansura

Similarly, coming from a convert's perspective Tanya finds the differences in schools and the new revival groups confusing and 'struggles to get her head around it'. The distinctions appear contradictory to the original aims of a single community, the *ummah* envisioned by the Prophet. The concept of a universal Muslim community is contained in the Qur'an. It is not based on any single race, nationality, occupation, kinship or special interests. In general it is taken to mean all sorts of relationships characterized by social cohesion and moral commitment with the principle of submission to God. The term is often used for the Muslim diaspora.

A better awareness of different groups and their influence within religious circles especially the mosques comes up in Fardausa's account. Cynical about the sectarian profiling, groups have encouraged, she also finds derisive tendencies towards one another in claims to righteous doctrine. These are feisty and contrary to unifying Muslims, they are divisive and putting off individuals like Fardausa. In her opinion too, it is not necessary to follow a particular faction especially in Australia.

There are a lot of the groups out there and every group has their own view. They think they are the ones, on the right track. Whatever they say, they are the righteous ones and whatever they say should be accepted. Because I don't mix with groups and I don't believe that there is a thing like you have to belong to a certain group... People talk - sometimes when they are having lectures or gatherings, they will say who is doing those lectures - 'So and so. Oh no', you know just the talk that people talk about and also we have the *masjids* they are given names... No I think it is so unnecessary in here, in Australia.

- Fardausa

Most of the women indicate a general perception of the discourse on female roles in Islam through different networks. Many acknowledge knowing community leaders and individuals

especially women who advocate conservative views. Conservative views however, are interpreted in both restrictive and emancipatory ways. Implied in the responses, a domesticated role for women as well as a liberalizing one is conveyed in the understanding of what 'pure' Islam really stands. For instance, some women feel there is an implicit propagation of appropriate female characteristics that convey marked gender roles. A few leaders and individuals advocate a domesticated role for women implying particular characteristics of model Muslim women. Fatima, a youth activist originally from South Africa finds herself unable to fit into a 'box' of Muslim female traits that leaders would like to 'put her in'. The ideals put forth are incompatible with her understanding of female roles.

I have been told I am too outspoken, and you know that it's not a woman's job, what I do. ...apparently I am meant to sit at home ..., you know that's not my version of the way it is. I think they are giving us a box and trying to fit us into it. A box they think according to Islam we should be in. I don't think in Islam we necessarily should have that box, but I think it's their interpretation that we should.
- Fatima

On the other hand, there are different understandings on the part of women themselves who see going back to 'pure' Islam as giving Muslim women the rights that Islam originally gave to women. Mansura believes that while there are Muslims who advocate a retreat for women, others referring to the role of women in Islam's early history promote emancipation through active participation in the public.

I would say leaders, yes but, I would say more so, there are women themselves that want to go back to a pure Islam and what they mean by a pure Islam is that Islamic teachings from the sources and with the diversity of the opinions. Basically, the idea is that we should go back to the time of the Prophet, especially in terms of the treatment of women. How it was back then and how much it has deteriorated in the Muslim communities that exist today. So a lot of them would be saying that by the term 'pure' you mean that a strict tradition and there are some of those, but I would say that there are more women that are calling for this themselves – 'I don't want this impure Islam I want the 'pure' Islam – what does Islam say about this?'
- Mansura

This interpretation also surfaces in Attiya's narrative. She believes that historically Islam has encouraged women's emancipation; that the Prophet's wives actively partook in public

activities and therefore calling for a confinement of women is an incorrect interpretation of Islam directives. The gradual erosion of the original women's rights in Islam is found in the readings of 'Muslim feminist' accounts (see for example, Leila Ahmed (1992 pp 41 – 63)⁶⁶. 'Muslim feminists' both men and women, like Mernissi (1987), Ahmed, (1992), Barlas (2002); Wadud-Muhsin, (1992), Bugaje, (1999) explore the original intent of the Qur'anic scriptures and increasingly write about how the rights awarded to women in early Islam have gradually been contracted through cultural interpretations.

As observed here, there is a presence of leaders as well as individuals promoting particular views on gender propriety and limitations. How such views affect women and how these influence their lifestyles is discussed below.

6.2.2 Influencing lives and lifestyles

On a personal front most women find such discourses unaffecting. Even though many acknowledge knowing individuals advocating seclusionary practices for Muslim women, they are not influential in the personal sphere. As literate and empowered women the respondents find the discourses mostly a reminder to live according to Islam. However, they do reflect upon the content of the rhetoric and seek answers within their own search for the role of women in Islam. For instance in Naheed's case this has been after hearing a lecture on the impermissibility of gender mixing and interaction. Qualified as a doctor, she faces an internal moral predicament regarding gender interface especially in the examination of male patients. She overcomes this through an understanding that 'education is an obligation' upon Muslims and that the community needs professionals in different fields. On the same note, Rahila's account shows changing attitudes towards female education. She finds Islamist views conceding over time to the need and importance of female education. The fact that many Muslim women would prefer to be attended to by female providers of health and education has changed the women's appreciation and value in furthering female education.

⁶⁶ Although the term feminist is used here, the issue of Islamic or Muslim feminism is fairly contentious. Quoting Moghadam (2000), 'Is it correct to describe as feminist or even as 'Islamic feminist' those publishers, activists and scholars including veiled women whose work toward women's advancement and gender equality are carried out within an Islamic discursive framework.'

This same group of women saying sort of that if a woman has a child, that it should be the priority and which I actually agree with. What was interesting was now they think that when the children are grown up and there is no longer responsibility of looking after children twenty-four/seven, then there is a place for women to become doctors, nurses etc, and be in particular professions for the community to have these rather than getting the services from men.

- Rahila

The influence of the rhetoric on mainstream public perceptions however, is thought to be significant. The overemphasis on the importance of religious leaders has muted the voice of Muslim women. Mostly since 9/11, the need to explain or justify Muslim values qualifies male leaders as the authorities on Muslim issues. In media representation, advocacy on the part of Muslims has largely been a responsive outcome to present views on Muslim 'misdemeanors'⁶⁷. Although at the community and personal fronts, these find no credence or influence other than a resentment of misrepresentation, in the Australian public, they construct a control over the lives of Muslim women as Raffiah's comments indicate.

I would like to think that they are not influential, but because their comments have been on media, it appears that they are. I would like to think that they are not because whatever they have decided cannot influence the way I live. It has no bearing at all on the way I should live. Yes, I think these views do affect Muslim women generally because it makes Muslim women want to probably feel as though they have no say, that they are not being truly represented by these so called leaders, that they should actually empower themselves to choose whoever they want or make do with others making a decision for them. I don't think that women are retreating into the household because of these comments. From what I can see women are studying, going out to work. I don't think whatever they say has a slight impact on how they feel and not in the way they want to run their life.

- Raffiah

Rather than a revivalist agenda, cultural orientations are indicated as a curtailment on women's access to public space. The several negative experiences Attiya has had in public because of her choice to veil with a *niqaab* create concerns over her safety. She comprehends her husband's anxiety as a new migrant to Australia whose understandings are from his socio-cultural milieu. Chaperoning her in the public space has not been a practical

⁶⁷ The most controversial and detrimental that of Tajuddin Hilaly. Sheikh Hilaly has been a controversial 'favourite' of the Australian media as a 'representative' of Muslims. The sheikh has been taken as the principal leader of Sunni Muslims in Australia. A fact largely misconceived in public perceptions of a monolithic Islam is that Sunni Islam does not have a hierarchical religious structure.

solution and unnecessary according to her. Just as much as she respects his wishes, she also insists on her right to be active within the community.

I just feel like what happened to me, for example, for my husband that would be a very big concern. It is scary, though it was very simple, it didn't get out of hand and it may well have and so that would be a concern to him. And again that his cultural interpretation of how he sees it he may keep a woman at home because of that to protect her. If I can't go out with her, she can't go out by herself. I can't as a woman not understand where he is coming from because that is his nature to protect the woman, I have to respect that, but then also I guess relationship is both ways where you have to respect my needs also to be independent and to go out if you are unable to take me out. That is something that is a relationship thing that needs to be worked out on an individual basis.
-Attiya

As some women find themselves in a public role after 9/11 both as advocates in community work and as representatives, there are challenges to the established set-ups of authority and representation monopolized by male leaders. Policy measures suggested in the National Action Plan⁶⁸ and the government's intent to facilitate a greater participation of Muslim women in various public processes are seen as challenging leadership authorities. With resources directed towards empowering Muslim women to engage more with the mainstream, a number of Muslim women have taken on representative roles in bringing the Muslim women's voice to consultations (see for example HREOC, 2006). Also the vigilante stance of the media towards Muslim leadership has made many cautious of public statements regarding women and this is seen as curtailing some of the more extreme views that may exist. On the one hand, increased public spaces open up for Muslim women, but on the other, they also test conventions of authority. In Maryam's experience, her advocacy role has meant looking into social issues that have previously not been addressed in the Muslim community. Although she works with religious leaders on the subject, as 'new territory' for them also, she stands out as the 'expert'. Her knowledge in the area is

⁶⁸ The National Action Plan, developed in 2005–06 is a response to the particular issues facing Australian communities as a result of the increased intolerance and violence arising from global events in Australia since 2001. It focuses on the key areas of education, employment, integration and security. See the Department of Immigration brief on the plan at <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/national-action-plan/>. Accessed November 14, 2007

relatively more than those of others. This is seen as supplanting the traditional role of religious leaders as authorities on matters concerning the community she indicates.

In the roles I am playing presently because I am trying to be an advocate for Muslims with disability, I am in some ways kind of standing out and challenging the *sheikhs* and *imams* openly about these concepts. It's sometimes scary because I am not promoting it, but I am the most expert in this field and standing in that kind of role where it's traditionally been the role of the *imam* it's hard at times. You feel like you are outside your role in Islam, you feel like the *sheikhs* are going to pull you down and say, ok, you have no right to be telling us what to do. And at the same time, the role I am playing because traditionally it was something that women would not go up to the front of the *sheikhs* and the *imams* and tell them that this is wrong, but now this is something that I am needing to do ... because that was not where we were placed before and it was a challenge and I believe there are still people out there that are not going to pay me any respect for what I am saying because I am a female.

- Maryam

The presence of revivalist groups in Australia is mostly felt through proselytizing activities like lectures, seminars and gatherings organized within the community. The diverse ideological leanings of different groups are not clear cut to the respondents and indicate mixed messages as to the public role of women. The meta-narrative of revivalism, however does have an impact on how women review their public roles, but not inevitably in tandem with the ideologies of particular local groups. Proselytizing groups have little influence in the experiences of the respondents, however the broader revivalist discourse affects their lives and the women are actively searching for answers to their particular issues within this. However, ambiguities about leadership roles for women exist and are interlaced with challenges to male authority in the public space. While traditionally male figures have been representatives of the community, government policies especially in their objective to increase Muslim women's public participation in decision-making processes post 9/11 are viewed as challenging established set-ups of leadership.

Whether revivalist presence is retrogressive in intent is not clearly discernible through these narratives. In their experiences revivalist groups have little influence over the participants. Further, female seclusion is not economically viable in Australia. It cannot be maintained at the middle-income level⁶⁹ or under the current welfare policies. In the mutual obligation or

⁶⁹ As revealed in Chapter 3, the two income arrangement appears necessary for sustaining the household.

work for dole welfare policy, welfare assistance is provided to the unemployed for some return responsibilities. These include actively seeking work, striving to improve competitiveness in the labour market through education or training and or giving back into the community through voluntary hours⁷⁰.

6.3 Experiences of the Kenyan group

6.3.1 Sectarian groups and the revivalist discourse

The religious traditions of the Arabs from Hadramaut⁷¹ are significant in the course of Islam and Islamic scholarship at the coast of East Africa (Ahmed, 1995). Traditionally the most influential *ulama* (communities of Islamic scholars) at the coast are of Hadrami lineage and their Sufi philosophies have been a basis for the tradition that over centuries has been the character of Islamic tradition in the region. In the last few decades the growing reformist activity in East Africa, has been largely condemning of this ‘traditional’ Islam that maintains a stronghold with most local Muslims. The ‘new’ *ulama*, scholars educated in international universities in both Islamic and secular studies bring back the puritanical orientation of *Wahabism* that is in dissent with the *Sufi* proclivity of the local traditional Islam (Bakari, 1985). On the clash between the two, Bakari writes that:

‘*Wahabism*, in its puritanical, uncompromising and aggressive form has been imported into East Africa by many of these recent graduates. Their enthusiasm in implementing an essentially *Wahabi* doctrine has alienated some of them from the traditionalists and this has become the source of constant friction between the two polarized groups.’

Reformist ideologies are not only brought in by scholars educated overseas, but also through the missionary activities of groups like the *Tabligh Jamat* (associated with *Wahabi* ideology) and its rival, the *Ahle-sunnat* (that subscribes to *Sufi*, *Barelvi* traditions) both originating in the Indian sub-continent. Both groups are amply represented in missionary work in East Africa. Whereas the *Tabligh Jamat* encourages the ideology of the *Wahabi*

⁷⁰ See the electronic brief on the Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia at <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/dole.htm>

⁷¹ Part of southern Yemen now.

school, the *Ahle sunnat* more in tune with the local Sufi inclination competes to maintain a stronghold of the traditional Islam over Muslim communities.

The existence of reformist groups is acknowledged in the narratives of the women. Although only three women admit to being affiliated with a particular group, there is evidence in the narratives as well as their demeanour that some of the respondents have strong association with the two – *Wahabi* and *Ahle-sunnat* groups. However, all decry the polarization as creating discord in the Muslim community. The growing sectarianism generates a rift in both the community and within households. Tayibbah shares the story of a family in Lamu where a family feud ensued following one brother adopting *Wahabi* ideology and divided the family as well as supporters of the two brothers in the town. Lamu, a small town on the coast of Kenya is renowned for the religious festival that celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed called the *maulud* or *maulidi*. This is a significant Sufi tradition fêted in many parts of the Muslim world where poetic eulogies (*qasidas*) form an oral tradition that praise and teach about the life of the Prophet. These are an integral part of reminiscence about the Prophet's teachings. The *maulud* festival, intrinsic to coastal Islamic culture and an important social event draws participation from surrounding regions. According to *Wahabi* ideology, the celebrations, as well as other customs are innovative accretions that corrupt correct practice of Islam and many new religious leaders and proselytizing groups like the *Tabligh Jamat* condemn the practice.

Although most respondents indicate siding with a traditionalist stance, there is evidence of understanding and support for *Wahabist* views. Some of the women indicate having gone through the systems of education set up by *Wahabi* groups or in the case of Tahmin having studied overseas in a *Wahabi darul uloom*. That the *Wahabis* are derided in some communities surfaces in Tahmin's narrative as she explains how there is strong resistance to their views and little understanding of their standpoint. Local Muslims do not easily give in to *Wahabi* perspectives which appear to threaten the traditional Islam practised within the region over centuries. However, the availability of Internet Islamic sites and satellite channels contribute to the revivalist discourse and in Tahmin's view, this exposes many to other perspectives that they might consider, and lessen the resistance to puritanical Islam like *Wahabism* as more Muslims learn about its reform agenda.

Amriya, also inclined towards this puritanical form reveals her understanding of the *Wahabi* stance on the *maulud* festivities. She explains the rejection of the ages old celebration as an innovative (*bidah*) practice not conducted at the time of the Prophet and also that it encourages desegregation; that women mix with men in the celebrations. Some women travel alone long distances to attend the celebrations, and the expenses incurred both in travel and the celebrations themselves are an unnecessary burden on many, especially women. She, as well as others also contends that the opposing views are polarizing and causing intense rivalry with censure and denunciation between zealous ideologues.

You will find some of the *shuyukh*, they will say doing that is very *bidah* because it was not done during the Prophet's time so you people are wrong we are right. You see they are there and also most of the time they look at the impact. Some of the *shuyukh*, they say there is a lot of mingling there so that makes it like even more *haram*, (*impermissible according to Islam*), it's not proper. People have to travel to Lamu and join others who are doing the same celebrations so you will find like sometimes women have to travel alone, so some of the *shuyukh* say because of this it becomes even worse...

- Amriya

People who believe *maulud* and all those other celebrations are very important and they have to be there. And there are those who believe that those celebrations are not important, so there is a big gap. In between, in between I would say, there are those who want to be this side and learn probably.

- Zohra

I do know they exist – *Wahabi* and *Salafi* and I know some are very strict, there is a feeling of difference. To some extent it makes me angry because we are not supposed to be like that. What kind of picture are we painting to other people? We are separating each other, that's what we are doing. And at the same time I am very sad when I see somebody following one group and so stuck to that one group and you are just following blindly. You don't want to know why there is a difference between you and the other group. Ok, my father is here, my husband, my family is here, so I am here – you don't want to budge from there. I don't think it should be like that.

- Sanna

There are a number of ways in which reformist ideologies impact upon women. How the respondents react to them and how they perceive other Muslim women that they know are affected by these is discussed below.

6.3.2 Influencing lives and lifestyles

The narratives indicate that many local Muslims, both men and women have adopted reformist ideologies and attempt to enforce these ardently on others through proselytizing activities. In general, besides censuring traditional practices of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, other stricter rules with regard to the dresscode, forbidding music, strict segregation and a secluded role focused around domestic duties for women are compelled within. In their responses, the participants show their own equally strong views and choices as to their stances. Habiba reveals that religious fervour has increased in the last decade or so, and a lot of women have taken the task of reform seriously and impose it zealously on others.

... They try to influence you, tell you it's not right what you are doing and ... They come and tell you this is not right. Why are you wearing these kinds of clothes? ... there are groups like that...
- Habiba

There is evidence in the stories that the strong puritanical views of *Wahabism*, are imposed on women. In some cases these are highly confining and deny women access to spaces outside the house without explicit permission from male members. Ironically, while extremist views deny women workplace participation, educational pursuits are not curbed, as observed in Tahmin's⁷² case. Although very strict about the observance of segregation, her father has not denied Tahmin and her sister an education. The restriction on her working outside the home is gender segregation, if gender segregation can be maintained, her father has no objection to her working outside the home. No such imposition is observed in Khairun's case who is a working woman in a mixed environment and as a laboratory technician has direct contact with males.

Married to a *Wahabi*, Khairun calls herself an *Ahle sunnat* and does not view the differences between her husband and herself as an issue of conflict or impasse. They have compromised on the differences of their creeds and mutually accept each other's views. Khairun shares

⁷² Throughout the interview Tahmin appeared a very confident, articulate and intelligent young woman who although restricted through her father's religious stance is bent on furthering her potential as an Islamic teacher and had applied at a local school for a teaching position.

how following two different sects, the husband and wife came to celebrate the festival of *Eid* on different days.

In some cases it will affect because the women will be obliged to follow their husbands, but in some houses you may find that the husband is a *Wahabi* maybe and the lady is a Sunni, an *Ahle Sunnat*, but he husband has no objection... Like in the *Eid* prayers of ... my husband has to pray first so I woke up first and prepared everything for him and I gave him all the support during the *Eid* day and I was fasting... It happens a lot, but it doesn't create conflict. So long as you agree to disagree. The husband and wife if they agree to disagree then there is no conflict. I have seen it happening. I have several friends of mine where we come to work fasting, but our husbands at home have already broken their fasts.
- Khairun

Others share their robust views on why they stand their own ground in the differences. The increased ideologizing and profiling of faith encouraged in the conflict between the two major groups has no place in Islam as a religion. It is only the statement of creed that makes people Muslims, not various ideologies. Amriya bases her practice on what she believes is the rightful way; keeping a distance from what the Prophet did not practice. In Rahmas's view 'focused' individuals like her are not influenced by proselytizing. It makes little difference what purported correct Islamic practice is as she exercises own agency in finding out from what she feels are credible sources. Rahma's sister is a graduate from a local Islamic institution.

We have got these groups now and ideologies... as Muslims our main identity is when you say the *kalima shahada*⁷³ that's it.
- Asfiya

Truly speaking I would not like to be in any sect. I am taking myself from what the Prophet said. All what the Prophet, peace be upon him told us, I would like to follow. All what he didn't talk about or he didn't practice in his life, I would rather keep a distance from it.
- Amriya

You know some of us are focused. Whatever you say you are wasting your time we have an independent mind, some of us. But the ones who don't have independent minds, we kind of become confused. You are told this is *haram* (*impermissible according to Islam*) so people

⁷³ The statement of creed .This is the declaration of faith. Anyone who recites it understanding its meaning is considered a Muslim. It is transliterated as: 'I bear witness that there is no God but God and Mohammed is his messenger.'

get scared, but with people who are focused – you will find out you have the books. I have my sister there I'll ask her – if she doesn't know, she is going to ask somebody else so you make a confirmation.

- Rahma

That individuals and groups actively engage in using faith sources to discourage female education and workplace participation emerges in the stories of the women. Equally, the respondents use faith-based arguments to the contrary. Amriya's rendition for example makes a strong case for the need for women having to go out to work as an economic necessity of the times. She puts forth the contention whether rules on gender segregation should outweigh the economic necessity of going out to work since providing for the family is an act of worship in Islam. According to her if 'proper conduct' in the public is followed then there is no reason why women should not be a part of the workplace. Education for women however, is still strong counsel on her part as it has a multiplier effect that benefits more than an individual mother. Families and society also profit through the education of women.

...they talk about maybe you mingling with men, but I say it is the way you take it, it's the way you perceive work. I am taking my work as an *ibada* to me – I am earning *halal* income to feed my family, to educate myself and even help the society. It's through working. Also they are talking about you don't have enough time for the family. Now I throw back the challenge to them, if men provide for the family, then women would not have to work....

- Amriya

Similarly Rahma questions the progress of the community if forceful opposition to female education is held. She highlights how such views are damaging for the community's progress.

It happens a lot for example, when the young girls are going for university lets say a profession, the Muslim group, and the male Muslim group they are against it. They say it is not important to educate the girl to that level, but we also want female gynaecologists where will you get them?

- Rahma

Despite the rhetoric on constraints, the example of Somali refugees where women observe strict Islamic rules of *hijab* and yet maintain an entrepreneurial culture has been a motivating factor in encouraging local Muslim women to seek work outside the home. Somali refugee women since their arrival in the country and especially in Mombasa have set

up various enterprises in the local areas. Whereas conventionally hawking and small businesses were public domain activities in which only men partook, the examples of Somali women refugees have motivated many Muslim women to set up their own businesses and generate an income. Khairun makes these comments.

... the Somali refugees they are also Muslims, they are sisters (*women*) who have brought these ideas of starting businesses. So, most of the Muslim women, who are the locals here tend to really take the refugees as kind of a morale booster... Nowadays the locals (*Muslim women*) they have come up with different businesses of their own. Different kinds of businesses in that, we see them in shops selling or doing their own businesses...they can work for themselves and they can take care of themselves plus the family.
- Khairun

Although the narratives suggest that reform activities may have an impact on Muslim women in confining them in homes, such practices are also a function of cultural mores. Some families of Arab and Asian origins have adhered to seclusionary practices which their socio-economic ranks allow to exist and they hold on to these practices, moreso in the climate of religious fervour. Noora who has been working, shares how she broke the ranks and is among the few working in her community.

We are the few (*in the community*) who are educated and we are working. In my family we are the first me and my sister. My sister is a teacher.
- Noora

While education and workplace participation have opened up many public spaces for Muslim women, leadership still remains contested in many areas. Zohra shares her frustrations over trying to create awareness about HIV/AIDS as a community health officer. As a carer and a qualified campaigner, she has expertise in working with groups most at risk. Her efforts to implement campaigns in the local communities have been thwarted by Muslim male leaders who have their own ideas about how such messages should be spread. She also faces stiff contestation over the political role of women. Based on the interpretation of injunctions that continue to reinforce a patriarchal configuration of decision-making these are used to deny capable women to run for positions of leadership that can benefit the community. The support of male leaders, especially the *imams* is seen crucial in endorsing candidacy through religious clarification as to whether women can stand for political

positions. As a keen HIV/AIDS awareness activist working in the slums of Mombasa, she finds her political prospects defeated as an *imam* convinced her husband that a political role is out of bounds for a Muslim woman. Despite her many capabilities, and the support from the local community, her aspirations to become a councillor in the local government were dashed under rulings over women's leadership roles. In her experience, some Muslim female political aspirants have defied such rulings. However, Mwinyhaji (2007), who outlines the interpretive basis for these rulings, also finds in her study that politics is a 'dirty game' for both men and women where 'unconventional' means are used to win elections in Kenya. Concerns over their safety can also be a motivator in stopping women from taking up political positions.

Say a woman would like to be a politician so that you can support the Muslims, your fellow Muslims, but - 'you are not supposed to talk, we cannot hear your voice, you are cannot go to parliament', so once you are told that... Probably in your area you are very famous. You are known to be a person who does things so what do you do? Really become affected by that. I wanted to become a councillor because the area where I am, I am working with people living in the slums. They are 35,000 of them and they give me support and they (*the imams*) said no, you can't be and it got suddenly too much for me and I said then I am like sorry its like you can't. And I am not the only, there are so many of us. So many of them are being told that and some of them decided no, I will just go. I will go to the parliament then and then I will not go to the parliament and this affected me for a long time because my husband was very supportive then he went to one of the imams, a very senior imam in Mombasa no, no women should not be seen standing in front of people, talk about politics so my husband said no. I said fine...

- Zohra

Drawing incentives from the reformist doctrines of mostly the Middle-East and the Indian sub-continent, Kenyan Muslims also cast their efforts into the wider domain as actors of Islamic revivalism. Although not identified or labelled as a particular association until recently, Islam at the East African coast has had more in common with Sufi proclivity than the more literalist and essentialist approach that has reached Kenya through various means. Traditions of supplications for the dead, observances of commemoration ceremonies, beliefs in the mediation of great saints, the celebrations of the Prophet's birthday and others, deeply-rooted in the faith consciousness of mostly the coastal Islamic culture have no significance and border on deviation in *Wahabi* doctrine. The condemnation and contestation from the reformists is communicated through mosque lectures, networks of

madrassas and incorporated organizations. To counter these, the traditionalist view is augmented through the presence of the *Ahle-Sunnat* groups that have established educational as well as social work organizations that meet the challenge of spread with zealousness. Following what the narratives of the Kenyan participants reveal, a lot of reformist activity invests energies into profiles of the ‘correct’ practice of Islam that proves to be divisive of the society. Although the women themselves have very firm and grounded views on their positions in accessing public space, there is evidence in the narratives that these impact women in what orientations their families choose and burdens them in their own practices.

As in the case of the respondents, there is strong evidence that generally Muslim women are visible in professional positions, leadership roles in some areas and activism at the grassroots level. Leadership at the community levels as seen in Zohra’s case above still appears elusive as doctrinal interpretations and cultural mores prevent women from such aspirations. Kenya has had one Muslim female elected Member of Parliament who rose to be an assistant minister and two nominated members in the current parliament (KMWFRM, 2008).

If viewed from a Western referential perspective, the status of the women above lacks the freedoms of liberal Western women. The neo-patriarchal structure of the family discussed in Chapter 4 is hardly the example of the ideal liberal household, nor is the pressure to retreat to the domestic sphere. When linked to social contexts of the specificities of their culture and religious worldview, the narratives reveal how the women are traversing the challenges of modernity and the post-modern movement of Islamic revivalism given their need for a guiding framework within which their identities are rooted. Are revivalism tenets influencing women in reversing the benefits of progress and their own development or opening up spaces in which to authenticate these to empower themselves? In answering these, the section below discusses what the narratives of the two groups reveal.

6.4 Retrogressive discourses or empowering debates?

In both contexts, the revivalist agenda is an extension of the global proliferation of Islamic revitalization. As discussed in the preceding chapters, Muslim women are facing

unprecedented changes in a modernised and globalised world that call for a realignment of their social, economic and political position in relation to both their public and private roles. As a rooting and grounding device (Mernissi, 1987), the revivalist vision of bringing into reality every aspect of conduct within the realm of the Islamic framework offers a schema as to how to steer along the paths uncharted before. Yet, as the narratives in this chapter present, how the representation is to be transferred into a sound reality that addresses current issues remains elusive. Mernissi, the well-known Muslim feminist although writing in the 80s, makes a lucid observation applicable to contemporary dynamics in Muslim societies. She writes:

‘The split in the Muslim individual between what one does, confronted by rapid, totally uncontrolled changes in daily life, and the discourses about an unchangeable religious tradition that one feels psychologically compelled to elaborate in order to keep a minimal sense of identity is, as far as I am concerned, the key point to focus on in order to understand the dynamics of Muslim life of the late seventies and eighties... Reality and representation of reality are always far apart.’ (1987, p x).

The complexities of transferring the discourse into workable veracity are present in the amalgam of current variables that compound the issue of implementing ideals into the context of realities. Throughout this study thus far, there is considerable evidence of the benefits of modernization that empower women to go beyond the traditional limits in realizing their aspirations and potential. In this section I discuss the similarities and differences in the two locations in resolving lifestyle choices in accordance with the broader prevailing discourses.

The heterogeneity of Australian Islam in its many *madhabic*, ideological and ethno-cultural actuality is hardly the monolith of Western representation or of a unified *ummah* expected in the ideal of Islam. The disposition in gender public roles within is an element of its supra-diversity that brings together regional migrant communities as well as local European and indigenous Muslims together. Although they share the commonality of Islam as a framework, socialization within own cultures, as well as in a liberal democracy contributes

to individual understandings of female roles. The conservative views of puritanical Islam thus appear irreconcilable in how these women perceive their public roles.

The Kenyan example, on the other hand presents a consistent representation; that of a traditionalist Islam that now encounters puritanical forms that challenge its orientation. Traditionally female roles have been shaped within a conservative framework and in an environment where religious expressions are a part of public life, puritanical views though challenging are negotiated within the social milieu. Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh and other religions are openly practised and very much a part of the public space in their institutional presence of mosques, temples and churches. Domesticated roles for women are an acceptable feature of the society that on the whole does not have a liberal outlook or institutional support for women's rights. In the Australian Muslim society, not only is the continuum of religiosity very broad (see Yasmeen, 2008, p 30), but the state support shores control over lifestyles, the concepts of domesticated roles are an alien feature to the society in general. Although in both groups the women do not accept the rhetoric of retreat for women, it opens up spaces for an enquiry into whether there is a dichotomy between public-private spaces for women in Islam. The multiplicity of resources in a fast and wide connected world means that the local is no longer the prime reference point; that women are able to network transnationally to source understandings of religious norms and values.

The narratives from the two groups present two reflections over this. One that puritanical Islam is empowering, in that, it offers a search for the original intent of the reforms the Prophet promoted and supported. Muslim 'feminists' find the rights of women well endorsed in the Qur'anic scriptures and highlight its reformist flavour given the historical context in which it was revealed. It censured and forbade the practice of female infanticide of the pre-Islamic Arabian society, limited polygamy, gives women a share in inheritance and the right to divorce. Although men are the 'maintainers and protectors' of women, the Qur'an sanctions the right of women to own property and to deal with their earnings as they wish (Hussain, 2004). The other reflection is that current Muslim idealism in its rhetoric does not offer veritable solutions to the challenges posed in a modern world. Asking for the retreat of women to the private domain is not the solution to Muslim economic, social and

political marginalization as many of the women emphasize. Recasting identities to fit into a more conservative form is incongruent with modern lifestyles; the public space is the locus of meaningful activities to both genders. Socio-economic status and education open up spaces for empowerment and the ability to make decisions for one's self. Whereas ideally Islam requires men to be the providers and guardians of women, the changing times have changed the dynamics of the household and blur the public-private role dichotomies.

The research finds the women considering their culture, ethnicity, economic and social environments as well as religiosity in negotiating their roles along a continuum of public-private. Their positions along this are anything, but immutable and go past the binaries of liberal versus traditional or traditional versus conservative role for women. Below are the key findings from the chapter. The next chapter, Chapter 7 looks at the contemporary issues of gender impacts of the 'war on terror'.

6.5 Key findings

6.5.1 Australian group

- Though there is diffused knowledge about different sectarian reformist groups, there is an awareness of conservative views on female emancipation held by some individuals and leaders
- The conservative 'back to basics' view is interpreted in two ways – one that it empowers women in looking back into Islamic history to see examples of Muslim women actively participating in the public sphere; the other that women should have minimal roles in the public sphere
- The increased inclusion of Muslim women in the decision-making processes as well as the access to the public is challenging the traditional set-up of male Muslim leadership
- Male leadership seen as authorities on Muslim values and issues by the mainstream has been detrimental to the perception of Muslim women

6.5.2 Kenyan group

- Revivalist discourse and groups are clearly identifiable as traditionalist or purist
- The discourses more concerned with the correct practice of Islam and are affecting households in general
- Interpretations of gender roles as articulated within discourses suggest curtailing female activities in some households
- Looking beyond local discourses, women find empowerment through other Islamic resources
- Women's leadership roles are heavily contested.

PART 111: RESPONDING TO CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES

CHAPTER 7

THE GLOBAL 'WAR ON TERROR' AND LOCAL GENDER IMPACTS

Thus far, the work has looked at the paradigm of modernization and how socio-economic changes influence household relations, as well as how Muslim women attempt to balance changing gender roles as they respond to Islamization. This chapter examines perceptions of the topical trends in which the global discourse of the 'war on terror' has local implications for Muslim women as countries collaborate and assist the US in their 'war on terror' operations. As noted in the theoretical framework, the current phase of the international system is marked by the 9/11 events that are distinctly shaping the world order in the era of globalization.

Though there are several theories as to the political symbolism of the 9/11 events themselves, the subsequent responses in how the events were interpreted and reacted to by the US government changed the course of world politics. So entrenched is the notion of September 11, 2001 as marking a new world order since the post-Cold War, that some analysts caution about the singularity of the prism that reduces the complexities of world developments (Cox, 2004). The term the 'war on terror' and the discourse that has developed around it are associated with the global struggle against the threat of international terrorism and lead current global policy directions. The rhetorical focus on Muslims within, amplifies the cultural differences between Islam and the West. This undoubtedly affects how Muslims are perceived globally and locally. Anecdotes, as well as the reviewed literature provide plenty of evidence that the current focus affects Muslims in the West and the non-West. Some reports from Europe, the United States and Australia are mentioned in Chapter 1. Outside the Western world, even where no reasonable or tactical links are found, policy measures have adopted similar frames as the US in their own regional conflicts, as well as in collaboration within anti-terror operations (Cainkar, 2004; Seeseman, 2005). An unfortunate outcome is the continuums of Muslim 'deviancy' in the global environment where the actions of some have inference for the many.

Within the conceptual framework, the introduction touches on the gender frames embraced in the responses to terrorist activity; how gender serves as a rationale to a military solution. This segment of the study looks at the gender impacts of the focus on Muslims and Islam. The women were asked about how they perceive the attention on Muslims and how it affects them. Through their responses, the chapter looks at the global nature of the debate; how the lives of the women far removed from the events themselves are touched by the broader implications of being Muslims in the contemporary world, and how the debate perpetuates the cultural divide between Islam and the West.

The contents of the narratives are analyzed under three spheres of bearing:

- **Spaces of discourse; perceptions of difference**

One of the salient features of the ‘war on terror’ discourse is its reproduction in the globalized environment. While the 9/11 events took place in defined spaces, the rhetoric and the policy implications that followed are far removed from its core-peripheries in the global social, economic and political interconnectedness. Here, the women discuss how they perceive the discourse; what spaces it occupies and reveal how the collective global spaces engender consistency in topical debates of differences. An expectation at the start of the primary research was discursions of the impacts of the 1998 American embassy bombings in Nairobi, in Kenya and how these gave rise to anti-Muslim sentiments. However, as the analysis continued, these appear to have mellowed as contemporary impressions unfolded, revealing the globalizing of the present frames.

- **Gendered impacts of the ‘war on terror’**

The interlinking of global terrorist activities with the identities of local Muslims, brings forth aggressive reactions towards Muslims. As discussed in the introduction, cultural critiques that dislodge an understanding of Muslims and their faith have served to perpetuate a cultural divide, resulting in a backlash against Muslims (mostly women) in the West. While this segment of enquiry also uncovers how respondents in the Western context (Australia) are affected by the discourses, in comparing with the Kenyan participants, the study provides impressions related to the global discursions in a non-Western nation. The presentation of the analysis extracts from the narratives how the

women are affected by the anti-Muslim sentiments. The stories are too long to be included here; the analysis is therefore presented in a table format with narrative excerpts showing the ‘costs’ of cultural prejudice. Although the term ‘costs’ is used, these are subjective and open to interpretation. However, they serve to establish that cultural prejudice is detrimental to individual and societies. The first column in Tables 6 and 7 shows the narrative extracts and the second collates the experiences as a manifest ‘cost’.

- **Grassroots activism**

The narratives revealed an active engagement on the part of the women in overcoming the cultural divide or seeking redress. Many share how they do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the feelings engendered in their experiences and proactively employ their capacities to influence others in prevailing over these. These practical measures taken at the grassroots levels can potentially provide contributions to policy directions in moving beyond the cultural divide as developed in Chapter 9.

The three domains above are examined separately for each group in the sections below. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (7.1) covers the experiences of the Australian group, the second (7.2) those of the Kenyan group, Section 7.3 assembles the findings to present the overall gendered impact of the ‘war on terror’ discourse and the last (7.4) gives the key findings.

7.1 Australian respondents’ experiences

7.1.1 Spaces of discourse; perceptions of difference

Global and local communication media are a propelling force of globalization and transform the ways in which people network. Media - television, newspapers, talk-back radio, and the Internet are identified by the respondents as the spaces in which networked systems synthesize the global ‘war on terror’ and the discourses of difference are perceived. Other spaces are local networks and the public arena in which sensitivities are heightened. The media has played a significant role in sustaining and contributing to community perceptions; the coverage of the September 11 attacks itself was unusual in its genre and use of tropes (Vaile, 2006). While the enormity of the unfolding events had

no precedent in history with which audiences could identify the screen images in order to make sense of what was happening, the coverage was also unparalleled and extraordinary⁷⁴. According to Vaile (2006), the frequency of reruns and the length of time each shot was run, broke the conventional genres of news coverage and added to the destabilization of perceptions as to the significance of the events and the perpetrators. Eesha, a PhD student, disturbed by the images shares her discomfiture in the first few days after the events. The enormity of the event and Muslim culpability suggested in media messages transmitted unease in public places for Muslims, especially Muslim women.

I remember them just repeating rerun after rerun of the planes going into the Twin Towers... I didn't come to university I think it was for two or three days.

- Eesha

The analysis of news coverage on Muslims since has been the focus of several studies that highlight the discursive elements of representation mostly as binaries of opposing values between Muslims and the West (ADB, 2003; HREOC, 2004; Vaile, 2006; Younane, 2006; Aly and Balnaves, 2006). In the case of Australia, its position as the United State's ally deems it a potential target of terrorist activity and that leads the debate. A continuous state of alertness was unambiguously encouraged in the Howard era through security measures as well as advertising campaigns to educate the Australian public, encouraging a 'look-out' for terrorists in 2001 and another in 2004, 'to help protect Australia' (Younane, 2006). In addition, counter-terrorism legislation assuages the fears of the risk of terror attacks on the one hand, and adds to fears of an assault on civil liberties on the other (Aly and Balnaves, 2006). Galvanized through both the national and international discourse, local impacts materialize through an atmosphere of suspicion on the part of the mainstream community and concerns over exclusions on the part of Muslims. Several women share their experiences of public perception following the 9/11 events; below are two examples.

Some of the stares and sort of 'cold towards you' - cold perceptions towards you and things like that. I don't think many women can cope with some of the negativity; even like simple stares. When you are at the bus stop, they look at you – the bus is coming on the left side,

⁷⁴ Although a search for an approximate number of viewers who saw the images in its aftermath was unproductive, the 9/11 images are perhaps the most widely seen images in the world.

they keep turning to the right looking at you from head to toe, when you are just wearing the head scarf. Because you are Muslim and there is so much negative talk about the Muslim. People are taking the vibes.

- Nurzati

I will not forget coming back to university the week after and people not talking to me. That was very hurtful because you felt guilty. They refused to look me in the eye – that was people working there. They still work there. We now have a better relationship. Things have sort of mellowed down and one person, he actually speaks to me now, but it took him a good couple of months, even a year to actually make eye contact with me. He was completely disgusted... You could feel that change in everything towards you, just a change and it was really strange because I am the same person. I haven't changed. What do I have to do with the whole thing? So it was quite hurtful to me.

- Eesha

The exponential nature of discourses appears in Berenger's (2006) assessment of the role of cyber media in the Iraq war. An interesting question he asks is whether individual recipients process the information they receive before passing it on to others, or if individuals bother to fact-check the information they receive from obscure news agencies, bloggers, and political interest groups on the Internet, who might be furthering their own agendas. This proposition and the provocative and 'war-like' nature of the online debate emerge in Tanya's experience. Tanya who converted to Islam a few years ago is a media graduate who finds herself spending a lot of time on different forums trying to put forth a Muslim point of view. She tends to get caught up in an exchange of a consuming cyber 'cross-fire' between Muslims and non-Muslims. A lack of knowledge about Muslims and multiple presumptions surface in Tanya's narrative as the way in how non-Muslims perceive Muslims. However both groups (Muslim and non-Muslim) appear equally engaged in the swap of invective.

Studies on the merging of different mediums of the discourse (for example, Aly and Balnaves 2006), as well as interface within these mediums (for example, Berenger, 2006) show heightened perceptions of being 'under siege' on the one side, and feelings of being threatened on the other. Within the responses these also surface in insights that insider discussions within the Muslim community reinforce the perception of conflict. The communal spaces, the discourse occupies makes it difficult to avoid and not easy to

disengage from. Those who attempt to avoid the focus also encounter it in spaces of Muslim community interactions like the Friday sermon where counter discourses reinforce the siege perception.

I don't watch TV that much, but the news like the war in Iraq and things like that - I feel like that is why people are reacting towards me like that. I think that a lot of people know what is going on in the world. Even if you didn't watch any TV, but you went to like a Friday sermon, they will mention that the war on Iraq, so its from that that you understand and then I guess it 'ups' your level of how bad it really is.
-Huda

With such concentrations, Saida contends that the conflict is internalized as a fact of life. How the constant relay of hostility affects and impacts private and public lives is encapsulated in her rendition. Where her dreams are to be like any other Australian, the relay of anti-Muslim sentiments is pressuring and an invariable reminder of non-acceptance in the Australian society.

If you listen to the foreign channels - the Arabic channel gives different messages to a different audience. I read a lot of articles on the Internet. I do watch the news, but for me it is ... I think it is something that we Muslims have gotten used to, like it doesn't seem to bother me. At the beginning especially after September 11, it was a bit shocking because we were just afraid of the whole thing. Every night my husband and I would come home and we would talk about the news, talk about Islam and talk about what happened. And we would do it continuously every single day. ...If you go to a gathering, you talk about what happened to this Muslim, this bomb attack or that you know so there is a lot of focus. Definitely not one of dreams when I was (*growing up*)... talking about dreams - being in Australia ours is just like everybody else - lead a normal life and be accepted for who I am and yeah...sojust being accepted and just being left alone by the media or by people themselves.
- Saida

Prevalent in the various nodes of interface between Muslims and others, both in national and global contexts and various spaces, the embracing pervasiveness of the 'war on terror' discourse is evident in the responses above. The transmissions heighten the sense of 'being under attack', sensitivities of being ostracized by the mainstream society and fears of being targeted because of visibility as Muslims. An association of culpability is perceived not only through the weight of media focus, but also in the non-acceptance accorded in public places. On that note, Dunn et al (2004) find that as a minority cultural group, Muslims are identified as the most unlikely to fit into Australian society. They relate this to geo-political events,

international media and local moral panics that have heightened levels of Islamophobia. Reflecting this, Annam expresses how the continuum of Muslimness relates in the world today. The terrorist activities of individuals have ramifications for those completely detached from the spaces in which terrorist activity occurs. The threads of association enmeshed in preconceived epistemic, the actions of some have consequences for the many - especially Muslim women.

We have to bear the brunt of these comments. When a Muslim terrorist blows himself up in Palestine or a London train, then we have to bear the brunt of that in our daily lives. So when I hear it on the news, - 'Oh, no not again'. I know that it is going to cause hostility towards Muslims, but more likely Muslim women because we are a soft target as well.
- Annam

Community and interpersonal interaction within the Muslim community add to existing anxieties about recognition as equals in Australian society. A continuation and preoccupation with the issue into private spheres of family interaction suggests an impression on private lives as well, and is substantiated within the detriments of cultural discrimination in the aftermath of 9/11 discussed below.

7.1.2 Gendered impacts of the 'war on terror'

The incidents the respondents relate corroborate the reactions endured by many Muslim women following the events of 9/11 and subsequent terrorist acts (HREOC 2004). Through both personal experience as well as anecdotal evidence from friends and acquaintances, the women share these reactions. Of the twenty participants, sixteen, who wear the *hijaab*, disclose experiences of vilification. The rest four did not have a personal experience but, have knowledge of women who have suffered abuse in public spaces in Australia.

The experiences disclose how cultural prejudice manifested following 9/11. The narratives include incidents of physical attacks, derogatory remarks, denigration of values and stereotyping. Although explicit discrimination has waned considerably as terrorist activity has declined over the years, the prejudice continues in various forms and affects the aptitude to contribute and participate as full citizens of the society. The repercussions of intolerance are revealed in various stressors implicit in the narratives. The analysis is presented in the

table below. The first column contains the narrative extract in which the 'cost' is coded, the second the descriptor for the 'cost'.

Table 6: Local gender impacts on the Australian respondents

| Narrative extract | 'Cost' |
|---|----------------|
| <p>I don't like being among strangers now. I wasn't like that before. I would bond very well with strangers. For example, there was a parent meeting for a music program at my daughter's school and it just made me uncomfortable to walk into this place where I am going to meet other people, but I have to do it because of my daughter's interest Nurzati</p> | Avoidance |
| <p>Very disappointed about the fact that there are claims that Muslims are not denouncing terrorism enough ... Rahila</p> | Disappointment |
| <p>At university I did Women's Studies, I did feminism, feminist history and ... This lady, a feminist from the 1970s - she just made cross comments about Muslims; that we fought for women's rights and why are you wearing the <i>hijab</i> and she said all this about religion. And I am like - what about celebrating differences you know? Isn't there a slogan of feminism you know, like protecting all women and protecting all women's rights? And she says, 'No, no you don't belong here!' Saida</p> | Disparagement |
| <p>There is almost a cynicism and no Australian Muslim that I know believes that what they see in the media is the truth or to be even there - you know, impartial and I tend to agree Tanya</p> | Distrust |
| <p>She thinks the police might not believe me or they will say it's not a major incident or they won't take it as serious Fardaus</p> | |
| <p>Because I insisted and I really had to insist, one of the guys came and took down the statement and that was a Saturday. And on Tuesday morning the Commissioner called him to get the statement, they didn't have it! They had basically chucked it in the bin! I found out through the police and the Multicultural Council Fatima</p> | |
| <p>I know you could say that we are in the spotlight, but the thing is that I don't want to feel that way. Huda</p> | Frustration |
| <p>When my patients see me, because I am a Muslim lady, they may not have confidence in me. I am still an intern. Self-doubts are compounded by people's perceptions of me Naheed</p> | Performance |

Table 6: Local gender impacts of the Australian respondents (continued)

| Narrative extract | 'Cost' |
|---|-----------------------|
| <p>I am fearful, actually quite fearful that one day the Government - it's happened in France where they have banned wearing the <i>hijaab</i> in certain places. It's happened in Turkey and I am fearful that it is going to (<i>happen here</i>) one day where we are not allowed to wear <i>hijaab</i>. I mean even the right for Muslim women to wear <i>niqaab</i> that has been challenged</p> <p>Maryam</p> | Discriminatory policy |
| <p>...to always explain the behaviour of somebody else; of another Muslim and that is a huge responsibility and I don't want to carry that responsibility</p> <p>Mansura</p> | Pressure |
| <p>People have asked me to explain, I can't explain ...I can't explain what they are doing... In Israel and Palestine there is a completely different issue. You are talking about occupation and we are talking about people going and blowing themselves up in Bali. I don't understand that, I don't!</p> <p>Eesha</p> | |
| <p>If you have to deal with it on a daily basis. It's like - when can you actually get down to doing what you need to do?</p> <p>Fatima</p> | Opportunity cost |
| <p>The Australian government; just because of what's happened there wants to put in those extra resources. Whether we have any threat here or not we've got extra resources in security - that kind of changes our profile (<i>of Muslims</i>) here in Australia</p> <p>Maryam</p> | Resource cost |
| <p>Suddenly he just grabbed her hair like this from the back. ...She was wearing the scarf and then said... (<i>used</i>) foul language</p> <p>Fardausa</p> | Safety |
| <p>They yell at me 'terrorist' or 'go back to your country', there are hurtful things that happen and once I had my veil pulled off in the shopping centre</p> <p>Attiya</p> | |
| <p>One day the kids were walking home from school, these adults in the car were just screaming at them - 'Get out of Australia, you are not welcome here!' and that terrified them. They did not want to leave house after that. More recently, we were not aware it was linked to our being Muslim, but recently we found that there were events at night time, and our house seems to be the only one targeted to be trashed. People were breaking our mailbox, breaking our car windows, throwing bricks at our house at different times. Probably four or five times we have had that happen - our car windows broken ...</p> <p>Maryam</p> | |

Besides the emotional descriptors indicated above, the respondents use expressions like anger, sadness, overwhelmed, uncomfortable, negativity, unfair, unprotected that compound other challenges of everyday living. Physical abuse with concerns for own safety, as well as the safety of children through harassment is revealed. With regard to social interactions, disparagement is the most common experience and distrust especially in seeking redress or help from the authorities is disclosed. Resulting behaviors of isolation, especially in the days following September 11, surface in ways of dealing with the unease in the public space. Many Muslim women avoided going out into public spaces following the 9/11 incidents. Other ways are seeking comfort zones through interaction largely with Muslims. Underutilization of potential, performance pressures, and opportunity costs emerge as concerns. The added burden of having to deal with harassment especially in seeking redress is indicated as a fairly large price in terms of time and resources spent. Moreover, the pressure of defensiveness as Muslims, also has trade-offs with regard to time and effort spent in seeking to defend or counter attacks in different spaces. The prevailing distrust in public perception burdens performance levels as many feel under scrutiny in executing routine workplace tasks.

7.1.3 Grassroots activism

The two main approaches that surface as the means by which the women respond to traverse the hostility are agency and advocacy.

The focus on Muslims though negative has aroused an interest in the practices of Muslims and Islam within the mainstream Australian society and some of the women have been proactive in responding to those who approach them to find out more about Islamic practices. They see it as a positive opportunity for self-development and motivation to learn more about their faith. Many have been engaged in creating an awareness of Muslims and Islam to the wider community. Even those who have never actively participated in community work have felt the obligation to clarify misconceptions. Not wearing the *hijaab* herself, Rosmina takes up the opportunities within her work by talking to her clients.

I think it is part of duty as a Muslim to let people know who I am and where I come from and when they do find out that I am Muslim, they are easily surprised and then they ask me questions like why do they wear the *hijaab*, and definitely ‘do they force you to wear’ it so I

take the opportunity then in that situation to tell people about Islam.
- Rosmina

Since 9/11 many young university students have been made positive connections with the mainstream in building bridges across the communities. How these benefit the community at large as well as individuals, surfaces in Huda's efforts. Her creative approach has not only benefited her as an individual, but also the Muslim student community at her university.

I remember making the new committee and really helping out with that and because of that we ran for the pack prize and got the pack prize for 2006. I also won the commemoration prize for individuals that create cultural awareness on campus.

- Huda

Support from mainstream Australians is also acknowledged in most narratives. While there is bigoted behaviour from some, many Australians are forthcoming in their support. Attiya who wears a *niquaab* discloses how she finds that while some people may abuse her, others are forthcoming in their care for her safety. Even though her husband has been apprehensive and protective outside the home, Attiya is confident of her right to exercise her cultural freedom. Her rights as an Australian citizen make her confident in seeking redress when facing hostility in the public sphere.

I have had people abuse me on the street and another person come and ask if I am okay.

...To me it's like Australia is my country and I believe that from my heart and it does not matter what anyone says to me on the street. I don't feel, not welcome here and it could have been the Government that put multiculturalism in place that says you are worthy of who you are. So for me even though these things happen and I get my down on a day, I do feel I belong here and nobody has the right to treat me the way they do. I feel by law that I have rights in this country and I am not scared to go to the police or make a complaint if somebody has upset me. Like sometimes not getting let into a petrol-station because I am covered and they said you can't come in because your face is covered. I really get upset at that time, but then I think it is my right in this country and I will go out and I will complain about them and that's how I feel about being an Australian.

- Attiya

Other accounts reveal how the women advocate on behalf of others to deal with the issues or in Fatima's case set an example of not letting matters be dismissed as trivial. Told to get off the road and 'go home', as her abuser tried to run her off the highway as she drove to work

one morning, she is determined to pursue the matter. It has taken a toll on her in the time she needs to take off work to follow it up but, she is resolute and also taken it to the press.

I was very shaken. It took me a day to actually calm down and go over it. ...It happens often you know and you can ignore it so many times. But I think that the reason why I have pursued it is mainly - it was not necessarily for me, but it was for the community. It was to say this actually does happen to us all the time and we do need the laws to protect us.
- Fatima

Overall, in the experience of the Australian group, the discourse on Islam and the West is pervasive both in places of interaction with Muslims and non-Muslims. A preoccupation with its elements creates a cultural divide that has significant impacts on public lives and to some extent within the private sphere. The cultural repression it instigates has repercussions for the emotional and sometimes physical well-being of the women. There are indications within the narratives that some respondents are actively engaging in overcoming the divide that has ensued in the rhetoric of Islam and the West.

The following section examines the experiences of the Kenyan group.

7.2 Kenyan respondents' experiences

7.2.1 Spaces of discourse; perceptions of difference

The Kenyan respondents also point to the media as a primary source of perception. In addition to locally produced TV and radio programming, contemporary satellite and digital technologies are a part of the social communications infrastructure in Kenya. Twenty-four hour channels connect the public with news flows as well as popular culture, the course of which is mostly from the industrialized West. The perceptions of the 'war on terror' are complicit with the Western representation of Islam and Muslims. There is a general feeling of antagonism towards Muslims in the framing of terrorist activity reporting. Most are skeptical about the partiality of Western channels and indicate varied sources of information to process and weigh out accuracy. These include print media, and the Internet that facilitates partaking in global discussions.

As they share the pool of information, some respondents point to the growth of the competitive non-Western channels like Al-Jazeera as balancing perspectives. Al-Jazeera⁷⁵ has gained credibility as a global player, less biased towards the non-Western world.

I think a lot of people are getting information from al-Jazeera, we get CNN and BBC, but al-Jazeera is kind of very outspoken and they tend to bring out issues which are not given so much limelight in the other channels. Al-Jazeera picks up issues which need attention – it is more biased towards the non-Western world.

- Muneera

(Some of the media are biased) especially CNN and BBC that is why I would rather look at al-Jazeera or al Arabia or sometimes Peace TV to tell you other things...

- Tayibbah

Print media, the Internet and satellite TV- mainly media, but also through women groups and we have seminars for Muslims that we attend and we get to know. That also makes you want to learn more; you have to do some reading as well... I think that also stimulates me to read more... Because media alone; if you look at CNN alone you get a completely wrong picture.

- Tayyibah

...through chats, through emails and these things so the word goes on... we know what is happening on the outside through media, through Internet and everything. We know what is happening and we see it even here. No (*not only local media*) even BBC, CNN and these days everything is there – al-Jazeera, everything... (*different channels*).

- Fatma

There are mixed views about the local media in drawing a connection between religion and terrorist activity. While some feel that the local media plays a role in reinforcing negative stereotypes, others are more positive about its restraint and relate anti-Muslim sentiments to the terrorist activities that have happened in the region.

⁷⁵ Originally an Arab news network now having a global reach, it has been controversial in its dissenting views of the West as well as of some Arab governments. It has been criticized as anti-American and as inciting violence. See Arab Press Freedom Watch:
<http://web.archive.org/web/20051124201030/http://www.apfw.org/indexenglish.asp?fname=news%5cenglish%5c12018.htm>. Accessed January 10, 2010

I think the media has played a very big part, the local media, the international media. They have played a very big part in it (*an anti-Islamic sentiment?*). Oh yes! Especially after 9/11, I think this is very obvious, very obvious!

- Sanna

...there must be an agenda for them to associate terrorism and Islam. Maybe they are trying to like poison people's mind so that they have negative feelings against Islam... It's through the media - the way they put it. If I can get it through the media what about a person who doesn't know what Islam is - how will he perceive it? (*Your concern is that others are also perceiving it as negative?*)...yes, that is the only way they know Islam.

- Amriya

The media here don't give a lot of focus on religion... they don't tend to be biased on one side. The way the media here works they don't add other angles. Sometimes I do watch CNN if I get the time, but just a little bit and I feel that they add to the news to make it (*sensational?*)... So you tend to weigh it out and then make your mind up, make your own decision about the news... We've had incidents like the 9/11 here in Kenya. We had the bomb blasts in Nairobi. At that time I was in Nairobi. I was still in college and people would look at you as 'murderers and killers', people would look at you as something else. You wouldn't board a bus peacefully or when you went in a bus maybe everyone moves away from you. Yes, I had that! I was frightened, I couldn't go out. I just stayed at campus for at least one month without going to town. It was immediately after the 1998 bombing, but at least nowadays people have started reading about other communities and others have accepted that it is due to this, that this is happening, but some still have strong feelings about that.

- Khairun

Militant extremism is a relevant regional issue. The bombing of the American embassy in Nairobi in 1998 was a national trauma in the history of Kenya and provoked antagonism towards Muslims. Even though the bombings were aimed at harming American interests, the 218 people who died in the bomb blasts and about 4000 that were injured (Corey, 2009) were mostly Kenyans including Muslims, Christians and Hindus. In the days following the attacks, a negative public sentiment and the fear of reprisal were perceptible in the reception of Muslims in public places after that. Khairun, who was a student in Nairobi then, relates her fears of public perception of Muslims in the aftermath and believes that even though the public is more informed now, people still have strong feelings about the incident.

In 2002, an Israeli owned hotel outside Mombasa was bombed in a suicide attack. The fears of growing militancy has brought reprisals to bring to justice those involved. This is viewed as a disproportionate response to appease the United States and seen as a harassment of Muslims on the defense of wiping out terrorism. In recent years it is alleged that a number of Kenyan Muslims have been arrested, detained and flown to other countries for interrogation (Mwagiru, 2007; Reuters, 2007). This draws local events into the realm of the broader 'war on terror' and arouses strong anti-American sentiments. The majority of the women see the local anti-terrorism measures as instigated through American pressure on Kenyan authorities to undermine Islam. Fears for the safety of victims and their families surface within the narratives.

Although the contemporary discussions are integrated into global, political scenarios, they also feed the local geo-political grievances within the national discourse of Muslim-Christian relations. Not characteristically hostile, there is historic friction between Muslims and the dominant Christian communities of Kenya. The political factor of Islam in Kenya concerns itself with the development and prosperity of Muslim communities. Muslims have for long been concerned about defending their religious and cultural values against secularization and Christian domination. Although secular in its institutional framework, the Government is seen to stress Christian foundations and marginalize Muslims with regard to development opportunities (Oded, 2000; Bakari and Saad, 1995).

As in the experiences of the Australian respondents, the above narratives also disclose the persistent nature of the discourse on Islam in relation to the global 'war on terror'. As much as in the West, modern media technologies are elements of urban lifestyles in Kenya and serve to engage in global discussions as do local and global television channels. The Internet is indicated as a space for participation. Anecdotal or word-of-mouth communication also plays a role in expanding and spreading word at a community level in Mombasa. The above narratives not only disclose the spaces the discourse on Islam occupies, but also the interconnected elements that make-up its substance. Four elements are intertwined within:

- the global war on terror,
- the incidence of terrorist activity in the region,

- the ensuing search for terror suspects and their rendition, and
- the enduring grievances of Muslim marginalization that have taken on a political character in the last two decades (see Oded, 2000).

The manner in which these affect individuals is revealed in diverse stories; the women talk about incidents both at home and in the international arena that affect them negatively. Merging into existing economic and political grievances, global reactions to the incidents of 9/11 exacerbate feelings of marginalization within the Muslim community. With diplomatic ties with, and aid dependency on the USA, the Kenyan Government has cooperated with the US through counterterrorism measures in the ‘war on terror’. The increased intelligence gathering, policing and surveillance targets Muslims communities. Several ‘terror suspects’ mostly young Muslim men have been interrogated, detained and taken to neighbouring countries for rendition (Bengali and Landay, 2007).

Although most respondents allude to these anti-terrorism measures and concerns over the sufferings of their relatives, six women mention these particularly and indicate knowledge of how individuals have been affected. Muslim organizations have been advocating and arguing against the human rights violations, but the position of the government has been very strong. There are ramifications of aid dependency in these circumstances. Lind and Howell (2008) looking at the link between ‘security and subterfuge’ in the context of Kenya’s aid dependency, find that the Kenyan government received considerable aid in return for its assistance and cooperation in the ‘war on terror’. As such development is now a political tool in the objectives of the ‘war on terror’.

How a coalescence of national and international events manifest as marginalization of Muslims and its impacts on the well-being of the individual women as well as the society are covered in the section below.

7.2.2 Gendered impacts of the ‘war on terror’

The ways in which the ‘war on terror’ affects the lives of these respondents is dissimilar to those of the Australian group. As identified earlier, Muslim grievances regarding the ‘war

on terror' are interwoven with the economic marginalization of Muslims in Kenya. Public reactions in the aftermath of 9/11 have not been as belligerent as experienced in the West. However, there are inconveniences related to the local and global experiences of the women as identified in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Local gender impacts of the Kenyan respondents

| Narrative extract | Detriments |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <p>If the husband has been taken away, it becomes very hard on the women because they have to run the house. They have to look after the children Noora</p> | Economic hardship |
| <p>...he was put under house arrest, with a woman and a small baby - so you can imagine what it is doing to us. We read incidences of old people - a father 70 years old. I feel it's very unfair, extremely unfair that they are put through this Sanna</p> | Empathy |
| <p>It affects the lives of Muslim women (<i>in Iraq and Afghanistan</i>)... – they are being oppressed, so yeah you feel it, you feel for them Firoza</p> | |
| <p>...anything that happens to Muslims anywhere, in the world does affect us Tayyibah</p> | |
| <p>...We were stopped at the police checks and I remember he (<i>a policeman</i>) said to get out of the car and we were literally told 'please do not blow yourselves up in front of us!' – This was local police! This had never happened before. I mean this was the first time, 35 years of living in Kenya, never feeling threatened... We were told that if you don't have identity cards, we are going to put you in and he (<i>the policeman</i>) said to my husband I am going to take your wife and I am going to walk away with her – and I thought this is Kenya, really! I was brought up here; I never felt like that, I have always felt safe being here and thought why is this happening? That day I felt very angry, very angry we had our ID (<i>identity</i>) cards, but the tone they were using, it was very effective. It was very scary for us - It was a shock! It's affecting Muslims all over the world Sanna</p> | Fear |
| <p>There was a time when my Dad and all were going to India for an Islamic (<i>event</i>)... and what happened was at the airport, the security - they were not allowed to go in those clothes (<i>the shalwar kurta</i>). They had to actually go and change into shirts and trousers so that they could pass security and go ... that happened to my Dad. This was around 9/11. Tahmin</p> | Frustration |
| <p>When I went to the States, we had some other Muslims; one came from Canada, the other one from Beirut, one from Uganda, and one from the Ivory Coast and myself. My passport read ...; the others their names were not easily identified as Muslims so I was the only one - inside every airport I went... All traveling together, I was the only one who had a <i>hijab</i> on. Whenever I had to go to through security I had to put my hands apart and legs apart - you look at that difference - throughout my journey! When I went to Amsterdam throughout my trip at the airports that was what happened Why me? Zohra</p> | |
| <p>Because of antiterrorist legislation... policemen can come into the house and say they are looking for weapons, we had it last week on Radio Rahma that a family has been attacked by almost four police – they just dash in and they say they are looking for weapons. The government just makes excuses and the years pass by and they are in jail. Amriya</p> | Political- Human rights violation |
| <p>...this little girl who was twenty-two years old was taken to a cell with this newborn. I mean I felt for her because I fought for her actually to have a baby cot, to be given some mineral water, to be given some extra food in the cell Aamenah</p> | |

The responses of the Kenyan participants reveal that though affected by the general discourse on Islam in the 'war on terror', their challenges unlike those of the Australian group are not caught up in a backlash activated by the 9/11 events. However, perceptions of marginalization are particularly aggravated in the state's relationship with US government in the present anti-terrorism measures. In taking action, the government has detained and interrogated many suspects. Four Muslims were charged with involvement in terror activities but acquitted. One person was sentenced on firearm charges. Several related cases have ended up in acquittals. Other suspects have been transferred for rendition to other countries (FRD, 2007). Mazrui (2004) in his concern over the Kenyan authorities post 9/11 'pact' with the Americans, remarks that this can be divisive for the African people in general. He notes that since September 11, 2001, the Kenyan authorities have 'eagerly repatriated their own citizens at the slightest encouragement'. He also points to the double standards shown by the Kenyan and other African governments in showing solidarity with the Americans when the 9/11 events occurred. While there has been open empathy towards American losses, there has been little demonstration acknowledging African anguish like the Rwandese genocide. In addition, the pressure on African governments to enact anti-terror legislation pose new threats to civil liberties in African countries that have been making some progress in democratization of their nations.

There is evidence of this in the stories of the women, as they sense global and local marginalization there is resentment towards the United States hold over the Kenyan government. Many feel that injustice is perpetrated to comply with American interests and its pressure over the Kenyan government to enact anti-terror legislation. A topical concern for Muslims in Kenya is the Anti-Terrorism bill linked to the global developments since 9/11. An anti-terrorism bill was gazetted in 2003 and rejected because of the draconian measures within, as well as the fact that it may offer grounds for inter-religious animosity and suspicion (Ooko, 2008).

7.2.3 Grassroots activism

Fears over the civil liberties of Muslims and grassroots activism emerge in Aaemanh's involvement in protests over the detention and arrests of young Muslim men. Aamenah actively involved in various community activities shares her views aired in an interview with the BBC regarding the local anti-terrorism operations of the Kenyan Government and the apprehension over the detention and safety of terror suspects.

I have been on the BBC; on the air because we are protesting about our brothers who were caught and who disappeared and we don't even know where they were. So we had a procession ... and the BBC interviewed me. I told them what is happening in our country, how we are being treated...

- Aamenah

Broader conflicts also evoke reactions from the women and arouse strong feelings over the oppression of Muslims. Here the account reveals Muslim women are participating in such grassroots activism as well the changing nature of global activism where events in one part of the world set into motion reactions in another. Tayyibah talks about Muslim women's participation in demonstrations over the Gaza bombings in 2007. Her narrative of a Muslim woman hurt as the police tried to disperse a Muslim crowd demonstrating about the Gaza bombings is confirmed within the local newspaper, the Daily Nation's story on the incident (the Daily Nation, January 9, 2009).

Like yesterday Muslims were demonstrating peacefully towards the Israeli embassy. ...and they just tear-gassed them. They flushed them with very high pressure water. You saw the woman crying...

- Tayyibah

Some feel dialogue is the way to bridge the gap by taking the time to explain away the misconceptions others have about Islam. Whereas terrorist activity is carried out by other groups also like the former IRA, the Tamil Tigers, and incidences in the US involving its own citizens, in the frames used by the media the association of terrorism with Islam is well-established. Amriya for example feels a need to clarify what Islam actually means.

It does affect Muslims; in fact a Protestant asked me about terrorists and Islam here in Kenya. Its like why are Muslims terrorists and why is it only done by Muslims? So the

connotation is that only Muslims are terrorists – yeah because of the media that is what they think, the way they put it across.... if you read the history its not only Muslims who have been terrorists... We have to take the time to sit down with people and explain to them about Islam, what do we mean by Islam? Islam means peace, Islam means submission to Allah. Islam means a way to life so by talking to them...
- Amriya

These narratives indicate an engagement of some Muslim women in controversial political issues in which their dedication to social justice is firm and strong. While not as proactive in political matters, most of the other women are concerned and absorbed in the general development of the Muslim community.

7.3 The gender impact of the ‘war on terror’ discourse

In looking at the spaces of discourse, the analysis uncovers the comprehensive and global nature of transmission of an ‘Islam versus the West’ undertone within various spaces of communication and interaction. Several integrated networks sustain a protracted engagement with the discourse that cuts across the precincts of private and public spheres as shown in the narratives. Its globalized, pervasive character is evident in the contemporary merging of various communication spaces. While the volume of information is channeled through national and international media, community exchanges and personal experiences feed and nourish it at the local level.

The analysis supports a perception of anti-Islamic sentiment within both the Australian, and Kenyan Muslim communities. With feelings of distrust, stereotyping, being under vigilance and marginalization in different domains of their lives, the women communicate a general cultural discrimination in the wake of the ‘war on terror’. In the experiences of the Australian women, this has been through an attributed accountability as Muslims. Through the anxiety and suspicion, associated with the Islamic faith, they as visible signifiers of the faith are attributed a responsibility. Public sentiment on this is established by the address of the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to a conference of imams in 2006. Andrew Robb (2006) put the onus for its stigmatization on the perceptions of the general community:

‘...though some people say that the problem of stigmatization of Muslim people is a problem caused and generated by the media; that the media seeks to portray Australians Muslims in a negative way...I don’t subscribe to that point of view – ...the media simply reflects its readership, its listeners or viewing audience..., the media is reflecting the very real anxiety and suspicion within the broader community...’

In the experience of the Kenyan group, it is the Government’s anti-terrorism measures that have sharpened the sense of marginalization of Muslims. In a globalized environment, the reach of anti-Islamic sentiments channelled through different media exacerbates the existing asymmetries of development opportunities as well as human rights violations which many of the respondents hold American influence responsible for. As Muslim grievances are aggravated in the current milieu, transnational issues transmitted through various media, such as the asymmetry in the Palestinian issue, the current Iraq and Afghanistan invasions, the humiliation of Muslims within, these provoke a sustained resentment against perceived American imperialism. In both groups the most striking feature is the continuum of the global, national, local and personal. The interface between and along these spaces not only perpetuate and energize the debates, but also set in motion reactive responses like intolerance and suspicion at the local level.

The narratives of both groups reveal that Muslim women are not passive sufferers of the hostility. They are actively engaged at the grassroots level in navigating through the gendered spotlight of the contemporary debate. Following are the key findings for this chapter. The next chapter examines the discourse of the contentious Muslim veil.

7.4 Key findings:

7.4.1 Australian group

- The ‘war on terror’ discourse is prevalent in various nodes of interface between Muslims and others, both in national and global contexts
- Both the backlash in the aftermath of 9/11 and the integration of the global, national and local discourses have gendered consequences and heighten a sense of being stigmatized by the mainstream community

- The women are proactive in overcoming the cultural divide

7.4.2 Kenya group

- Global social communication media and networking are a major source of perceptions of the ‘war on terror’ in which Muslim marginalization is perceived
- There is an integration of global, with geo-political and national issues in the discourse
- The local gender impacts are less intense than in the case of the Australia
- Some women are proactive in speaking out about the anti-terrorism taken measures by the government

CHAPTER 8

VOICES OF THE VEIL

No attire has caused as much controversy in the modern world as the Muslim veil⁷⁶.

As an icon of female suppression and a statement of defiance, it is seen as a threat to democratic and liberal ideals. Viewed as compromising the freedoms of women, it has been subjected to regulation by some European governments, whose approaches to it have varied depending on the dynamics of state citizenship, multiculturalism and national politics. The ‘Veil Project’⁷⁷ covering eight European countries shows that while France, Germany and Turkey have banned the practice in the public realm; the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, Denmark and the UK have had a more tolerant attitude towards it. The major themes that surface in the analysis that support its banning are that: it infringes state neutrality⁷⁸; is a sign of women’s subordination; and a political manifestation that should not be tolerated. Kilic, Saharso and Sauer (2008), part of the research team on the Veil project find that across Europe and including Turkey, the veil debate has had strong connotations of the meta-narratives of national politics—citizenship, integration, gender oppression, multiculturalism, secularism, and cultural and religious identity.

The politicizing of the veil is not a propensity restricted to Western discourses. It has been a symbol of Muslim nationalist debates, where cultural identification has invoked it for political purposes. Turkey is the only Muslim majority state that prohibits its wearing in public institutions as it contravenes the country’s existing secularity of the state system⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ Although the term veiling is employed here as referring to modes of headgear that is part of an Islamic dress-code, there are a number of issues with its lexiconic handling. The veil has no singular referent in Arabic (El- Guindi, 1999); its nearest expression *hijab* comes from the root word *hajaba* (to hide) which has triple dimensions; a visual, spatial and moral. Visually it signifies a covering or hiding; spatially it connotes marking a threshold; and morally as belonging to the realm of the forbidden (El- Guindi, 1999). In contemporary usage however, it has become the most popular term associated with female headgear and face coverings of Muslim women

⁷⁷ Titled ‘Values, Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracies’, the project examines the differences and similarities in regulation and the policy-making processes in Europe. Available online at <http://www.veil-project.eu/>. Accessed September 17, 2009

⁷⁸ In Netherlands’ case to ‘protect the neutral appearance of state officials where functions concern state authority and impartiality’ (Lettinga and Saharso, 2008)

⁷⁹ Presenting a paper at a university in Istanbul, in 2007, I was surprised to be told that being a guest I was privileged in not being prevented from removing my scarf on the premises. I was introduced to a number

Under Kemal Ataturk, the country became a secular nation-state in 1923 and denounced it as a hindrance to a progressive nation. Since 1989, when its constitutional court decided that the veil was against the principles of secularism articulated in Turkey's constitution, the country has banned the wearing of the headscarf by civil servants, in medical and educational institutions. Its removal was a connotation of the secularity and progress of the new modern nation (Ahmed, 1992). Likewise the economic and social transformation in the Middle East through colonial administration and infrastructure brought reforms that affected women's status and the later discourses of self-determination linked the issues of women and progress into those of nationalism (Ahmed, 1992). In the early 19th century modernisers advocated the Westernization of Egyptian society through a rejection of the restrictions of female segregation, domestic seclusion and the face veil (El Guindi, 1999; Ahmed, 1992; Shirazi, 2001). Likewise, Reza Shah, the father of the late deposed ruler of Iran, encouraged by the Westernization of Turkey replicated its institutions including European dresscodes and forcibly abolished the wearing of the veil (Metz, 1987, Shirazi, 2001). The revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini, later reinstated it under Islamization policies in 1983. Saudi Arabia is the only country that applies the *Sharia* laws and as in Iran, veiling is stringently monitored by a moral police, the *mutawas*.

More recently, reclaiming Islamic culture, extremist groups in most Muslim majority states insist on the obligation for women to wear the veil. For instance, in Muslim states of Central Asia emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union, veiling customs are reinvigorated within nationalist discourses (Bodman and Tohid 1998). Also since September 11, 2001, the drift toward veiling has been mounting as many Muslims reorient themselves towards an Islamic identity in the rejection from the West of their cultural values. Featuring in diametrically opposed discourses of a secular and gender equality position, and a defensiveness based on the attributes of virtue in the ideals of Islam, the heated debate takes on an emotive polarity that seldom ventures into the experiential reflections of its practice. Yet, there are other conceptualizations of the veil obscured under the political posturing. For example Hoodfar (1997) sees its adoption as a strategy to increase public access that loosens the bonds of patriarchy, El- Guindi (1999, p xi) uncovers the roots of *hijaab* to discover a

of female students who wore wigs to cover their hair since they were not allowed to don the headscarf; many remove it at the gates of the university, I was told!

‘rich nuanced phenomenon’ that communicates social and cultural messages common to the Abrahamic faiths. What does the concept of veiling really mean to individual Muslim women? How is it perceived in the societies that they are part of? In attempting to answer this, the interview schedule asked the respondents about their personal practice of veiling or not veiling (as some of the women in the groups do not). It also enquired about perceptions of veiling within the societies they live in.

The chapter examines the responses of the two groups in two different sections (8.1 and 8.2), the first focused on the Australian group and the second on the Kenyan. Further divided into three, the analyses situate the experiences within the broader societal perceptions. The last section (8.3) then compares the findings of the *hijab* discourses in the two disparate locations and section 8.4 presents the key findings of the analysis.

8.1 The veil debate in Australia

In general Muslim dresscodes and veiling practices in Australia largely conform to global normatives of the *abaya*, the *jilbab* and the scarf - the *khimar*. However, there are women who dress according to the cultural traditions of their countries of origin which are distinct in their veiling styles. For example, the *baju kurung* of South East Asia is accompanied by the *telakong*, while the Somali *hijab* is a long mantle that covers the head and falls below the waist. The Sudanese *thawb* (an Indian sari like garment also covers the head) and the *shalwar kameez* with a *dupatta* (from the Indian sub-continent) are also a part of the kaleidoscope of Muslim female dressing and veiling in Australia. Apart from these national forms of veiling, a stricter *hijab* that also covers the face just leaving the eyes visible is seen in the public space.

Both the global and international media and the rhetoric of leaders after 9/11 have provided a basis for an archetype of the Muslim woman as oppressed through the practice of veiling (Samani and Marinova, 2007). As such the social relations between Muslims and the mainstream society have focused disproportionately on the veil. The heated debates over the veil in Europe found resonance with two federal MPs’ who suggested that the veil is contrary to liberal-democratic values. In 2005, Sophie Panopoulos raised the issues in the

Australian Parliament with - 'Why should one section of the community be stuck in the Dark Ages of compliance cloaked under a veil of some distorted form of religious freedom?' (Hansard, 2005)⁸⁰. Browyn Bishop, wanting it banned in public schools saw it as girls 'wearing it as an act of defiance against Australian values' and added that the iconic element of the veil is a 'symbol of the clash of cultures' that 'runs much deeper than a piece of cloth' (ABC, 2005). In a climate of suspicion, national security was the underlying motive for state MP, Fred Niles in 2002 in his unusual suggestion that the outer garment of the Muslim women's dresscode, the chador was a 'disguise for terrorists as it conceals both weapons and explosives, ...' and therefore to be prohibited in the public as a potential security threat to Australia⁸¹. These heightened views have also been balanced by a nuanced impartiality, as well as more sensitivity towards Muslim concerns.

How these observations compare with the women's own experiences of veiling as an Islamic dresscode is disclosed in the responses discussed below.

8.1.1. Australian accounts of veiling

Seventeen respondents wear the veil or the *hijab* in different forms, five wear the full *abaya*⁸² with a fairly long head-covering, one woman wears a *niquaab*⁸³, and the rest just put on a scarf as a headcovering. Two women reveal that they were wearing the *niquaab*, but took it off after incidents of disparagement in the public in the aftermath of 9/11. Three do not veil.

⁸⁰ Available online: <http://www.aph.gov.au.hansard>. Accessed September, 2, 2009

⁸¹ In the New South Wales 20/11/2002 Hansard. Muslim Women Chador Prohibition. Page 7058. Retrieved 2/09/09 from

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20021120027>. Later on a television channel Niles accused Muslim women who wear the chador of being extremist - 'the types of people bin Laden uses for his cause' and claimed that Muslim men were forcing the women to wear the chador. He added that he would encourage Muslim women to avoid wearing the chador (Transcript World Today November 22, 2002). Retrieved 5/09/2009 from <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/stories/s732835.htm>.

⁸² A long-sleeved, floor-length, loose, usually black, garment worn over other clothing when a woman leaves the protection of home.

⁸³ The headscarf.

The responses reveal cross-cutting motivations for veiling of which the convictions towards Islamic practices stands out as the most repeated in the narratives. Other facets that emerge include personal development in Islam, social identity, cultural expectations, and socialization into the practice. For Nasrin as she gets older she gets more philosophical about life and her adherence to Islamic principles and practices grow as she ponders over these. Veiling, to her is about her religiosity, but as to the type of veil she finds herself compromising by modifying it to suit the circumstances she finds herself in. Needing to go out to work, she is unsure whether the workplace would be accepting of a bigger veil than what she puts on and is working towards a qualification that will enable her to work in a Muslim environment where her dressing will be more acceptable.

I started thinking more about my life, my religion so I started following it more strictly than I used to be when I was younger. I am getting older and I am thinking of death and things like that, so I am becoming more philosophical and that leads me to become more religious...I veil because I want to be more religious because I want God's forgiveness... I feel that it is advised in the *sunnah* that we should veil although I am not sure of the best way to veil. ...I wouldn't put on the big one at the moment because I am working, I am putting on shorter and printed ones, but and I would like to follow more strictly - like with a bigger *hijaab* and just one gown which is the outer *jilbab* rather than just wearing a top and a skirt at work because I don't think that, that is strictly following Islam. But at the moment I feel like I still need to work. I haven't given up my work completely. Maybe a few years down the track I will be veiling completely. Maybe I will have given up working completely. I am not sure... so that is the reason why I am taking a diploma in Education. I thought that if I work in a Muslim primary school probably then I could wear the bigger *hijaab* with the longer *abaya* rather than working in an Australian university where I have to go to a class and I cannot wear this.

- Nasrin

A firm sincerity towards Islam also emerges in the younger generation. Mansura, in her twenties shares her rebelliousness over being pressured to put on the scarf. By customizing it as a fashion accessory, she managed to fulfil a family expectation and retained fashion trends in the absence of her brother. Her conviction grew after September 11; the more she has reflected over why she wears the *hijaab*, the more she sees it as act of worship and equivalent to other principles of Islam that are obligatory for Muslims.

Why I veil. When I first came here (*to Australia*) it was a cultural I didn't wear it properly then. It was pretty much like a bandana thing that was done because of my brother. He said

this is how you dress and this is it! I remember walking from school once and the jeans had to look nice and I had my tee-shirt tucked in and when my brother was coming to pick me up, the tee shirt would come out - so it would look longer. Up until the first year of university, I pretty much did it because it was a family expectation, more so my brother's expectation. I was obeying him more than you can say I was obeying God in terms of wearing it, but I didn't wear it like I wear it now. It was actually a bandana. Then at university after September 11, the more and more I thought about it and like tried to think through it – why do I wear it? ...Now I wear it pretty much because I see it as an act of worship, the same reason as maybe why I pray. I see wearing the *hijab* as that same sort of thing. I do see it as it is a command from God and I am trying my best to follow that.

- Mansura

Other accounts share similar sentiments of faith sincerity interspersed with elements of choice. Alone here with her sister, Fardausa (also in her twenties) from Somalia feels she exercises a lucid choice based on her religious belief and does it because it is ordained in the Qur'an. Another young respondent, Huda sheds light on how Western individuality merges with religious obligations and culture in a society like Australia; people exercise liberal rights to make choices that they want to. Wearing a veil when one is ready rather than because it is obligatory. Here the veil is not part of the identity, but develops it. In this, Huda makes a significant distinction between what is the perception of the veil as an enforced symbolic marker of identity and a freely exercised choice projecting symbolism of religiosity.

I wear it because that is God's word - that is what we should do and just obeying what God says. Like most ladies, I can't think of myself wearing anything else outside. I don't like it; I can't imagine myself without a scarf. Wearing this thing mainly because you know what Allah *swt*⁸⁴ says in the Quran and yeah... don't question it... It is a choice yes, for instance I am not here with my parents I am here with my sister. I can take it off any time like so just within me there is nothing stopping me taking it off.

- Fardausa

How far along in personal development in Islam you consider yourself. A lot of people think like that it's about me first, when I am ready then I will wear the scarf. Just like the Western world thinks it is about the individual, sometimes, it's the way Muslims think that and sometimes that's how it is. And this is the reality of being in a society with all different sorts of cultures and backgrounds influences and Australianness. It is not part of an identity, but it develops your identity.

- Huda

⁸⁴ Abbreviation of *Subhanau wa taalla*

Even though the women relate exercising free choice in their decisions, there are suggestions that the veil may be used to mitigate parental control. Where there is an expectation from families that girls should veil on reaching puberty, many are likely to be pressured to do so as Mansura's story above discloses. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that young women circumvent such expectations and modify to partake in popular girl culture. Alternatively, parents have realized these evasive tactics in a liberal environment and relax the rules. Here the story reveals a cultural normative where girls are encouraged to take up veiling in the home country, but there is relaxation of rules because of the social milieu of the Western society. Saida learnt about veiling when at school in Egypt where she spent most of her childhood. A 'coming of age' passage emerges in her account as she explains how the concept of modesty in Islam impressed her and convinced her to take up covering without parental pressure. Even as she believes it is a religious enjoinder, she accepts her younger sisters not wearing it, as does her father. Although it is an expectation according to his belief and their culture, he feels it would be more impertinent on their part for him to know that his daughters take it off behind his back.

After she (*the teacher*) spoke to us about *hijaab* and modesty and stuff like that and we finished the class we went outside. My friend and I, we were playing and then my other friend says, 'Oh my God, we don't wear the *hijaab*, ...and we are Muslims! ...It was just like a minor sort of belief. It wasn't like a strong thing, like ok, I have to do it now. Then I felt it was also a sign of me growing and by that time I had my period ... then it became a practical thing, wake up and put my *hijaab* on and get out of the house and long sleeves and long skirts or pants and whatever. It was only when I went to university that I found why I wear the *hijaab* and feel *alhamdulillah* I started early. Three of us started wearing at the same time. Our parents were shocked – 'sure you want to do, this wait till you are sixteen or seventeen'. I am like I want to do it now! ...Nowadays the *hijaab* especially in the West is a matter of choice for women; two of my sisters don't wear it. My Dad does not want to impose it on them. I just wear it since I was eleven, but my sisters - 'we'll get married; my hair is too beautiful to cover!' May Allah give them *hidaya*⁸⁵, but my Dad never imposed it on them because he did not want to see them covering in front of him and then taking it off on the streets and then one day he will see them on a bus or wherever ...
- Saida

The following account discloses the *hijaab* as an expression of customary mores.

Accretions built up within Islam that revivalists are keen on eliminating surface in this. Here

⁸⁵ God's guidance

the religious obligation to veil is secondary to a cultural obligation to cover as Tanya discovers. Inured within societal practices, veiling is diffused within the cultural mores of South Asian societies (Shirazi, 2001) such that the religious inducements are fused into customary dresscodes and take on syncretic mores. Tanya shares her understanding of veiling practices as revealed by her Pakistani in-laws. She feels their practice has a strong subtext of a life-cycle change, that it connotes a mature stage in the life-cycle of a woman - that of motherhood⁸⁶. Tanya expresses surprise over this inference. In her general understanding, veiling is a practice denoting modesty that should avert male attention and demarcate limitations of interaction with the opposite gender, yet she finds that there is insistence on wearing the *hijab* as a woman grows older and has children rather than at a around past puberty.

I know my mother-in-law who didn't veil until she was about mid-thirty. She is quite happy for her daughters to not veil until they are married and have children. So to her it's an indication of marriage and unavailability, I guess, and also I guess a modest addition to her dress as a mother I think she is seen as having more or being more respected with a veil now that she has got children, but prior to having children or when the children were young she didn't veil – *a life cycle change* – that's how she has described it. Her children are now what my age is - mid twenties and they are not married yet. It's not a problem for her that they are not veiled, but once they get married and start having children she will put pressure on them. According to my husband, there will be pressure on them to veil and they will be expected to follow as she has done...I find that a little bit odd because to me the concept of veiling is to cover your modesty. So as a twenty something girl you are probably your most attractive. If her value was about that, it should be now that she is wanting them to cover moreso than when they are older or unattractive ... that is something that I found very interesting myself.
- Tanya

Aspects of how the *hijab* determines the parameters of public-private dichotomy are alluded to in Norma's words. Sensing a quiet pressure from her friends, she feels she is not ready for a commitment that requires a change in her behaviour in the public - for instance being seen by others bathing at a public beach. The moral modality associated with the *hijab* has both a physical aspect (the *awra*)⁸⁷ that pertains to covering the body and an ethical component (*haya*) that concerns behaviour. Although there are different rulings and

⁸⁶ To what extent this applies to Pakistani society is indefinite; however El Guindi (1999) includes these understandings in the context of some communities of the Middle East and South Asia (see Chapter 5).

⁸⁷ The normative of *awra* is what must be 'covered' pertaining to both males and females and different degrees are stipulated in different circumstances. See for example Al-Qaradawi (1992) and The Fiqh of Covering One's *Awra* <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?t=131781>. Accessed September 7, 2009.

contested interpretations over what parts of the body consist of the *awra* between Islamic scholars as well as Muslim feminists, the concept of *awra* is more objective than that of *haya*⁸⁸. *Haya* is an abstract term normally translated as modesty. Norma's account gives the outer boundaries that are the *awra* that would have to be covered if a woman decides to put on the *hijaab*. Concerns such as Norma's surface in providing appropriate recreational facilities for Muslim women who observe the rules of *hijaab*. In the West, many women seek women's only facilities for recreational purposes. On the other hand, Rahila's story refers to *haya* - the code of behaviour expected from someone who wears a *hijaab*. She relates an incident of young girls seen dancing in *hijaab* and photographed at a nightclub.

I would like to be wearing it, but there are some issues really that I need to sort out within myself. I don't want to wear it because I feel there is a quiet pressure from my friends and people that I know are expecting me to wear a scarf...I would very much like to push myself to put it on because I think it protects you. Because once you put the scarf on, you feel that you have a certain behaviour that you have to follow. That's my opinion anyway; that you can't do this, you can't do that because you got a scarf on and so you have to be able to really give all of those things up. You can't go to the beach swimming when you have to have a scarf on or are you happy for others to see you in your scarf or dress swimming in the sea...There is a code of behaviour that goes with the scarf I feel that.

- Norma

A *hijaab* to me is that you have the outer *hijaab* that reflects the inner *hijaab*. What we see on the outside is the outer reflection of what you are on the inside, your conviction and faith and trust in God. It's about modesty...To me a *hijaab* protects you from going to certain places - you are a Muslim woman you feel the responsibility; you are recognized; that in terms of your character that you should act in a certain way.

Rahila

Concerns over restricted outdoor activities appear in Rosmina's narrative. As an out-doors person who loves sports and runs her own gym, Rosmina has considered wearing the *hijaab*, but is convinced it is not the 'right thing for her'. According to her while her Muslim identity is important, it is not necessarily enhanced by a *hijaab*. As she reflects on her inner

⁸⁸ After a long search for the meaning, I found this the closest to the comprehensive, but concise meaning of *haya*. This is from a lecture given by Shaikh ibn Faqih. The word '*haya*' comes from *hayat* (life). It is that which keeps you ethically and spiritually alive. Just like a body gets its value from being alive, the spirit, soul, character and person get their value from having *haya*. *Haya* covers a large number of concepts which are to be taken together: amongst them are self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple, etc.' Retrieved from <http://verbage.wordpress.com/haya/haya-part-one/>. Accessed September 7, 2009.

motivations, she also reveals its symbolism in both the mainstream and Muslim communities. On the one hand, she is likely to risk feelings of unacceptance and on the other feels a subtle pressure from within the Muslim community to put it on.

I have thought about it for myself personally I have certainly considered the *hijaab*, but then I don't wear the *hijaab* mainly because I am still not convinced that it is the right thing for me to do. Maybe I am being hypocritical. I don't know. Maybe I am just being a bit of a coward, maybe I am too scared to wear the *hijaab* because I know that as soon as I wear the *hijaab* I will be looked at differently by even by my neighbours. So yes it is an issue and it is a concern because I feel pressured. I feel like I should be wearing the *hijaab*. On the other hand, I feel that it is not me. It is not the person I am and I don't feel that I should be wearing the *hijaab* just to show the rest of the community whether it is within the Muslim community or the general outside community that I am a Muslim because I tend to feel that I can display that just by being the person I am.
-Rosmina

Other reasons that come up in the responses are socialization into contemporary culture where the modern blends with tradition. In societies where women generally veil, the popular culture develops trends in fashion around these. Across much of the Muslim world the *hijaab* in its different derivative forms has local fashion industries behind it and women can shop for a range of Islamic clothing in austere as well as very fashionable styles⁸⁹. Clothing styles are trendy in appealing to different age groups. Eesha's story, in sharing the excitement of *hijaab* 'initiation' as well as her new driving skills corresponds with other contemporary youth revels as well as image consciousness in the Muslim world.

I wore it actually after I graduated from university. So I wore it quite old...it was not imposed on me. I don't think anyone can impose anything on anyone when they are twenty three. It is not an age when you can impose something on anyone. It was just time and it was just right I just felt it was time. It was in Egypt...like I had to go and buy scarves -, I was going to wear a *hijaab* and I made a trip to Cairo and I went to all these really trendy places

⁸⁹ In their respective regions the diverse Muslim dress-code range from the loose *jilbabs* and *abayas* of the Middle East, the *chador* of Iran, the *shalwar kameez* and *dupatta* of the Indian sub-continent to the *tudungs* and *talakoms* of the South East Asia and the *burqa* of Afghanistan. All have growing fashion industries around them. Western retailers are now entering the market in catering for the Muslim market. See how retailers are marketing to fashion conscious Muslim women - <http://www.slate.com/id/2128906/>. Accessed September 7, 2009.

that sold scarves and I remember my first scarf had a butterfly on it, like a motif and it was silk and all these bright colours... My sister and I did it on the same day. Even though she is five years younger than me, she was the one who wanted to wear it. She was much more enthusiastic than me...I remember the first time we wore it and I am like, ok... we went out and I had my driver's license and I was driving. I got into the car and took a round like just drove around, came home and ok so that's it, so we are wearing *hijaab* now...It was actually a fun time because we got to go shopping and we did get to see people's reactions to some degree. So I think you just feel it is the right time.
- Eesha

In the above responses, four overlapping motivations stand out as to why the women wear the *hijaab*. Foremost, in the words of many, it is about their religiosity. As some put it - it is a commandment from God and therefore to be done without questioning. Related to this, there are signs of personal development within Islam itself. Some indicate that they have reached levels of understanding where they are able to undertake the commitment with deep levels of conviction. Knowing enough about the practice, they are confident that veiling is something they wish to take up. The third is socialisation. Having lived in a Muslim society, the family's practice of Islam, attending an Islamic school where the *hijaab* is part of the uniform or inculcated as a value, all play a role in the process. Some having taken on veiling at a young age feel it is a part of their identity that they would not wish to change. Linked to the rest, social identity also surfaces as a motivating theme, but there are mixed views about it. For some personal identity is a personal issue and extension of their inner conviction in following Islam, in others it is a consciousness developed within the social setting with the focus on Islam. After 9/11, under pressure to explain why they practise what they do, young women sought more clarity about their motivations that added a firmer conviction to continue veiling. A speculative cultural life-cycle theme also appears where women in certain cultures put on the veil after getting married and after having children. However, it is unclear as to whether this is a common practice in Australia or whether certain ethnic groups adhere to this practice.

In explaining their lack of enthusiasm to take up veiling, those not wearing it, reveal the public/private parameters created in the practice. The rules pertaining to covering up would mean having to give up certain public activities or modify the practice to suit especially outdoor recreational needs. Additionally, they feel it would impact their acceptance within

the public sphere. This also surfaces in the accounts of how the veil is received in the public space in Australia as examined below.

8.1.2 Perception of the mainstream society towards veiling

As uncovered in many studies and reports, and observed earlier, most of the respondents point to the media as the primary source through which mainstream Australians conjecture Muslim veiling practices. With little interaction with Muslim people, media frames where the average Muslim is overshadowed by newsworthy and extraordinary events concerning Muslims are the main contributors to the discourse of the veil. The Muslim woman archetype as a social category in mainstream understanding emerges in both these narratives as a basis for 'knowing' the Muslim woman.

If you don't know a Muslim wearing a veil personally or the only veiling Muslim woman you know is from the TV and media image, it would make you think of the Taliban and stuff along those lines. You will never know the average Muslim. You never get the news about the average Australian Muslim who goes to work, has good relations with the neighbours; which is what the majority of Aussie Muslims are. Consequently, the assumption is I think when a non-Muslim sees a Muslim woman - oh well, possibly not educated, a stay-at-home Mum, her father forces her to wear *hijab* - because they don't have anywhere to get the information. Whereas if they knew these views would go out of the window!
- Rahila

I think generally the media is how you recognize a Muslim in Australia. Very much, I think it makes a huge impact. I think it makes a big difference in what they look at you as to your capabilities and then automatically if you are covered, then you may be backward and you have to prove yourself a little bit more than anybody who is not covering.
- Attiya

Implicit within, these themes are also reflected in other responses. The most recurrent view is that of being disempowered that underpins other assumptions like passivity, incapability, a lack of agency, unprogressive, and subject to extremist behaviours. While it is comprehensible that there is lack of understanding in the general public (where there is little personal interaction), these conjectures also surface within institutional settings where professionalism of the women is undermined through general inferences. The following share impressions of the manner in which the mainstream relate with Muslim women.

Mansura who is a case worker for victims of domestic violence and deals with these issues in a professional capacity finds that even at an expert level, communication especially with feisty liberal feminists is condescending towards Muslim women like her. There is an acuity of powerlessness upon which the women are acting in showing solidarity with the 'less enfranchised'. This influences exchanges in which the Muslim woman is subordinated as less adequate in terms of contributing to dialogue or even in understanding repression.

When I am outside, I don't even think I am wearing it. I am walking out on the street and I am talking to people, etc. I don't really think about, 'Oh my gosh, I am dressed differently!' It doesn't really affect me that way; its more somebody saying Muslim that would make me feel different than how I dress. ...like with this child protection forum, some of the women, feminist ladies I talk to again would treat you like a child. That 'it is ok, you will come out of this, you are a Muslim lady now, but one day you will be educated enough to really understand about domestic violence, the issues involved and right now it is ok'. I feel that there is that patronizing - you poor thing - you will be saved!
- Mansura

A lack of understanding surfaces in cultural propriety - in how to approach Muslim women. Confusion over these is presented in here. However, these quandaries also have an underpinning of suppositions based on pervasive social categorizations. In her capacity as a presenter within workshops Maryam often meets people who have little social contact with Muslims. She shares a medley of misconceptions including her racial background and the significance of her long scarf that non-Muslims present when meeting her for the first time. These are combined with the archetypical expectations of what Muslim women would be. In her words, as a very vocal Muslim woman she defies all of these!

When they initially see you wearing the *hijaab*, the first thing people think is oh, you are not going to have a say. You are going to be so quiet, the perfect little woman. That's what happens and when I open my big mouth, it scares them. Initially that's what people say to me, that's their initial perception – they have told me that in particular. I do a number of workshops for ... and they are always surprised. They see me Arab automatically, or Turkish, and then as soon as I say I am a fifth generation Aussie, their mouths fall open. It's, you know - that automatic stereotyping especially because of the way I wear the *hijaab*... because I wear such a long *hijaab*, black they think I am in mourning!
- Maryam

The element of workplace discrimination based on social identity comes up in institutional interactions. Eesha, the first Muslim woman in the Physics department at her university, found it took people a long time to warm up to her. It was her English proficiency that helped in 'breaking the ice', but her account reveals distrust, based on her cultural identity in the ability to 'deliver' when employed as a tutor. There were concerns that students would not be able to 'connect' with her because of her veiling. How this bears out in the Australian workplace is not determined. The correlation between student and teacher 'connection' in the context of the veil has not been raised in Australia thus far. The issue of the *niqaab* used by a primary school teacher became a controversial matter in the British discourse on the veil in raising particularly aspects of socio-linguistics of effective face to face communication, as well as becoming a general political topic (see page 100, Joppke, 2009).

It takes a long time for me to break the ice and I know that I am actually like *alhamdulillah* ... I don't have an English barrier problem I can talk and I know a lot of things that other people can talk about. I can talk about anything but, yes, definitely wearing a scarf... I remember this lecturer when she was thinking about giving me some tutoring, someone actually told her, 'If you give the job the students will never be able to connect with her because of her scarf'.
- Eesha

Eesha further suggests potential discrimination of veiled women in the workplace. As a woman in *hijab* she found no attempt in drawing interest from prospective employers while passing a careers' fair at the university. Being in a university environment, her feeling is she would not be taken as a lay person and can only put it down to the fact that as a graduate in *hijab*, she does not have the right kind of image that draws employers. She indicates that women have had to compromise on wearing the veil in obtaining employment at their skills level or opt to work in environments where the *hijab* is more acceptable. Cited earlier, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's (2005) research provides evidence on the effects of visible discrimination in the Australian workplace includes women who wear the *hijab*.

Today I was coming over to you and there is a careers' fair and I am walking...No-one stopped me. These are people who are supposed to be showing that these are our companies; that you are graduates, why don't you come and work for us? No one wants anyone with a veil to come and work for them. So yeah, it is very difficult for me to get a job...I think the only place that there might be hope is the university because people are intellectual and it is quite a diverse environment here and many different ethnic groups. When I look at outside

how many Muslim women actually work, I only know one woman that works in the government who wears an *abaya*. The rest of the women had to take off their *hijaab* when they went for interviews and they didn't put it back on when they started working so you do feel cornered. I don't want to do that. I am sorry it is a part of me if you employ me, employ me with it. It's not going to change me if I take it off so I think especially for women like us who do have a degree, who can contribute...

Eesha

As Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2005) have uncovered visible discrimination in the workplace is not confined to Muslims only, other ethnic groups suffer racial discrimination. This bears out in Norma's experience as a primary school teacher who explains that it is not just Muslim identity, but also racial differences that are an issue in the Australian workplace context. She finds that ethnically different teachers like her take longer to obtain trust and confidence of students and these would be compounded if she wore a scarf. To facilitate acceptance and tolerance she makes it a point to talk about her religion and culture to the students.

I am not sure about wearing it. Being a teacher at school, I think it will be a problem with students. It's hard enough being Asian with the European kids. You know straight away they have a perception, every class, every new class you go to, you have to gain that trust and confidence and with wearing the scarf probably that might be a bit difficult. .. In every class I go to, I always make the point that within a week or two that they know I am a Muslim. If there are Muslim students in the classroom I will make sure that we *salaam* or talk about it to make sure that the other students are aware that I am Muslim. I am from Malaysia that there is a cultural difference and so get them to accept it so they become more understanding and tolerant and so far it seems to be working you know and I am happy about that.

-Norma

In other spaces notions of fanaticism are revealed as public perceptions. Attiya, in her *niqaab* finds people reacting to her thinking she is fanatical about her beliefs and practice. This reduces possibilities of being taken as an average person who goes about doing normal things or shares common issues and has the ability to converse about customary issues. Her personality ascertained by her outer appearance, she finds that she surprises people when she talks as a 'normal' person while in the *niqaab*.

If I was to have a normal conversation with somebody who saw me veiled they will really think I didn't have much to say or they looked at me as though she's probably a fanatic. When they talk to you, then they realize that that you very much a normal person and they

seem very shocked by it. Oh you think like that, oh you are normal! That is the way they judge people, I think all societies do.
- Attiya

On the brighter side however there is a growing awareness about Muslim culture. As a university student Fardausa finds that the veil does not elicit much response other than a curiosity. Peer contact on university campuses being more horizontal, there is more room for interaction and awareness of cultural diversity and therefore an acceptance of the miscellany of personal identities including that of *hijab* clad female student. Most Australian universities celebrate multicultural events that bring a host of different ethnic and nationality groups together. Such opportunities are positive forums that help create awareness of the diversity of the public.

I don't think it matters to them. They mind their own business they don't actually care whether you wear it or not... a friend of mine who doesn't wear a *hijab* and her non-Muslim friends ask her you are a Muslim how come you are not wearing? So you might get those kinds of questions...
- Fardausa

The existing perceptions of the Muslim woman archetype appearing within much of the literature on Muslim women surfaces here as the women talk about how their veiling is perceived by the mainstream Australian community. In the absence of meaningful interface, the common frames associated with the political and media lenses display hostility, as well as a judgment of capabilities in performance. While there are sensitivities as to how to interact with Muslim women, there are also presumptions based on common tropes associated with Muslim backwardness, oppression, and extremism as well as attached to the veil. As seen earlier in this work, these are presented in both the public and institutional spaces. However, there appear some breakthroughs where increased interaction especially among the younger generations is wearing down prejudice based on presumptions.

8.1.2 Perceptions of the Muslim community

In narrating Muslim views, most women reveal that the veil appears a marker of piety within sections of the community. There is a habitual view of a veiled woman as someone who practices Islam with more conviction than those who do not veil. While religiosity is subjective and not easily quantifiable, the women share awareness of how the type of *hijaab* has become a gauge for how deeply one practices the faith. Such correlations of piety with the type of veil as well as with the practice of veiling itself come up within these accounts.

Yes I think even within the Muslim community, there is that kind of discrimination, not just in a negative sense, but you know if you see a woman in a *hijaab*, the most common reaction is, she is practicing her religion, that she prays and she fasts and this and that... And sometimes it depends on what kind of *hijaab* you wear, if you wear like a small *hijaab* maybe more, if you wear a big *hijaab* you are more religious and pious and if you wear like a huge *hijaab* then you are way out there and if you wear a *nikaab* then you are extreme. Some people may view it as piety, but some people will go - no, she is extreme, shouldn't be wearing it in this country.
- Annam

It's what group we are talking about. Those who are rigid or strict in their views, if you are not wearing the *hijaab* you would not be taken seriously. Those who don't wear the *hijaab* feel judged, they feel uncomfortable.
- Rahila

Within the Muslim community they sort of regard you as having more conviction, I suppose. They see you whether you are a strict Muslim or not if you veil or you don't that is how they measure it which is not my prescribed criteria. They see how practising you are through your veiling and not veiling.
- Rosmina

The perception would be that those women who are not veiling are not as devout because people normally judge according to how a person dresses.
- Faiza

I think even in the Muslim community I am afraid to say that some people they do stereotype. If the woman is wearing a really long scarf oh, *mashaAllah* she is so pious. It's nothing to do with that. For myself, from personal experience I realize that veiling does not mean anything, nothing at all. Yes, you are fulfilling a command Allah has asked you to do and that's about it. It doesn't make you a good person, it doesn't make your interpretation of Islam correct, doesn't make you kind or respectful or anything, any of those things. So for

me, I guess I look at it as an obligation and that is where it ends for me personally.
- Attiya

As indicated above, there is a growing symbolism of the veil within sections of the Muslim community that associates it with religiosity; the bigger the veil the more the perception of faith practice. As revealed in the response below the focus in this context is on the outward manifestation of Islam in which the more fundamental principles are overlooked within a physical identity. Here the stereotyping relates to the practice of Islam itself. The pressures of compliance are felt by those that do not wear the *hijaab*. Some of the respondents show resentment over the latent and in others an overt pressure to put on the *hijaab*.

I find it very upsetting when it becomes the main focus of how you behave. It becomes the principle behind everything and it isn't really. There are more important things that come before the woman wearing the *hijaab*, like *salah* and fasting and all that kind of thing. But yes, suddenly it's become like if you put the *hijaab* on and because that is your Islamic identity... yes it is extremely important I am not saying that it is not and certainly compulsory for Muslim women to wear, but I think it is being misused way too much.
- Attiya

While there is no doubt that veiling has levels of conviction towards the practise of Islam, on perceptions within the Muslim community itself, the responses reveal a culture in which those wearing the veil are thought to be more practising than others. A symbolism attached to the type of veil ranks it in religiosity; the larger the veil, the more the perception of adhering well to Islam. Credibility in piety and devotion is also attached to the practice – those wearing the *hijaab* are likely to be taken more seriously than those who do not. Those not wearing the veil, feel a subtle and at times an open pressure to cover up. While these pressures are assertively resisted, the women that do not veil feel uncomfortable about being judged over their decisions. Interestingly, the *niqaab* also conjures notions of extremism in sections of the Muslim community.

What are the motivations behind Muslim women wearing the *hijab* in Kenya? How is the practice perceived by non-Muslims and within the Muslim community itself in this society? Below are the responses to these from the Kenyan interviewees.

8.2 The veil discourse in Kenya

One of the manifestations of the strong Islamic presence in East Africa especially at the coast is the veiling practices that vary with class, socio-economic status and ethnicity. Traditionally, the *buibui* a customary outer covering has been used by the Swahili and Arab women in their access to the public sphere⁹⁰. The *burqa* or *chadur* has been worn by Muslims originating from the Indian sub-continent. As their socio-economic status allows it, women from these groups have been less incorporated into general public activity than indigenous Muslims. Related to the seclusionary practices, the *buibui* and the *burqa* are more concealing than the *lessos* or *khanga* sheets also used as coverings, generally under the *buibui*. These are conservatively wrapped around the waist and cover the head and shoulder and used over other coverings. Women from the lower income strata engaged in petty enterprise outside the home mostly wear the *lessos* around the waist over dresses and wrap a sheet around the head without covering the shoulders.

Contemporary veiling practices reflect a paradigm shift through changes brought about by the revitalization of Islam in the region. As discussed previously in Chapter 6, the changes demonstrate a rejection of the ‘traditional’ forms of Islam, as well as Western cultural values and include veiling practices keeping pace with global practice. As such, veiling varies considerably with ideological direction with some women covering their faces, hands as well as their feet. Noticeably, veiling is being taken up more by the younger generation and the prescribed stipulations of covering hands, feet and the face are followed strictly by those that affiliate with more conformist ideologies or groups.

⁹⁰ Even though none of the participant women wear the traditional *buibui* some have referred to their coverings that are of contemporary global styles of *abaya* and *jilbab* in local colloquial as the *buibui* in their narratives. Traditionally the *buibui* left the legs exposed; in the contemporary dresscodes, the legs are covered.

Although a secular state, the Kenyan constitution allows the free practise of religion and public displays of religiosity are commonplace and a feature of its cosmopolitan make-up. The dresscodes and symbols of the Hindus, Sikhs, the various sects of the Muslims and Christians are all noticeable in the public. The veiling practice, an intrinsic facet of this multi-religious society has featured little in public discourses until recently. As more Muslim girls started veiling in schools, the expulsion of a few for contravening school uniform policies in the 1990s was seen as an infringement of religious rights and increased Muslim-Christian tensions. The schools, two of them Catholic, were taken to court and the public debate that ensued became a political issue in which then President, Daniel arap Moi himself intervened. He ruled that Muslims be allowed to carry out their beliefs (Oded, 2000).

8.2.1 Veiling accounts

All the participants except Zainab and Safiya wear the veil regularly. Nonetheless, the two women cover their hair when attending religious functions. Two others, Tahmin and Amriya wear the *niqaab*. Amriya who works with an NGO takes it off when working within the office, but dons it when doing fieldwork. Tahmin in her steadfast adherence to the Deobandh doctrine observes a strict *pardah* in the public that obligates complete covering including gloves and socks with just the eyes visible. The others all observe veiling in various ways; three wear the scarf over modest clothing and the rest wear the long *abaya* or *jilbab* together with a scarf tightly or loosely covering the face. Amriya, Tahmin and Aamenah also cover their feet with socks.

Veiling practices have amplified in the last fifteen years as increased awareness and knowledge about Islam is facilitated by institutional and media communication developments. Where previously potential scholars had to travel overseas, the opening of the Mahad⁹¹ institutions provide for women as well as men's training in Islamic teachings with similar curricula as overseas institutions of higher learning in Islamic studies. The graduates having been through a secular education qualify to teach in the integrated schools

⁹¹ Institutions promoting *Wahabi* ideology

and *madrassahs*. Their teaching methodologies draw on both their secular education as well as Islamic knowledge in their teaching. Approaches to veiling practices are more reasoned and appealing to many. Besides being encouraged by parents, girls learn about the *hijab* in these schools and *madrassahs*. The graduates from the institutions also hold *darsas*⁹² within learning circles for ladies. It is through these study circles that women mostly gain knowledge about their roles, rights and responsibilities as Muslim women and about the correct *hijab*. The Internet is another source that many educated women are turning to for information about the religion, including the correct form and mode of the *hijab*.

As Rahma shares, the face veil has become a culture through these. Her sister, one of the first graduates of the Mahad started the practice of wearing the ‘*ninja*’ (a colloquial for the face veil or *nikaab* used in many Muslim societies) together with others. She also shares how traditionally girls have been socialized into wearing the veil while still young in the *madrassah* as she was. This is a controversial score for many feminists in their criticism of the *hijab* as it is impressed as a coercion of girls into veiling. However, on the part of many Muslims, it is a religious injunction and therefore a breach of faith principles if left unpromoted. Most Sunni scholars emphasise its wearing upon entering puberty.

It is only for the last fifteen years that veiling is important. People are becoming more aware of Islam and advanced technology plays a big role. The opening of institutions like Mahad - Mahad for ladies is a higher education centre and Islamic studies institution for Islamic law, *fiqh*, training Islamic teachers for primary and secondary education. After qualifying they invite you for *darsas*. It's become a culture. People scorn at you for not wearing the veil. If you bring up your child, when she grows up it is automatic (*habitual*) to wear the veil. Those who don't wear are thought to not follow Islam properly. The *ninja* nobody was wearing it until Mahad - the graduates started to wear. My sister was one of the first. A lot of women are wearing it now. I think veiling is a life-style. *Madrassah* teachers told us that if you do not cover your head you will be cursed...
- Rahma

No Allah *subhanau wa tallah*⁹³ from the Qur'an if He commands anything we have to follow. If you want to be close to Allah *subhanau wa tallah* you have to follow his teaching so when I reach that age of *buloog* (*puberty*) then I find I have to put on the *hijab*...
- Amriya

⁹² Islamic lectures

⁹³ Glorified and exalted - term used in praising God.

Although the responses indicate a blend of socialization and freedom in their choices to veil, the current discourse of reevaluating Islamic values in the society has led many to reconsider their own images and identities. In her response, Habiba refers to the style and way of veiling that was commonplace and accepted before revivalist discourses challenged the syncretics of traditional and modern influences where veiling practices combined the two. Many women wearing the *buibui* previously did not cover what is properly described as the female *awra* according to Islam. In her own case, her decision to veil properly signifies a confluence of the expression of the current Islamic paradigm and the reflections of age maturity. As she started to reflect more on her lifestyle, Habiba finds herself abiding by the obligatory pillars of Islam, as well as veiling in the manner that she considers correct.

It was not imposed on me. When I was young I used to wear another kind of veil. I used to wear *buibui* and I never used to cover my face and my hair was open... Sometimes my husband would say cover yourself, cover yourself. I never took it seriously ...I never bothered to wear a *chuni* nothing and I used to go with my hair open. We used to wear midis in those days. I mean nobody told me anything; it just came to me you know; that this is not right, everybody is wearing it properly. It came from inside when I started school; I started praying fasting and everything. ...I saw younger people are covering themselves and I am quite old now, better cover myself...
- Habiba

Other motivations include having an Islamic identity, feelings of spiritual fulfilment as well as a sense of belonging within the community. Eight women disclose wearing the *hijaab* at a late stage in their lives. Here Tayyibah describes the gradual process of her initiation. As a modern and educated young woman, she did not entertain the thought of veiling despite family pressure. Exposed to the practice in Islamic societies as a student in Egypt and visiting friends in Abu Dhabi, she resisted many attempts to make her wear the *hijaab*. It was the pilgrimage that eventually transformed her dresscode and style. To her husband's surprise she changed her entire wardrobe to suit her new dressing. Tayyibah also shares a sentiment about 'weaning' young girls into wearing the *hijaab*. As a parent she is keen on inculcating the practice within her daughters. Her daughters go to a Muslim school that mandates the *hijaab* as school uniform and she feels this acculturates them into veiling practices. Besides learning the basic fundamentals of Islam in integrated schools, girls have to wear the *hijaab* as part of the school uniform, starting at a very young age.

...it just came to me after my second *hajj*, it just got into me. I had gone for *hajj* once and then went for *umrahs*. Suddenly one day when I came back I told my husband I am not wearing short dresses anymore. I studied in Egypt and I wasn't wearing the veil even though I saw it worn there and it affected to me, but I was still wearing short dresses just at the knee. Then when I came back from studies, my grandfather said why don't you wear the *buibui*? I said, 'I am really not ready for it now', so I went on. Then when I went for my second *hajj*, came back, started getting into these slowly. I told my husband now I don't want to wear short clothes anymore. He said, 'Really are you sure?' My husband never forced me. So then I just took my whole wardrobe out and I made long clothes and a *hijaab*. Then waited for a few more years before I started wearing the *buibui*...All I wear now is *abayas*... It actually came from within – I feel it's important because then there is no chance of it going 'out'. You shouldn't do something and then leave it or just pretend and do it in front of your parents and then when you are away you leave it. I don't force my children, but I am happy my children are (*in a Muslim school*) and you know you have to wear the *hijaab* from Standard 4. Like my daughter she cannot remove her *hijaab*, you know it grows with her...

-Tayibbah

'Turning into a new leaf' after the *hajj* also appears in Farha's account and indicates a redemptive element in deciding to veil. Although she does not regret her lifestyle before, when she did not wear the veil, there is a feeling that that was 'wrong', and what she does now is 'right' and she feels safe and good. This redemptive element is to be understood in the significance of the pilgrimage itself. For many Muslims the pilgrimage is a time for setting worldly affairs in order and expiation of sins if performed correctly.

I would say like that just two years back and like at that time I was not covering my hair or anything. When I went for my *hajj*, yeah after that I decided that I will start covering my hair. So how it was before, the way I used to be and all ok is fine. I was used to that life, but now since I have made up my mind and I thought I will do this... so yeah I feel good. I feel safe and I think what was before was wrong, this is right.

Farha

Others who have also taken up veiling at a more mature age also talk about it in terms of their personal, spiritual development. Both Firoza and Muneera feel it was the right thing to do at the time.

I didn't wear it till the age of twenty I think. It was my decision; I was not forced into it. In fact I wanted to. I don't know why I wanted to. It was just the right thing to do at the time. Just the feeling I have to wear it now. Ok, in a sense I thought you know like they say when you cover yourself you feel more secure. At that point I think I was not feeling secure and that got me thinking, no, I should wear it.

- Firoza

Yes I think so. Well initially I wasn't wearing the veil but, when I felt I needed to wear one it all came from within me and I wanted to have an Islamic identity. And because we are expected to veil ourselves I did. I felt I became more part of the community by wearing a veil.
- Muneera

The religious underpinning for veiling surfaces strongly in the following responses. The women see it as obeying a commandment of God according to the Qur'an that Muslim women should be following. While there are differences of opinion as to the extent of covering; whether the face veil is obligatory, there is consensus among Sunni *ulama* over the covering of the body and the hair. Among the four Sunni schools, only in the *Hanafi* school, the face veil is not obligatory (Roald, 2001)⁹⁴. Where in the past women practising seclusion were hardly seen on the streets, the face veil is commonly seen on the streets in Mombasa.

Partly I wear *hijaab* so that Allah is pleased with me, second, I obey his command, third, I am respected by everyone...
-Amriya

if the person is already in the religion, in fact she should be wearing the right *hijaab*.
- Khairun

I want to have to cover my body as a Muslim ...It is my decision and it is according to the Qur'an.
- Aamenah

Differences of opinion surface as the women describe the extents of covering prescribed according to their understanding of the *Shariah*. While Amriya and Tahmin see the face veil as an obligatory condition of veiling, Aamenah though strict in her religious views, does not agree to such stipulations and insists it is necessary to have facial communication during any interaction with others. Habiba shares her disapproval on increased coverings seen in the local society and bases her understanding of obligatory conditions during the *hajj* where women if performing the *hajj* cannot cover their faces during that period.

⁹⁴ According to Roald many Islamist women associated with movements like the Muslim Brotherhood, in Europe have taken up wearing the face veil.

I don't put on the *nikaab*. This is how I dress up in my *buibui*, *jilbab*, my socks I don't put on gloves, because I want to be seen. You see me in the streets, you see me as Aamenah, I don't want to open my *nikaab* and say 'oh, how are you? no, no, no' ..I want you to see me as I am Aamenah, so you identify me as a person like you have seen my facial features.
- Aamenah

Well Islam says you cover your hair and your body. That thing, the *nikaab* is not really important even if you go for *haji*, you are not allowed to cover your face. You have to leave your face open and only your palms are out and your feet, but you cover everything, but people are wearing gloves nowadays and you are wearing socks and all that it is too much I think!
-Habiba

Within these accounts, the major factor that surfaces as influencing veiling practices in the region is Islamic revivalism. The ideological changes initiated by revivalist groups and movements have been enhanced by local institutions like the Mahad that prepare Muslim students to teach in the local schools. These graduate students have been through formalized training in the 'high' tradition of *Wahabi* Islam in a very structured curriculum format. Together with their secular educational backgrounds, the new teachers adopt more modern approaches to education. Muslim parents who fear Western influences send their children to the integrated schools where religious values are incorporated in a secular curriculum. Parents feel reassured about the inculcation of Islamic values within the education system. The protocols of correct *hijaab* are taught to the younger generation within these systems and *hijaab* is promoted as part of the school uniform. In addition, informal preaching gatherings called *darsas* take place within homes, as well as at various function venues and female teachers instruct the more mature girls and women about the etiquette of veiling. These social changes have garnered a momentum in the veiling practice as Western modes of dressing are discarded and the veil takes on a cultural mode. The new Islamic consciousness has made most of the respondents think about or rethink veiling practices. Some have adopted the veil; others have modified their wearing to correct their 'distorted' versions of it. As part of upbringing in a Muslim society, the responses indicate an early socialization into the practice that many have retained in adulthood. The accounts display motivations where the personal abuts the societal, wound up in the discourses of Islamic revitalization. Most of the women admit to veiling or re-veiling in a process of revitalizing their faith in recent years stating varied incentives and inspirations including social

expectations, increased religiosity, age maturity, identification with the Muslim community, emphasizing their social identity, and revitalized faith and spiritually.

Below is an examination of responses of the Kenyan group on how non-Muslims in this society view the veiling practices of Muslim women.

8.2.1 Perceptions of non-Muslims

In general the responses indicate a broad acceptance of veiling practices in the multi-religious milieu of the Kenyan society and many women cite respect as an element of the treatment they receive in the public from non-Muslims around them. For most of the respondents it also helps create the boundaries of interaction and the parameters of contact between males and females without them having to specify these or explain Islamic cultural etiquette. For example, touching a non-*mahram*⁹⁵ is disallowed in Islam for both men and women and shaking hands or any form of contact is therefore culturally unacceptable. Asfiya relates her experience of interaction with men in the workplace, where she feels the veil is afforded a higher level of respect from the men that she works with than what she perceives she felt before. Although she wore the *hijaab* late in her life Naima shares this symbolic communication relayed by the *hijaab* that creates a personal space even in the public that allows a woman to traverse the public realm without the need to compromise religious values. Naima adds similar cultural norms shared by the Hindus where physical contact between the two genders is not established in greeting gestures.

Just an example, the other day I had to do a community workshop, so the principal put out his hand and I just looked at him and I could see the respect that came with it and so once you have this *hijaab* on its very few men even Christians who would come with their hands offered. They would realize it for themselves.
- Asfiya

You do get the respect and now I have been wearing the *hijaab* for the past two years,...it creates a boundary and the person opposite knows he will not extend his hand, he knows being a Muslim lady it is not acceptable and I think even in the Hindus it is not acceptable.

⁹⁵ A woman's husband or unmarriageable kin of the opposite gender.

They join their hands and do *namaste*. They don't shake hands or whatever...
- Naima

In her interaction with work colleagues, Amriya's account narrates discussions over the ethical profit and deficiencies of dresscodes. Conservative religious values are still a central element of Kenyan society in general and church attendance much higher than in Western nations. A resurgence of Christian religiosity with 'born again' movements that reassert Christian values are also visible in the Kenyan public sphere (Parsitau, 2008). Some common values are shared with the Christian mainstream society that although modernizing still retains modesty in dresscodes in most sections of the society.

... One of my colleagues said nowadays he does not go to church. ...He said I really admire you people in *buibui* and in *hijaab* ... I have stopped going to the church because once I sit in the church I lose my concentration to go an worship ... The dresscode they come to the church is so Westernized. Like they are not wearing proper decent clothes when they come to the church so when I go there truly speaking I don't want to lie to God because the concentration is not there for me to pray

- Amriya

On the other hand, though culturally acceptable, the *hijaab* in denoting an Islamic identity educes stereotypical responses as to Muslim women's capabilities where the image of the modern woman is modelled on the West and counts as an asset of agency. Tayyibah's account reveals a synthesis of gender/community/religion perceptions that attribute professional incapacity to Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. Taking over the administration position at a local hospital, she found the derision from her predecessor a challenge that she has lived up to in her capacity as an administrator. She finds that there is a widespread notion that Muslim women are not educated and generally not to be found in professional positions like hers. Her narrative also reveals how the more modern urban Christians especially from upcountry view coastal Muslims like her as incapable. Veiling in the public for her becomes an imperative in creating an awareness of Muslim women's professional capacity and participation.

If I go to a hospital right now and they have changed the guard, the guard will ask me hey, hey what are you doing? - and I am parking at the doctor's car-park. Just because I am wearing a *buibui*... If I didn't show my identity, they would just stop me - why are you parking in a doctor's car-park? So I ask - a Muslim cannot be a doctor or what? Just because

of the way I dress and I feel these things are everywhere. They always stereotype... in fact when I was taking the job my predecessor told me – you Coastal people or you Muslim because the Coast has many Muslims, I give you six months, you will not be able to run the hospital! So it was actually challenging for me and it was the first time that a Muslim woman was running a hospital and I managed to give it seven years and change the hospital completely... Sometimes we go to conferences like for doctors usually you will find you can actually pick out the Muslim... and it's good because we need to identify ourselves ...but, I feel sometimes we are discouraged just because of the way we dress. I think we should fight on.
-Tayibbah

You go there in a *buibui* or in a veil, they take you as if you are illiterate ... I have never accepted it and I will not accept it. I have a right to be attended like any other citizen in this country regardless of my religion, regardless of my moral status.
- Aamenah

How global modern images also disadvantage Muslims features in Zohra's story. Zohra with considerable experience in the hospitality industry was recruited to work as a senior guest relations officer at a local beach hotel catering for foreign tourists. When she modified the hotel uniform with a pair of trousers, she was asked to reconsider and tempted with higher pay if she would agree to remove her *hijaab* and dress in a revealing style. Such criteria deny many Muslims from participating in what is a very productive sector of the Kenyan economy. This narrative also reveals Muslim resistance to the erosion of their values in conforming to modern images that are exploitative of gender.

... When the tailor was measuring me, I said I want a long skirt. He refused. When he had finished the uniform, I said I am not going to put on that uniform because I told you I want a long skirt... The directors from Nairobi came, so what I did was I put on the long skirt and a *surwali* and with my *hijaab* on. You know what the boss said, who is this? This is not acceptable and I told him my name is ... I am the senior relations officer and he asked what experience do you have...The following day he called me and he told me, 'my dear Zohra I have seen your CV and I hear you are a very good guest relations officer ...but I want you to remove that *hijaab* and I will give you a higher salary'. I asked him, 'What?' I said, 'No, I am not going to remove my *hijaab* and and I want a longer skirt'. And he said if you are going to put on a long skirt it should have a slit. Can you believe it...?
- Zohra

In a culture where public expressions of religion are acceptable and well-tolerated, the veil in the Kenyan cultural context does not draw as much wonder as in the West. Even though Kenya is mostly a Christian majority, religious symbolism is expressed freely in the public

and the veil is readily acknowledged and understood as a religious symbol in the multi-religious society. With societal values and worldviews based on religious principles, the moral significance of the veil is tacit and the concessions on veiling in public institutions have been endorsed by political leaders. In their responses, the women indicate a communication of boundaries that is respected in their interactions particularly with non-Muslim males. As more Muslim women enter the workplace, the veil is acceptable in professional sectors; however professional competence and capacity is often gauged by the Western model of modernity that attributes the veil an outmoded practice. Given the general resistance of Muslims to modernity, Muslim women are still stereotyped as less educated and incapable of agency. Even though they are increasingly visible in the workplace, their competency in senior professional positions is still questioned. The veil image invokes a passivity conflated with Muslim backwardness in their general resistance to modern influences.

8.2.3 Muslim perceptions

A cultural expectation built up in the last few decades surfaces in the narratives where the women feel that there is a covert expectation to cover up. In this context, veiling is considered an Islamic obligation that those who don't hold onto are thought to be rejecting Islamic principles in favour of Western values. Given these, Firoza sees a duality in the veil - a social identity that collectively manifests as a contemporary cultural trend. As a social identity the veil emphasized in revivalist discourses rejects Westernization. In its collective observance, the practice has become a contemporary dress style. As the pressure to veil gathers momentum the stylized drift of the dresscode obscures its more moral elements and the practice is not seen as necessarily denoting religiosity. Amriya's censure discloses how the morally conscious view the current veiling practices generally observed in the public.

You will be surprised that people wearing the veil behave the way they do, but it's like a rule now in the Muslim community. If you wear the veil it's insignificant. I think some wear it as a fashion.
-Firoza

We can put it in two ways now because you can wear *hijaab*, but it is as good as not wearing *hijaab* and you can be in your simple decent dress and be in your full *hijaab*. Even the *buibuis* are westernized even the *mitandio* are westernized.

- Amriya

That it is bound up in the polemic of Islam and the West from the Muslim perspective emerges in Muneera's comments; that those not veiling are considered more modern and westernized. The veil or type of veil in this context does not necessarily have any significance as to the levels of religiosity. Just donning of the veil differentiates between valuing Islam more and a rejection of the West and vice versa.

Generally our community tends to view those who are not wearing the veil as modern and very westernized kind of. Even though they might be more practising Muslims than the ones who are wearing a veil. I don't think a veil makes you more Islamic than the ones who are not. It's just the way you are dressing up, but I feel that our community looks upon those who don't wear a veil as too westernized.

- Muneera

As within the Australian group, similar considerations of the outer *hijaab* reflecting the inner *hijaab* also emerge in these narratives. Not everyone that wears a *hijaab* is necessarily doing it out of a religious conviction. In some instances, it is societal expectations that motivates women. For Safiya it should be a personal choice and not a compulsion through expectation and in Abida's opinion some women exploit the moral purpose of the *hijaab* to suit their own social needs by wearing it at some occasions and discarding it at others.

Some people they wear it because society expects it of them.

- Sabrina

people should decide on their own what to wear ...

- Safiya

... the thing is there are others who do wear the *hijaab*. Today they are seen in *hijaab* because they are maybe in this (*environment*) and tomorrow at somebody's wedding and the *hijaab* is not there. So that sort of thing is you know then the respect is not there because you do not respect the *hijaab* itself. It's just a convenience. Today I do wear it, tomorrow I don't.

- Asfiya

Significantly visible in the Muslim veil, revivalist ideologies bring both a social and cultural transformation to the public image of Islam in the Kenya public sphere. The reconstruction is however varied as the austerity of more conformist groups with covering of the hands, feet and face in veiling practices exist alongside more stylish trends in *hijaab* clothing. Contemporary modes have a zest for fashion adopted from the styles of Middle Eastern consumer culture. In accentuating fashion, beauty, and femininity, the materialism of contemporary styles compete with the sobriety of the ideological elements of the *hijaab* as a covering.

8.3 Comparing *hijaab* contexts

In the contemporary propositions, the global veil discursions take on the symbolism of the clash between Islam and the West and are contested within the antithetic of the two. As a symbol of female oppression, in the liberal West, banning the veil is a potential solution to gender equality and female emancipation. On the other hand, the deveiling of women is seen as a sign of rebuffing Islamic ideologies and sought as a means of emphasizing Muslim identity. Reified in the two, the veil as a means of control loses its physical and moral purposes and gets subsumed under the louder calls for conformity. The responses of the participants disclose the nuances of context-specifics that lie somewhere in between the two.

In Australia, the veil discourse is contemporaneous and driven by the discourse of the war on terror. Cloaked in a modern liberal-secular frame that concerns itself with female oppression, the political debate lacks the strength of commitment to particular principles like that of the French where there is steadfastness in secularity of the public space. The few proposals to ban the veil are mostly an opportunistic capitalization for mileage from current political issues conflating the issue of Muslim female oppression with that of national security concerns. In the absence of significant interactions, the spill over of political claims into the public discourses in concert with media imagery makes for the general comprehension of the veil's connotation as a symbol of oppression.

In the more religiously accommodating Kenyan context, the veil is more easily tolerated in the public space and finds favour with the authorities in promoting religious harmony. The two Muslim women in the Kenyan parliament are veiled women. In cases where schools have barred Muslim girls from attending school in *hijaab*, juridical recourse is accessible and the court rulings over the scarf have been favourable to Muslims. In general, veiling practices are an intrinsic part of the varied societal setting and valued within a religiously conscious society.

In neither of the two countries however, is the veil imposed upon women. The cumulative experiences of the women validate the complexities of veiling practices that reflect various influences impacting upon Muslim societies. The common denominator in the experiences of the two groups is the dominant Islamic revivalist discourses that encourage improving the personal as well as communal moral character. Its public manifestation is the current resurgence of veiling practices that are varied. The factors that play a part in veiling decisions although underpinned by a theological backdrop are contextualized in current socio-economic, popular culture as well as political milieus. Actively engaged in the public space, the women make their veiling choices to negotiate and navigate through these.

8.4 Key findings

- Discursions over the veil take on the conflict between Islam and the West and are contested in an antithetic of the two
- The veil is seen as a sign of female oppression and resolutions to remove it are based on gender equality
- De-veiling on the other hand is seen as a rebuffal of Islamic faith and values
- The polarities of the discourse lose the moral purpose of the veil
- Nuances in practice lie between the two polarized views. The factors in veiling decisions are contexted in faith, social settings, popular culture, and fashion.
- In the Australian context the political debate is opportunistic; in the Kenyan political context, it is favoured in promoting social harmony. In neither of the two countries is it banned

**PART IV: MULTICULTURALISM AND BEYOND THE CULTURAL
DIVIDE**

CHAPTER 9

INCLUSIVE MULTICULTURALISM: REDRESSING THE CULTURAL DIVIDE

This chapter examines the responses of the women interviewed, to inclusion in their respective societies as part of Muslim minorities. It also provides a framework for inclusion to redress cultural exclusions in the multicultural settings. While multiculturalism is a part of most contemporary national landscapes mapped by the particularities of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic orientation, as well as the historical experiences of the regions, active management of multiculturalism are policy directives originating in Western settler nations like Australia (Kymlicka, 1995). With the passage of time and the crisscrossing flows generated by globalization, the demographic composition of these countries is racially and culturally pluralistic. While not adopting it as an explicit policy, other countries create more subtle approaches to manage their diverse make-up. With increased diversities, in the global environment, the challenges that go with the management of pluralistic societies in social, economic and political inequalities intensify not only through movements, but also through increased awareness of minority rights. Diversities require a modification of practice in public institutions to accommodate the beliefs, traditions and cultural mores of different groups. The challenges are to create policies that combine the objectives of unity with respect for diversity and difference (UNDP 2004).

The concept of multiculturalism is not historically novel as past societies have included different cultural communities in their make-up. A significant difference is the contemporary environment in which it occurs. Modern-day multiculturalism happens in a rapidly economic and culturally globalizing world that distinguishes it in political and economic contexts (Parekh, 2000). The modern nation is rooted in democratic ideology in which the state as the centralized authority ensures the inclusion and protection of the rights of its citizens, recognizing different groups. How this is confronted has surfaced as a key concern after 9/11, in balancing security issues with civil rights within current debates in the 'war on terror'. Though there is little empirical study of how national politics or religious contexts shape the actions and claims of ethnic cultural groups like Muslims, value debates

that contrast Islamic against liberal democratic values are part of discourses on national security, identity and multiculturalism in Western nations (d'Appollonia and Reich, 2008).

The study has thus far focused on the importance of cultural expression on the personal and societal fronts; how cultural differences appear at the national level is explored here. The salience of this is brought to the fore in moves across Western countries to implement border control, security and integrate Muslim minority groups within their societies. Though they have different dimensions, most discussions are clustered around the rubric of national identity and values. If societies are to be cohesive, there have to be some core values that are shared within a national identity. While these are debatable, they are the core values around which civic obligations are designed.

The segment in the questionnaire asked for the respondents' views on multiculturalism, national values and whether they feel included in their respective mainstream societies. The queries here relate to topical discussions on the political front in Australia. These initiated public comment through news media and national consultations on the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims⁹⁶, as well as informed policy⁹⁷. Most interestingly, the contexts of the political rhetoric focus on the gender elements of Muslim incompatibility in highlighting differences and debating cultural expression.

Even though the current issues do not relate directly to the Kenyan context, the comparison provides a historical as well as contemporary contrast of national identity and how as minorities, the women perceive belonging within a multicultural society. The wording takes into account that multiculturalism does not feature in Kenyan national policy and most of the public is unaware of the term. The question was thus rephrased as 'different groups living side by side'. The format of the chapter is slightly different from the previous ones. Sections 9.1 and 9.2 outline the multicultural setting of the two countries and then examine

⁹⁶ see IDA, 2007

⁹⁷ Since October 2007, certain categories of visa applicants are required to sign a 'values statement' to confirm that they respect the Australian way of life. Similar debates have been a part of discourses on national security, identity and multiculturalism in Europe and the USA. See d'Appollonia and Reich (2008).

the respective experiences of the women as Muslim minorities; Section 9.3 makes a comparison of these experiences and 9.4 outlines the key findings. Section 9.5 then draws up a framework for inclusive participation of minority women that merges practical interests within national strategic objectives in gender issues. Although generated through this study, this framework is applicable to minority groups in general; therefore it does not particularly focus on gender specific issues.

9.1 National identity and multiculturalism in Australia

Australia's immigration intake, responsive to its workforce needs, has proved challenging for its national identity. On the one hand, the labour contribution of migrants has been valued as vital for economic growth, on the other, their social and cultural orientation has challenged the design of national identity. Together with other minority groups and the indigenous Aboriginal people, Muslims in Australia were also subjected to the restrictive policies (Jones, 1993; Cleland, 2001; Kabir, 2005) that maintained an Anglo-Celtic population. Until the later part of the 20th century, the country had a 'White Australia' policy. The sketchy historical presence of Muslims managed through official control meant few established communities with little interaction with the predominant white society. It was not until the 1980s that the increased presence of Muslims was felt in the country.

The gradual ideological shift from racial insulation to a cultural conformity emerged with the post Second World War migration of European refugees that saw a remarkable increase in the overseas born population. The assimilation policies of the late 1940s attempted to make new arrivals indistinguishable from the mainstream population by adopting the majority English language and cultural norms. In the 1960s, given the greater diversity through increased migration, a better awareness of the needs of minority groups and an acceptance of the realities of cultural and lingual associations led to integration as the official settlement policy. Integration meant being part of the whole society without losing a distinct identity (Kabir, 2005; Tavan, 2005; Hollinsworth, 2006). The present multicultural policies reflect the cultural and lingual diversities of the population and recognize the market competitiveness of a diverse population in promoting economic growth. The

principles of contemporary multicultural policy include cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency (DIMIA, 2006).

Since the Second World War about 6.9 million people have settled in Australia; about 45% of Australians are born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas (DIAC, 2009). People from over 200 countries have made Australia their home and over 200 languages are spoken in the country (Healey, 2005). This diversity, evident in the public sphere includes Muslims from about 70 countries. While the waves of different migratory groups to the country have changed the nature of multiculturalism in Australia, in recent times, policies are influenced by the external factor of the ‘war on terror’

9.1.1 Multiculturalism and inclusion: Perceptions of Australian Muslim women

Within the responses there is appreciation of the theory as different ethnic groups existing cohesively in a society and deemed a ‘good thing’, ‘positive’ in ‘finding a balance’ to unite the different ethnic groups, the changing composition of the Australian society.

Multiculturalism as a policy in theory is very good – positive. It’s about integrating people in the society. It’s about people being accepting of others, it’s about people wanting to share their culture with others and not box themselves into small corners. I think multiculturalism is hugely important in Australia. You’ve got a country that has only recently been settled or colonized by white society, so firstly you’ve got the group of Aboriginal native people that were here and the Western white people - you know that’s going to be multicultural society or it should have been. History tells us differently, but ideally it would have been good to have a multicultural policy with the Aboriginals. Over the last 50 years there have been the Italians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, English, Middle Eastern, everyone from everywhere come to Australia. African recently, so it’s a huge, hugely important factor for our society to be multicultural in every aspect. Like it needs to start from childhood, kids need to be accepting of multiculturalism...

- Tanya

As the interviews took place during the former government’s time in office, the responses are a reaction to the coalition’s stance on the policy. While recognizing its ideal intent in bringing different ethnic groups together, there is an uncertainty over rolling back multiculturalism. A fear of deemphasizing diversity to affirm a new nationalism based on a

narrow definition of national identity emerges. A number of responses indicate fearing a return to assimilationist policies where the emphasis could mean more stress on cultural than social integration. Such sentiments have been elements of discussions in the political arena. Analysts like Jayasuriya (2007) see it as a reframing of multiculturalism to fit an Australian national identity. Likewise the name change of the department of multiculturalism to citizenship denotes a subtle roll-back to one of the interviewees. Her response elaborates the social and economic gains of allowing cultural expression. Recognition of cultural differences fosters a sense of belonging into a society, resulting in a better outcome for both sides - a sense of belonging on the one hand and enhanced productivity on the other. When people feel appreciated in a society and have a sense of belonging, they are willing to give that much more in productivity. The Commission for a Multi-Ethnic Britain makes similar observations – that the flourishing of individuals and communities is interlinked with the flourishing of public institutions and services. In this sense, the notions of recognition and belonging go beyond merely citizenship rights. They are mutually reinforcing forces that construe equality despite differences and a strategy for embracing diversity (Modood, 2007, p 153).

They are deemphasizing it now. The name of the department has also been changed from multiculturalism to citizenship... We know that in practical life everyone lives differently, everyone wants to dress differently. We are going back into assimilation. Every country benefits from multiculturalism – food, dress, work – at work recognize people’s differences and they will work hard when they feel that they belong to this country. Otherwise they will feel, this is not my country because they don’t recognize the way I am.
- Nasrin

The shifts in the official position are most evident in the values debates in Australia since 2004. The intersection of ethnicity, culture and values in the construction of the Australian identity came with a force in the wake of a series of gang rapes by Lebanese youth and the Cronulla riots⁹⁸. These were discoursed in a language of ‘women’s rights’ that attracted widespread indignation and severe denunciation (Grewal, 2007). The then Treasurer, Peter Costello, for instance argued against ‘mushy multiculturalism’ and for Muslims not abiding by Australian values to be stripped of citizenship (Gordon and Topsfield, 2006). The

⁹⁸ The Cronulla riots were a series of serious mob confrontations in Sydney in 2005, between youth of Middle Eastern appearance and mostly Anglo-Celtic Australians.

remarks came in the wake of the former Prime Minister's claims that some Muslims were 'utterly antagonistic to our kind of society', calling for Muslims to 'integrate fully into Australian society by learning English and accepting Australian values' (Cook and Tent, 2006). He added that 'people who come from societies where women are treated in an inferior fashion have got to learn quickly that this is not the case in Australia' (Cook and Tent, 2006). Yet again, on the fifth anniversary of 9/11 such remarks about values and hostile attitudes towards Australian interests appeared in the Prime Minister's remarks on Muslims. A swift move to a conservative position unfolded as Muslims took the limelight both globally and nationally. With events such as the Sydney gang rapes, the Tampa and 'children overboard'⁹⁹, Cronulla riots, a discourse of 'ethnicizing' values ensued (Poynting et al, 2004; Grewal, 2007; Samani, 2007). From 2004, a shift in the official position emerged in public discourse, much of it focused on Muslim incompatibility with Western values (Halahoff, 2006). Halahoff (2006) notes the strong alliance of the Howard government with the US, particularly in the government's foreign policy and discourse. This is mirrored in the responses with regard to the timeliness of the rhetoric partiality that makes Muslims different to other Australians. Maryam senses the objective as both a cultural divide as well as a suppression of Muslim views.

Just that terminology on its own said that our values are not valued. Our ideals have no value in society at all, so putting us down firstly. Secondly, it was making us different to everyone else; it was making us a totally different identity to other people. In the long run we are the same, our core values are the same ...
- Maryam

The significance of highlighting value differences appears a broader symbolism of Muslim versus Western values and questioning Muslim cultural merit. Most respondents feel that the perceptions in the political debates are based on presumptions rather than knowledge of the culture and values of the 'other'; that the debates are propagated to influence public opinion. In concurrence, this response indicates that the bar for Muslim patriotism has been raised high. Comments in an editorial letter in which a writer relays the current 'credibility'

⁹⁹ Prior to the 2001 Australian federal elections, two occurrences now popularly known as the 'Tampa' and the 'children overboard' incidents (detailed in New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Report, 2005) put asylum seekers mostly from Muslim countries into the Australian public eye.

enjoyed by Muslims in the public mind reflect the bias. While dissent with the government's stance does not deter others in giving voice to their outlook, a desensitizing adroitly turns Muslim disagreement with the official policy as implicitly unpatriotic and suspect of extremist attitudes. Such desensitizing appears in most feminist readings of the 'war on terror' (see Chisti, 2002; Pettman, 2004; Hussein, 2005). Even though many lives have been lost in Iraq and Afghanistan¹⁰⁰, the rhetoric of a military solution dismisses these as a 'rational' response in national security terms to dismiss dissent.

...people are always putting us under the magnifying glass ... you have to watch what you are saying. It was yesterday in one of the editorials - what he said was, he has gone to Egypt two times, he has gone to Israel, ...like he has travelled a lot and 'I can say whatever I want. I have blue eyes and I am blond, but you cannot because if you do then you are an extremist!'
- Eesha

The confounding aspect of the debates is the ambiguity about values. Although the women make out a rejection of Muslim values, they are unable to distinguish Australian values as a distinct set very different from Muslim values. In trying to distinguish between recreational, cultural and core values there is a sense of vagueness and wonder at what Muslim values are incommensurate with Australian culture and which ones do not conflict.

There are some values like being very friendly or very laid back and ...is that considered a value? So that's probably a nice value or doing activities so that you are really looking fit. We have that image of Australian - strong; these people doing surfing and all that. Is that a value (?) - I like that value! I like my children to have that value - they go out and do activities and are fit and healthy. I am still searching, I cannot define Australian values.
- Norma

When that whole thing about Muslims should be taught Australian values and all that came up, my response was what values are you talking about because the values I believe in are - looking after your neighbour, treating others the same way as you want to be treated, the

¹⁰⁰ While documented casualties of coalition troops are available, there are few public estimates of or recorded civilian, as well as military casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. One website gives the following figures since 2001:

Total killed in Afghanistan - 20,119.

Total injured in Afghanistan - 53,435

Total killed in Iraq - 733,280.

Total injured in Iraq - 1,398,087.

These figures include coalition casualties. The source is Unknown News. Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. Available at <http://www.unknownnews.net/casualties.html>. Accessed January 15, 2010

importance of the family and having good values means obeying the law. These are the values I have... The values that lie at the core of all cultures you would be able to call national values, but something that is entirely a part of one culture you would not be able to make those national values.

- Rahila

Given the context of topical debates, the respondents share feelings and perceptions of cultural exclusions. The accounts of the women indicate ambivalence over belonging to Australia. While there is an acceptance and accommodation of their differences on a personal level, most find that on a societal level there is relative social exclusion because of the visible differences that signify the women as Muslims. Episodes and experiences of discriminatory behaviours as well as the vulnerabilities of wearing the veil have been examined previously. On the whole the perception is that many people are open and kind, but the government's stance affects public opinion.

I do feel included in Australian society, but I guess in a sense that a majority of people I come into contact with are very understanding. For my teaching practicals I taught at ... I told them that I would need ten minutes to pray, they were very accommodating.

- Rahila

I do have those times when I go out and I feel very strong. You can say what you want, I really don't care. There are days when I feel very vulnerable, when I go out and if somebody does tease me or laugh at me or says something, it hurts. So while I am painting the picture of how I feel in society as being accepted, it is still very much a struggle and I don't want to take away that it is a struggle to be here. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people out there who are unaccepting of us and I don't think the government helps towards that. For most part, it is a very open and wonderful society, very fortunate to be here. At least there is hope I feel there is hope in the society.

- Attiya

The responses also put forth some sound resolves in overcoming exclusions. In part these have been covered previously in Chapter 7 in how the women traverse the hostilities in the aftermath of 9/11. Here Maryam talks about a strengthened community through the new Rudd government's social inclusion initiative. While systemic support from the government is necessary for social inclusion, it should be more engaging of the community's cultural specifics. The government's social inclusion agenda is a recent addition to government

initiatives in overcoming economic and social disadvantages of groups of Australians. The objective of the initiative is a stronger and fairer Australian through opportunities in employment, accessibility to government services, fostering community ties and participation in the democratic process. Although these are essential initiatives in empowering communities to obtain these services while retaining cultural distinctness, it is also important to identify the particular needs of the communities with regard to these.

Social inclusion is very important ... social inclusion also means looking at the main identity of the particular communities, empowering them, supporting them so they feel comfortable to reach out to obtain mainstream support services... We go there, we've got to have a balance of both, we interact with them and then we want a bit of our own identity. We've got to go back to a sustainable community - a community that has capacity. The government needs to see what each community identifies, see what each community needs help maintain that and that maybe by building their capacity looking at the leaders of that community enhance that capacity to access the mainstream services. It will come more naturally to become a part of the mainstream...
- Maryam

A growing number of Muslim women's organizations are involved in advocacy and activism on behalf of Muslim women to address gender issues. Yasmeen (2007) sees a shift on the part of Muslim organisations networking engaging and organising since 9/11 to participate in the diversity of the society with a special emphasis on civic and political engagement. There are also various agencies, community organisations, Muslim schools, ethnic and religious groups that are accessing government assistance to address a range of fields in culturally suitable ways. These have been facilitated by government's initiatives following discussions with the Muslim communities.

Reflected in the responses above, multiculturalism is valuable in terms of harmonious co-existence in a plural society however, trepidation towards current policy trends emerges strongly as a scapegoating of Muslims. As much as the official rhetoric allows for diversities, the responses show apprehension over changes to current policies motivated by engaging with the 'Muslim problem'. In the rhetoric, this features mostly as a gender issue. On the other hand the government's initiatives in engaging with the community to help Muslims integrate better have been taken up by many to overcome the cultural divide.

9.2 National identity and multiculturalism in Kenya

Given the historical presence of different racial and tribal groups within its borders, the national identity of Kenya is more complex than Western settler nations. Kenya's national identity has been redefined and refined along its trajectory as a nation state. With its British colonial legacy, modernization and now globalization, the political and economic rights of Kenyans have accordingly been contested along racial as well as tribal ethnic lines influenced by these. The colonial administration created a hierarchy in which the Europeans as the ruling class were the landed and political aristocracy, the Asians a reservoir of professionals and commercial personnel and the Africans the labour force in the lower occupational strata (Mazrui, 1976, p 275). Later, the anti-colonialist discourses mobilized Africanization that pushed for political representation as well as economic rights of Africans that were realized in the post-independence political and economic transformations. After independence in 1963, the major sectors such as administration, services and agriculture (through resettlement schemes) had an impressive presence of Africans. Commerce, however, strongly reined in by the Asian business class remained elusive. To remedy this, the government introduced exclusions of non-indigenous citizens to induce a balance of racial representation in the private enterprise sector¹⁰¹. The economic and social significance of this was the creation of a hierarchy in which an African bourgeoisie class, mostly associated with the single party politics of government bureaucracy emerged and acquired access to private capital and the lucrative sectors of the economy (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995, Bakari, 2002). For most of its post-colonial history, the country has been ruled by a single party that privileged the majority Kikuyu tribe. The turning tide towards a multi-party state came with mounting pressure from opponents from within, as well as an external pressure from donor countries and agencies and international organizations resulting in a repeal of the constitution. The country went to the polls in a multi-party election for the first time in 1992. It was in this climate that the Islamic Party of Kenya was established by Muslim activists, bringing Muslim grievances to the fore.

¹⁰¹ Different approaches were taken by Kenya's neighbouring countries that also received independence in the 1960s and embarked on Africanization of their major sectors. Influenced by the socialist leanings of Nyerere, Tanzania pursued socialist policies while Uganda under Idi Amin expelled Asians from the country in 1972.

As a minority, Muslim complaints in Kenya can be traced to the early Christian-Muslims relations and what has been perceived as de-Islamization attempts by the colonialists with the help of Christian missionaries. During colonial rule, the educational systems that provided the later local labour force for the administrative structures were controlled by the white missionaries who spread Christianity, not only through proselytizing, but also through education in mission schools. The early educational establishments aimed at spreading Christianity later developed as means of producing skilled labour for a colonial workforce. The decolonized structures have effectively inherited an institutional infrastructure that favours Christian culture. Protests put forth by Muslim activists include the historical slighting of Muslim contributions rooted in Christian colonial rule and paltry representation in the government and public institutions. More recent grievances include the discrimination, safety and security of the Muslims of the North Eastern province, land ownership, neglect of Muslim majority regions like the Coastal province in economic infrastructure and development (Bakari and Saad, 1995; Oded, 2000, pp 135-147; Hashim, 2005; Moller, 2006).

9.2.1 Multiculturalism and inclusion: Perceptions of Australian Muslim women

Kenya's post-independence development has been defined largely in terms of economic growth and progress with a preoccupation with modernization modelled on the West (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995). There is evidence that Muslim reticence to a Western style development has been detrimental to their economic progress, but data also supports the socio-economic and political marginalisation of Muslims in the country. Whereas Christians inherited the traits of Western culture through privileges in the early educational system, Muslims have been wary about the erosion of moral values. In the limited scholarship on the social effects of modernization in Kenya, Caplan and Topan's study (2004) gives good insight into how modernities have been negotiated in the largely Muslim inhabited coast of East Africa. According to them, modernity is not translated into tangible forms of development that improve standards of living; on the contrary the global cultural take-over threatens traditional values like respect, honesty, trustworthiness, ethics, and honour in a scramble for resources. Similarly, the paradox of development is highlighted in the women's responses. While there is an encroachment of popular culture in films, TV serials and other

cultural totems of global modernization that threaten the boundaries of traditional practices, there are inadequate investments in productive benefits of development.

Most share the view that Muslim contributions are not well recognized by the political bureaucracy and development infrastructure and investment within Muslim majority regions is lacking. Muslim grievances following the 9/11 anti-terrorism measures have been mentioned earlier in the study, these exacerbate the existing structural imbalances that the region faces. The major inadequacies in the provision of healthcare, education and housing are underpinned by a political system that plays on ethnic and tribal loyalties in the region. The little data available on poverty indicates a quarter of households living under the poverty line and women and children are particularly disadvantaged in Mombasa (Rakodi et al, 2000).

... We contribute a lot. In a country where although as Muslims we are not the majority we are a very good number of us in Kenya. So we contribute to the economy..., Muslim women do business in different parts of the country. As we contribute we also require the government to recognize us, but it is not, it is not to our expectations.
-Saada

The dual sources of ethnicity and religion as a source of political favouritism stand out in the stories. The bureaucratic control from the central government is highlighted in Tayyibah's extensive account that also relates the ethnic nepotism built up over the years of tribal affiliated politics in the country. Most heads of departments in the public institutions are from outside the coastal region. In this, Tayyibah finds a catch twenty-two where better opportunities have secured better openings for economic upward mobility for many Christians. Their credentials thus provide for better job prospects. Additionally with the public institutions centralised, all decision-making goes through bureaucratic processes that can overrule decisions made at the local levels.

When it comes to posts, positions, power, I feel in Kenya we need to do something. Nepotism is really, really high... look at the Ministry of Finance from top to bottom, it is actually one tribe and they are very educated. So even if you look at the credentials or the merit, they do deserve it, so you cannot say much, ... that brings animosity because others do not get a chance to go forward and get those posts... I was the head of the hospital and it was the first time a Muslim woman was there, but on the way I had a lot of difficulties... we

had two young doctors who were in the surgical department - interns, medical officers, they were both Muslims. The surgical team said these are potential surgeons, let's put them in a special program that we do with the Tanzania and Uganda government...The next thing I know I get a letter from Nairobi asking me why I took the two Muslim doctors to join in this big program without their consent.
-Tayyibah

Tayyibah also thinks that there is a lack of capacity in obtaining the available development funds. Muslims need to be more empowered and proactive in looking at ways to resource their community's development by competing for the funds that the government avails for various programs.

We have youth funds, we have women funds - a lot of money that the government has put out, but we don't find Muslims going for it. You find all the money is going to other people and mainly certain tribes, but definitely first target Christians. I think sometimes it is laxity on our side because you need to be aggressive to be proactive.
- Tayyibah

The stories of the women themselves highlight different levels of proactivity in concerns over community development. Observed in earlier chapters, as empowered individuals many take a hands-on approach in using their professional skills and capacities to benefit the community. Their approaches consider addressing the significant component of culture. Here the two responses demonstrate the dire need for technical and professional interventions attempts to overcome the consequences of lack of basic developmental necessities in the region. Amriya works for a donor agency, while Zohra is a qualified AIDS awareness campaigner. As these stories demonstrate, some resolves lie in understanding and addressing the mixture of poverty, lack of awareness and education, as well as the cultural barriers that feed a cycle of underprivilege, through a deeper understanding of cultural contexts. Marginalization feeds a loop of disadvantages and has significant gender consequences. Studies like Rakodi et al (2000) reveal the consequences of the poor economic and social conditions in the region that have significant impact on women. They explain female economic vulnerabilities as a consequence of poor access to education, limited productive assets, limited access to credit and a lack of awareness of basic rights.

What we do is we work for the community. Poverty in Kenya as you know is very high and normally people in the interior, like people in Kwale and Kilifi¹⁰² most of them when we do

¹⁰² Districts in the coastal region

the surveys, they don't know about the hospitals. They sometimes die in the villages through either diarrhoea or most of the women don't go to the hospital to deliver. They deliver at home, which is very risky. So what we do is we empower them - that look there are surgeries where you can go and get treated.... We are more doing of capacity building rather than giving direct service to them – *alhamdulillah*, we have succeeded in doing that with a number of projects.

- Amriya

Working as a community health worker is not taken easily in the Muslim community because they do not want to disclose. They don't want to talk about it and you will be told it's a curse or you will be told it's a consequence of adultery. Most don't have an idea how you can contract HIV, there are so many reasons. ... Some of us are already skilled to train trainers, but we cannot train because we don't have facilities ... and you can't keep somebody from morning till evening without paying themLike myself and others we go to schools and educate about HIV/AIDS. I go to women's groups, I can only do so much...

- Zohra

Despite the racial, ethnic and religious tensions, the responses are positive about coexistence in the general Kenyan community. Much of the accord is credited to the social capital developed through close informal relations with others and social interactions in society. These are also seen as part of maintaining traditional values that are increasingly challenged in the socio-economic disparities created through modern living. The women strongly emphasize reciprocal neighbourly ties as general cordiality as well as a means of mutual help. The endorsement of the freedom of worship by the government and the acceptance in the general public is also noted.

...you should always care the neighbour... never quarrel with the neighbour because a *hadith* from the Prophet says to be gracious to your neighbour...When you don't see a neighbour for a day, ask about him...

- Aamenah

...we have a lot of freedom of practising our religion *alhamdulillah*. Unlike other places in the world here we are free to do anything concerning Islam. We have the freedom of worship.

- Khairun

...Now with economic times people have different pressures from everywhere. I feel sometimes we don't know each other.

- Muneera

The narratives above disclose a diffusion of the historical racial stratification replaced by a socio-economic divide. The disproportionate level of infrastructure investment in the region where the majority population is Muslims, affects the progress of the Muslim community. It was not until around May 2007 that the first university campus opened in the town of Mombasa. There is evidence of attempts to avert the upward mobility of Muslims both at an institutional as well as infrastructural level. The political nepotism visible in these stories connotes a Christian/Muslim divide that has been exacerbated by the recent anti-terror measures in the government's compliance with the US. Examining the historical and current situations, analysts find that a key issue in preventing the religious divide is addressing Muslim grievances and the problems of underdevelopment in the Muslim-populated regions (Mazrui, 2004; Moller, 2006).

All of the women emphasize a strong feeling of acceptance, belonging and inclusion in the society in general. While there is concern over progress, there are also apprehensions over the deterioration of societal values as people become caught up in modern, material lives.

This following section compares the multicultural experiences of the two groups.

9.3 Comparing multicultural experiences

Both groups disclose elements of embracing as well as exclusionary perceptions and experiences grounded in the national policy directions in the respective countries. In the case of the Australian group, the respondents appreciate the official multicultural policy as bringing together various ethnic and cultural groups together in a cohesive manner by allowing cultural freedom. This is immensely important in drawing collectively the mix of indigenous, immigrant and Anglo Australians that have historically been stratified. Many however, feel the threat of abandonment of multicultural ideals in the current discussions over Muslims. Bitterness over the blanket impressions of adversarial traits and values attributed to Muslims is expressed as the women question the intent, timing and objectives of values debates. The contemporary contestations over Muslim values are not confined to Australia. As discussed in Chapter 8, similar issues have been raised including that of prohibiting the veil in Europe. The values debate rests on the issue of the fundamental

question of should the West support ‘universalist’ cultural monism based on values of liberalism, freedom of expression or does it embrace a cultural relativism to accommodate minority cultural values that sometimes conflict with the majority’s. Unlike in Europe no factual issues are raised in Australia, nor has there been an attempt to genuinely dialogue with Muslims as to what values are incompatible. In analyzing social challenges in Europe, there are suggestions over exchange of ideas based on commonalities between Islam and those wanting to see a change from the materialism of capitalism development (Prizel, 2008, p 34)¹⁰³. While the debates remain ambiguous, they inform policy that on the one hand fuels a moral fear, on the other the apprehension of ‘living mode’ (UNDP, 2004) exclusion. Such exclusions occur when the state or social customs disparage or restrain a group’s culture, including religion. Required are policies that give some form of public recognition, accommodation or support to a group’s culture, and mostly an understanding of what the ‘other’s’ cultural values are. On a positive note there are increasing signs of attempts by the government to engage with the Muslim community. The community’s own proactive measures are demonstrated in many ways by the respondents themselves in traversing the cultural divide exacerbated in the current climate.

In the Kenyan situation, the analysis finds a neo-stratification tracing the racial divides of the colonial times now based on socio-economic mobilities and class structures created in a capitalist paradigm. As privileged communities in the colonial era, some groups are able to maintain material privileges that surface as prejudicial behaviour. While there is no overt discrimination against Muslims, a latent vein is wound up in the tribal politics of the nation as the ruling elite use nepotism in the country’s development agenda. A major drawback to Muslim progress in general is revealed in the lack of development initiatives as well as an understated discrimination through denial of opportunities for social mobility. While on the broader social level, the respondents all assert a strong sense of acceptance and belonging to the society, there are obvious signs of economic exclusion. Economic exclusion of Muslims

¹⁰³ Prizel (2008, p34) quotes from an interview by Oskar Lafontaine, the former chairman of the German Social Democrats in *Neues Deutschland*: ‘Islam depends on community, which places it in opposition to extreme individualism, which threatens to fail in the West. The second similarity is that the devout Muslim is required to share his wealth with others. The leftist also wants to see the strong help the weak. Finally the prohibition of interest still plays a role in Islam, much as it did in Christianity. At a time when entire economies are plunging into crisis because of their expectations on returns on investment have become totally absurd, there is a basis for dialogue...’

in the country is also observed in earlier chapters and resonates with ‘participation exclusion’ (UNDP, 2004, p 14). Such exclusions include privileging some groups over others in membership in the society. The significance of these in the topical issues around the Muslim and the West discourses is the insensitivity shown by the government in its counterterrorism efforts. These exacerbate feelings and perceptions of marginalization.

Many respondents in the both groups are proactive in engaging with the broader community in utilising their capabilities to help overcome the challenges the communities face in general. Drawing on these, Section 9.5 drafts a framework for inclusive participation in gender issues. Although the structure is developed using the gender-specific experiences of the respondents, it is pertinent in application for minority inclusion in general.

9.4 Key findings

9.4.1 Key findings for the Australian group

- Following policy moves in the wake of ‘war on terror’ and other national incidents there are fears over the policy direction of multiculturalism
- There is also trepidation over a trend of scapegoating Muslims within current values debates
- An ambivalence over belonging and inclusiveness registers through perceptions of social stigmatization
- Many respondents are proactive in efforts to help Muslim integration

9.4.2 Key findings for the Kenyan group

- Legacies of colonial stratification are discernible in privileging of some ethnic groups over others including Muslims
- While culture is not a contentious issue, in general the rate of development has been slower in Muslim majority areas. Many respondents are concerned and involved in the community’s development
- As the progression into modernity continues, there are fears over the erosion of values

- The respondents have very strong feelings about belonging to the county.

9.5 Framework for inclusive participation in gender issues

The following structure is based on the findings of the study; particularly the ways in which the women demonstrate engaging with contemporary issues within the respective societies. In building bridges across the society many Muslim Australian women have been proactive in various ways and in turn been positively received by the mainstream groups. Similarly, the Kenyan example displays some innovative ways of drawing on personal resources in which the women are engaged in promoting developmental objectives to benefit the community. Incorporating the findings of the study into the theoretical framework of gender development, this section draws up a model for participatory inclusion in multicultural societies. Even though the model extrapolates from the study, it is applicable to other cultural minorities' inclusion in multicultural societies.

It rests on the premise that the democratic state is responsible for the rights of all citizens and in managing internal diversity invests in overcoming cultural exclusions of its minorities. Cultural exclusions as explained before are exclusions through identities that are different or distinctly not those of the majority culture. In the context of this thesis, they are religious identities of Muslims in two different societies who face exclusions based on these identities. How these manifest are dissimilar in the disparate contexts. Exclusions as seen within this work have negative consequences on freedoms of cultural expression, quality of life, as well as contributions to society. Using UNDP's (2004) terminology, the two types of exclusions identified in the study's analyses are 'living mode exclusion' and 'participation exclusion' (UNDP 2004). As explained before, 'living mode exclusion' pertains to a reluctance to value the cultural worth of the 'other' and 'participation exclusion' to denying groups the socio-economic privileges that dominant groups enjoy. In the Australian example this is highlighted in the study through a disinclination to recognise the cultural worth of Muslims and in the Kenyan case through a socio-economic divide. Both involve respecting diversity and redressing

divides to foster acceptance within the wider society, to overcome existing socio-economic divides, as well as to become self-sustaining in contributing productively and positively to the overall society. On the part of the minority communities redressing the exclusions calls for strong participation in the processes of integrating within the wider society to enjoy the benefits of citizenship.

As much as individuals and collectives of communities are beneficiaries of change, they are also the agents of change. The changes in the lives of the respondents relate to enhanced capabilities. Development literature highlights four elements of capabilities: to lead a long healthy life; to be more knowledgeable, to have access to resources for a decent life and to participate in the community (UNDP, 2004). Capabilities enable people to acquire tangible and intangible assets like education, health and safety that contribute to larger goals. Both assets and capabilities can be mobilised to overcome exclusions. The capabilities of individuals or collectives can help expand those of others through using these (capabilities). Observed in this work as educated and empowered, women some respondents are using their assets and capabilities in endeavours to make a change at the grassroots level through active participation and engagement in spheres of their expertise. As local actors they not only draw on their education and expertise (human capital), wider networks both within their own communities and the mainstream (social capital), but also on their knowledge of cultural norms and particulars (cultural capital) in making a difference. These elements can be utilised within a synergistic approach to build up inclusion.

As the term itself suggests a synergistic approach is one that involves ‘the working together of two or more people, organizations, or things, especially when the result is greater than the sum of their individual effects or capabilities’¹⁰⁴. Here the synergistic approach involves the state, cultural communities themselves and the overall structure of the multicultural society. It fits within the regulatory framework and the multicultural values of the society. It relates to elements of systemic support on the part of the government, drawing on the existing skills and capabilities of local actors within the

¹⁰⁴ Microsoft Word thesaurus.

communities themselves. The aim is to achieve strategic interests of the society through meeting the practical interests of the community. Distinguishing between the two – strategic and practical interests Alsop (1993) explains that strategic interests are those that pertain to society at a national level. With regard to gender equality in Australia, for example, issues similar to the experiences of the respondents surface in the Human Rights Equal Opportunities Commission report (2008), on ‘what matters to Australian men and women’ regarding gender equality. The report identifies three key areas that need addressing: women’s economic independence, balancing work and family across the life cycle and freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence. In the Kenyan example, the issues are around the implementation of basic goals outlined within the Millennium Development Goals like eradicating poverty, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS. These are strategic objectives the state sets as its social development programme. Corresponding to them are the practical interests that are a response to needs identified within social contexts. Though similar in nature to others in the society, they are experienced in a context-specific or culture specific manner. For example, education is a vital goal, but the type of culturally acceptable institution in which it is provided such as religious schools that cater for spiritual needs may also be important to parents. Matching practical interests with the broader interests of the state requires a dialoguing that fits in and balances the cultural norms of minority groups within the regulatory frameworks set by the state such as legislation on school attendance, health regulations like immunisation or child protection and family violence laws. Working together with the state, communities can bring about a difference in progress towards such goals.

Below is a brief on the roles of the state, the Muslim communities themselves and the wider mainstream society, in input and outcomes of the synergistic approach. This is followed by a table and the structure of a model of the approach.

The state:

The state provides bureaucratic support, resources and helps to build up the capacities of community leaders, professionals and experts to act as intermediaries in identifying

practical interests on the one hand and facilitating the objectives of addressing and achieving its strategic interests on the other. This involves capacity building of community leaders (religious and other), professionals and various experts to create awareness of services - health, education, income-generation etc. and dissemination of information on legal rights and frameworks. It also entails training of other personnel working with community groups to create cultural and diversity awareness for example; educators, health professionals, the police etc.

Resources such as funding, technical expertise and investments are crucial for the process of capacity-building. Some of the areas that could be of benefit are:

- Investments in research and data collection to identify issues/ areas for capacity building
- Investments in multicultural education/cultural services/ arts/ media to create awareness and appreciation of multicultural settings
- Technical expertise to enhance capacity building
- Investment in infrastructure in marginalised regions to also enhance capacity-building.

Most vital however, is the bureaucratic support (legislation or other) that endorses diversity through material as well as social recognition. This can be public support and acknowledgment of cultural particulars such as religious festivals, providing safety and security through legal and other protection, inclusion through appropriate affirmative action and bureaucratic support for particular private and public services such as integrated curriculum schools, culturally appropriate finance and recreational facilities.

The minority community and gender representation:

The term community used here is subjective. There are considerable diversities within minority communities such as the Muslim communities in both Australia and Kenya. While representation needs consideration of these internal diversities, the religious cultural, professional and social assets and capabilities of individuals collectively contribute to the process as intermediaries through giving voice to collective interests.

Working at the grassroots levels individuals and collectives within minority communities are able to observe problems at the ground level and provide valuable context-specific input for required changes.

However, as observed within this work there is a gender bias in Muslim collective leadership that hampers the addressing of key issues. Traditionally men, especially religious leaders within Muslim communities have been leaders and key spokespersons and this tendency rules out the potentials of utilising specialist skills that women may have. At a time when specialisation is the normative within the modern economy, individual and group skills are assets beneficial to communities irrespective of gender and attitudinal changes are needed to address the bias. The gender bias can also be addressed with affirmative action by the state where appropriate. However, affirmative action may be counter-productive if it is tokenistic and ineffective in producing valuable results. Enhanced capacity-building through skills in leadership may be constructive in balancing the gender bias through information and knowledge of legal as well as cultural (religious) frameworks.

Mainstream community:

There are common values within societies in some instances explicitly defined, in others implicit to the social cohesion and harmony within. In this study these emerge as impositions suggesting divides within cultures in the Australian context and the fears of erosion of tradition in the Kenyan context. Common values have the potential to create unity within societies and are cherished through inclusiveness. On the other hand, while there is much to appreciate in traditional values, taking extreme positions in preserving tradition can be detrimental to development and consequently to the quality of life of people.

There is also existing social capital within the mainstream through informal and formal networks and ties such as community organizations, religious organizations, volunteering efforts, schools, universities, community events, arts and culture venues that have the capacities to bring diversities together through various interests and work

interactions. These are forums that can enhance awareness of the similarities despite differences of various groups. At some junctures they may need active enhancing, at others their organic nature itself is facilitative of positive exchanges. For example, there is conscious effort put into community events by the state to promote harmony in Australia, while in Kenya the women talk about mutual neighbourly relations that benefit people.

The **potential outcomes** are:

- effective addressing of strategic issues such as addressing female literacy, gender violence, child protection and more,
- more inclusive societies. Inclusive societies have better prospects of thriving through trust and respect. This also helps in strengthening the civil society,
- increased productivity - where people have a sense of appreciation of their identity and differences there is likely to be more productivity .
- improved access to services leads to increased participation in civic activities,
- freedom of expression of cultural choices increases the choices of people to live the way they want to.
- socio-economic equity. One of the state's obligations towards its citizens is socio-economic equity. This not only enhances the productive capacity of the nation, but also stems social discord through addressing unmet needs.

The above elements are outlined in Table 8 and presented as a structure in Figure 5.

Table 8: Elements of framework for inclusive participation

| Systemic | |
|--|---|
| Capacity building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of community leaders, professionals, various experts to create awareness of services – health, education, income-generation etc or dissemination of information on legal rights and frameworks • Of personnel working with community groups to create cultural and diversity awareness – educators, health professionals etc. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments in research and data collection to identify issues/ areas for capacity building • Investments in multicultural education/cultural services/ arts/ media to create awareness and appreciation of multicultural settings • Technical expertise to enhance capacity building • Investment in infrastructure in marginalised regions |
| Bureaucratic support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of diversity through public support and acknowledgment of cultural particulars such as religious festivals • Provide safety and security through legal and other protection • Inclusion through appropriate affirmative action • Bureaucratic support for particular services such as culturally appropriate finance |
| Community | |
| Individuals | Assets and capabilities – professional, economic, social, political and cultural |
| Collectives | |
| Potential outcomes | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective addressing of institutional strategic issues, • More inclusive societies, socio-economic equity, • Improved access to services, • Strengthening the civil society, • Increased participation in civic activities, • Freedom of expression of cultural choices, • Increased productivity. | |

Figure 5: Inclusive participation framework

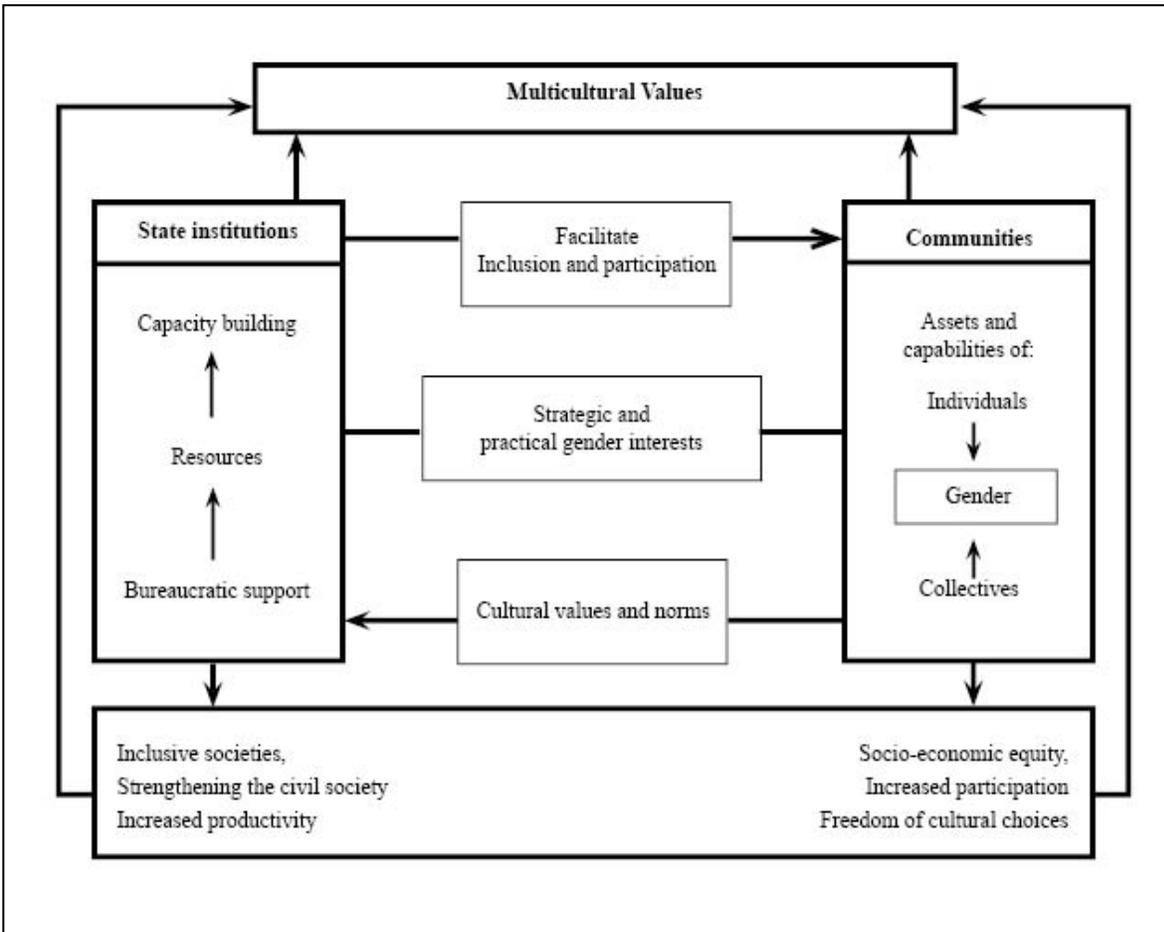


Figure 5 above lays out the implementation of the framework that meets strategic and practical gender interests. State institutions provide the bureaucratic support, resources and potential for capacity building explained above and outlined in Table 8. This helps facilitate inclusion and participation of minority cultural communities. Minority communities on their part avail assets and capabilities of individuals and collectives. The underrepresentation of gender requires active addressing in commitments to having experiences related and ‘voices’ heard. Collectively, community voices convey and contribute the cultural realities and experiences as well as how to engage effectively with the minority to achieve the objectives set out. The outcomes are mutually beneficial in that community needs are met in considering cultural specifics and the states objectives in specific issues and the ultimate

objective is a more cohesive society. As mentioned earlier, this structure is not just confined to gender specific issues and is applicable generally in the inclusion of minority situations.

The following chapter concludes this study. It synthesises the findings of the primary research and highlights the major issues that have come forth. Based on these it puts forth proposals for addressing gender issues allowing for diversity and cultural expression.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another' (the Qur'an 49:13)

A basic premise in this thesis is that the gender focus in the Islam and West conflict is an aspect of broader comprehensions that involve a reluctance or inability to understand and engage with the values, customs and worldview of a dissimilar religious culture. In construing frames of polemics between liberal and religious ideology, a cultural determinism obstructs the critical and contextualized exploration of Islamic gendered practices to address the relation between belief, social identity and paradigm change. At the core of the debate is gender inequality manifested in the outer identities of Muslim women's dresscode, especially the veil and presumptions of patriarchal repressions. The values of 'the other' are erased under the emphasis on liberal progress. Propped by liberal feminist ideology, the focus portrays itself beyond reproach by leaving other salient frames such as socio-economic, historical, geo-political power relations and global transformatory influences out of the picture. The impasse involves the polarities of liberal, modern values versus cultural expression and targeting the practices that go with them. The divide touches not only individual lives, but also risks discordance in societies through enforcing an 'us and them' rift. More deleterious is the fact that this causes dissimilar perceptions of issues that need to be resolved and more importantly the ways in which they can be worked out to inform measures for sustained coexistence.

While we must be aware of not romanticizing culture or condemning mores that are defective, unjust and potentially harmful, we must be careful in giving perspective to practices that are uncommon to ours. Culture itself is a multifaceted and a mutating concept that defies a singular definition. To a large extent its dynamism and hybridization are revealed in this study as contacts intensify in the global interconnectedness. However, it influences how we make sense of things around us, what values we shape our lives with and how we transmit goals we aspire to, to our future generations. Cultural freedom allows people to live the lives they value without being excluded from other choices important to

them and is extremely significant to the processes of how we develop especially at a time when we question how we wish to develop sustainably. If ultimately the goal of development is enhancing and promoting the well-being of people through enhancing choices that they have, then having the choices to attain this through cultural expression is in its essence meaningful.

This chapter brings together the discussions and the key findings of the study to make a case for the value of diversity, cultural expression and a sustained representation of Muslim women within gender development issues. It builds up on the perspectives offered in the preceding chapters to suggest proposals to be considered in policy-making, as well as areas of investigation to fill the lacunae that still exist. Three circles of influence – the Muslim communities themselves, national policy-makers and international policy-makers are considered. The Muslim communities because the normative of Muslim gender and gender relations are within the framework of Islam; national policy-makers - as the communities are situated within the jurisdiction of the state, the state has a duty to create the conditions for the exercise of rights to access and participate in cultural life; and international institutions that have significant consensus power to make a difference through interventions. Collectively there are goals such as the MDGs, initiated through institutions like the UN that nation-states are committed to; these stand better chances in achievement if there is grassroots engagement. Given the lack of research within these areas, the proposals have wider implications in opening up areas of enquiry. The discussion here follows the structure of the thesis as it reflects on and synthesizes the findings of the thematic chapters to put forth its suggestions.

The profiles in Chapter 3 capture some of the intra-community diversities of both groups. Even though, small sample groups of twenty women, their ethnicities signify considerable multiplicity. The Australian women represent nine different countries of origin and birthplaces and while not as varied, the Kenyan respondents also present a mix of race-ethnicity. Multiple identities, a reality of the globalized environment are presented in here. The demographics correspond with the global propagation of modernization where the women have extended choices through enhanced capacities and are participating in the economic and social public spheres much like other modern women. While a key

component of their identity is Islamic culture, economic processes, spatial histories, migration and market experiences all inform and shape the individual identities. Engaging in the modern order, the confluence of gender, the modern economic paradigm and culture are revealed in how the respondents perceive the shifting boundaries of gender roles and household relations.

With the paradigm change of modernization, two particular influences are discernible - one pertaining to socio-economic changes and the other to cultural remapping. Although, the contexts are dissimilar between the two groups, the effects of the market paradigm are apparent at the household level; as the cost of living goes up, women are expected to supplement household incomes. The macro-inflationary trends are more visible in the Kenyan context, where liberalization has forced the privatization of basic development services and falling real incomes drive the marketization of women's labour. The dynamics within the household are susceptible to change as economic pressures of a modern lifestyle impel women to join the workplace. While not the sole providers, men remain household heads. Common concerns in the Muslim household relate to the family as a location for vital cultural, moral and ethical values, therefore householding remains an important value ideal that many aspire to regardless of the issues confronting them. Though there is no requirement for Muslim women to provide financially for the family, in some cases they are the breadwinners and sometimes the sole breadwinners. While the older generation conform to religious edicts and negotiate this within their functional roles, liberal influences show up in the responses of the younger women, mostly in Australia who raise household leadership issues.

This opens up the subject over the incongruity between an ideal and a practical need given the economic imperatives of the times that Muslims need to address. What are the broader implications of this balancing? The Islamic framework as the basic foundation for the family set-up still holds and women are the primary carers of children. At the same time, given the changing economic patterns, women play an active role in family provision. These herald questions related to the economic roles of women, as well as roles in relaying or inculcating values important to Muslim families. What are the support systems that best assure these?

Other opportunities and challenges to female empowerment are contexted in the social and material culture of interrelated spheres - culture of the household, the community and the national realms. In different ways these create as well as hinder women's prospects for advancement. At the household level there is intermittent change related to embracing and desisting modern influences. On the one hand, education and workplace participation are viewed as economic essentials of the times, on the other; they are also seen as a threat to the traditional household organization. As the national market culture induces changes at the household level there is referral to the household cultural patterns in the responses to gender roles and relations. Simultaneously, material and cultural interests are entwined and subject to the socio-economic standing of the individual household and outlooks, attitudes towards education and female workplace participation are accepting, desisting or revising.

Both household and systemic support networks are crucial elements in sustaining empowerment in general and particularly in women's participation in the workplace. The Kenyan narratives identify a culture of kinship support as well as paid maid services as helping working women continue workplace involvement. In the Australian context this is through a culture of childcare facilities. The unavailability of close kin means a reliance on outsourced help in child-care to balance work with parental responsibilities. The women also reveal the lack of attitudinal changes towards housework as a distinct challenge. In most households it is still the female domain of family activities. Related to individual households, support networks or systems play a role in sustaining workplace engagement through help in balancing work and home duties. However, as with women in all societies generally, the market paradigm itself is burdening with the added roles of income-providers and stretches abilities to balance home and provision responsibilities.

Another issue raised in the responses pertains to status attached to working. As much as empowerment raises the quality of life of women in terms of financial and economic independence, do financial and economic independence really give women the choices that are the underpinning principles behind development or underrate the choices that they make in retaining religious values? Considering that outsourcing childcare which is the primary role of the female in households adds value within national income figures, the same and

possibly more valuable service that women provide as mothers is yet to be esteemed as such. As a fiscal issue, the question of the economic value of women's work in the home remains unresolved.

A recurring theme for personal and societal development is secular and Islamic education of women. Both from a development, as well as a religious viewpoint, individuals, communities and societies profit from the education of women. From a development perspective, it is an empowerment strategy that seeks to improve individual women's lives by enhancing their capabilities to earn income and contribute to the household. Other constituent relationships also benefit from the education of women. Female education increases the likelihood of better health and nutrition of children as well as their education. Additionally educated women are better informed about their legal rights and better placed to participate in decision-making processes at the societal and national levels. Similarly having an Islamic education enables women to know their rights within Islam. In their role as mothers they inculcate Islamic values that are important to sustain Muslim families. While this is not a problem at least at the basic levels of education in a developing nation like Australia, gender gaps in literacy in developing nations like Kenya still exist. A challenge to Muslim communities is how to promote the value of and enhance the provision of both to profit communities in general.

Beyond the household, gender in Islam is brought to the fore in the encounter with revivalist discourses that present a meta-narrative of restoring Islamic values as a living reality in all aspects of Muslim lifestyles. Western understandings of Islamic revivalist activity are largely in terms of fundamentalism disempowerment. In reality there are various different groups that have their own interpretive ideologies whose overall goal is to restore Islamic principles to all facets of Muslim living. Gender roles are re-evaluated through the interaction with globalized transnational discourses. While the aggregate presents a discourse of Islamic ideals that encourages a rethinking of the gendered public-private dichotomy in Islam, the particular ideological stances of groups are idealistic and divisive. Rather than particular groups, it is the social milieu of the respondents in their respective locations that influences how female roles are viewed, reviewed and adopted or adapted.

Overall, the globalized environment offers ways of circumventing local ideological directions in choosing from the repertoire of understandings available through various sources and still remain within the framework of Islam. Islamic sources remain unchanged; however there is the possibility of reinterpretation as well as a reselection for social issues that lead to different approaches. The meta-narrative of Islamic revivalism encourages women to rethink their public roles. Many find that a largely domestic role is irreconcilable with current societal needs. While the principles of female modesty and public-private roles are found in the singularity of Islamic sources, the social roles of women are also persuaded by the complex, varied and particular socio-economic circumstances.

The changes happening in Muslim women's lives are also caught up within the political processes of globalization. The interconnectedness of global spaces impels engagement with the contemporary 'war on terror' discourse. As the pervasive nature of the debates permeates public and private spaces, it is hard for the women to disengage from a cultural prejudice heightened both globally and especially in Western countries, nationally. In the integration of the global, national and local discourses, the role of media stands out as fuelling the antagonism. The dominance and partiality of global Western media is highlighted as a major influence in the cultural divide, at the same time the growth of responses from the Muslim media and Muslims feeds a counter-narrative.

In the integration of global, with geo-political and national issues, Muslim women have been on the receiving end of the cultural divide with alienation through perceived and real prejudice and costs for both individuals and the society at large. The marginalization of Muslims in the anti-terrorism and security measures are experienced in different ways with men, women, children and the old at risk in varying degrees. In Australia, it is the backlash of the 9/11 events and other terrorist activities and the public reactions that communicate a cultural intolerance. In Kenya, existing Muslim-Christians relations are strained by the anti-terror measures. On the one side, these wider sentiments about Muslims in the 'war on terror' cause apprehensions over how national and global policies will affect Muslims, and on the other, create distrust of Muslims within the majority populations. Overall, the discourses of terror create mistrust in the society and risk renting the social fabric through cultural reprobation.

The present global world is interdependent and shared commitments require co-operation that should consider the asymmetries of power relations in discourse spaces. The growing revulsion goaded in current exchanges threatens not only peace, but personal, social and human development. Consequently what are the social responsibilities of those contributing to the discourses as well as national and international bodies that are able to help mitigate the impacts of divisiveness? As well, more investigation and research on the aspects and impacts of the international security measures spurred by the 'war on terror' are required. For example, in social justice terms what recourses are available to individuals implicated or discriminated against within these measures? Muslim responsibilities also arise in mitigating the impacts of current discourses by commitments to diffuse the cultural divide.

The most contentious issue in the contemporary cultural divide is the veil. It is included in the contemporary debates as a sign of subordination as well as defiance to secularity of society. In Australia, the debates have followed the trends in the European countries with a few proposals of banning headscarves in public schools. Historically, the veil has also featured in nationalist, discourses of many Middle Eastern countries in their bid to follow a Western model of modernization, and yet again in the recent counter-approaches that emphasize a Muslim national prototype. Lost between Western/modern and anti-Western/anti-modern are the nuances of veiling practices that are developed within different contexts and cultural meanings. The study finds women wearing the veil for several reasons of which Islamic religious underpinning of a commandment that many wish to follow is a primary objective. There are however, other motivations attached to the practice including rational choices in faith sincerity, personal development, creating a personal space, customary dresscodes, and popular Muslim fashion trends.

With respect to the encounter with the West, the responses reveal that there is little understanding of Muslim veiling practices. Presumptions are connoted in popular images like the Afghan women's forceful veiling under the Taliban and the violence committed against them. While veiling for Muslim women may not an issue, it signifies and rouses conjectures of passivity, incapability, lack of agency, unprogressiveness, extreme and fanatic behaviours. Mitigating the cultural divide requires an understanding and awareness of particular practices like veiling. Rather than comparisons with liberal ideals, veiling has

to be viewed in the context of a religious worldview. On the other side, the veil should not be a score-card in the counter-narrative to the West.

Given the focus on Islam and Muslims in the globally integrated landscape how the women fit into their respective societies is revealed in the way national politics embrace religious diversity. The mainstream Australian society historically has had little interaction with Muslims. Viewed through a lens of modernization and secularization, Muslim traditions and practices appear in variance with the mainstream culture. With increasing numbers of migration intakes, interface in the multicultural environment is inevitable. However, interactions have been overtaken by the contemporary coalescence of global and national politics and defensive debates relate Australian national identity to Australian values that are socially excluding. While initiatives in building bridges are important for mutual understanding, more deliberations and research are needed with regard to gender and multiculturalism. How does a liberal society embrace and accommodate diverse cultural mores as well as the values that appear culturally irreconcilable within its society? In having participation in addressing strategic issues through presenting Muslim practical interests, the proposed inclusive participation framework developed in Chapter 9 puts forth one suggestion. This is also applicable in the Kenyan context in addressing key development issues.

With a sustained historical presence of Muslims in the country, religious culture is not a contentious issue in the Kenyan situation. The respondents have a strong sense of belonging. However, the changes concomitant to modernization carry socio-economic mobilities that have privileged some groups more than others. The inherited colonial institutional infrastructure favours Christians who have adopted Western culture more easily than Muslims. The evolving global material culture is a contemporary concern to Muslims in how to progress. While development and progress are desirable, unwilling to wholly embrace the values of a Western culture, Muslims in general have been disadvantaged through underdevelopment in Muslim majority regions. Here there is a need to address the economic exclusions of Muslims in human development. On the part of Muslims, a concerted effort in engaging with development is required to source ways of moderating it

to address cultural and value systems. While cultural crowding out is a grave issue, modernization has significant benefits in raising the quality of life of individuals. Progress and development have and continue to extensively enhance human health, life expectancy, food availability, transport and communications as well as improve the knowledge and well-being of populations, in both the industrialized and the developing world. The challenge to Muslims is to draw upon the fundamental Islamic values that can contribute to morally conscious development. Overall within these the contributions of women are vital and should be encouraged.

This thesis has looked at reconceptualizing the image of the Muslim woman in an attempt to move beyond the gendered polemics of the cultural determinism and divide. The work has located the lives of Muslim women in contrasting contextual settings to discover how their lifestyles are touched by the paradigms of contemporary change given their religious cultural orientation. Associated with modernization premises, as much as the theoretical trajectory of development is a linear process in which societies transform into sophisticated cultures, it affects different spheres of society and is not received unreflectively. Rather, as local actors moderate various aspects in order to suit it to their own socio-cultural realities, we need to question the dichotomies of modern- anti-modern, liberal-illiberal and civilized-uncivilized created within cultural determinism. Acknowledging the heterogeneity of settings as demonstrated in this work, conceivably there are multiple modernities and gender issues should be understood and addressed within these.

Table 9 below lays out the Muslim gender issues identified within the study and the stakeholders that can potentially influence change with regard to these. The broad-based issues and stakeholders presented are based on the conceptualization and the findings of the study. As the themes of the study suggest there are challenges in gender education, employment, current discourses on Muslim gender, multiculturalism and development in general; and potentially Muslim communities themselves, national governments as well as the international community can make differences in goals towards progress. While the interests and objectives of the different groups may be variant, the ultimate goal is a collaborative effort in the fast globalizing world to enable more inclusive and conducive development.

Table 9: Identified issues and proposals for stakeholders

| Issue | Stakeholders | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | Muslim communities | National governments | International community |
| Education – gender access | <p>Create awareness of benefits of female education</p> <p>Explore culturally appropriate settings for female education</p> | <p>Enhance the role of culture in mitigating the gender gap in education</p> <p>Invest in and locate infrastructure within reach to facilitate greater access to educational opportunities</p> | <p>Add the cultural dimension to the achievement of the MDGs on education</p> <p>Take culture into consideration in directing resources to overcome gender gaps in the developing world</p> |
| Economic – gender role | <p>Explore how the balance in gender relations can help support the economic roles of women</p> | <p>Ensure systemic support for minority women’s participation in the workplace</p> | <p>Customize interventions to suit cultural and religious diversity</p> |
| Discourses – gender portrayal | <p>Engage in diffusing the pervasive divide</p> | <p>Consider the consequences of minority gender constructions</p> | <p>Examine power relations in limits and conditions with respect to critiques of cultures and beliefs of others and intervene accordingly</p> |

Table 9: Identified issues and proposals for stakeholders (continued)

| Issue | Stakeholders | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Multiculturalism – gender inclusion | Engage in overcoming the cultural divide and traverse hostilities | Include multiculturalism in educational apparatus Provide forums for positive interactions Ensure citizens rights are not violated | Research the areas of social inclusion and equal citizenships as well as the growing transnational identities |
| Development – gender contribution | Promote the role of women in development | Consider the diversities of culture in enhancing capabilities | Acknowledge religious culture as a potent force in development practice Evaluate the gender impact of the market ideology and more topically the impacts of conflict on gender development |

As much as the study highlights the more factual and practical matters that Muslim women confront in the rapidly globalizing environment, many of the issues raised are generic to womanhood. Nearly half of the world's populations, sections of women everywhere are to a greater or lesser extent subordinated within local and global patriarchal structures. They earn less income, own less resources, have poor access to health and education; additionally women are increasingly at risk through contemporary global inequalities, forced displacement as well as conflict crises. Putting the frame of a cultural clash venerating liberal equality deflects from engaging in productive ways of addressing these as well as relational gaps existing in areas of health, education, economic opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. In so far as gender equality is a human right, so are freedom from cultural discrimination, fear, distrust and lack of opportunities. Looking at more creative ways in which to address these is all the more salient when the collective conscious looks at alternative economically and socially just, sustainable means to progress.

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GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Abaya</i> | Overgarment worn by Muslim women mostly in the Middle East |
| <i>Ahle sunnat</i> | Movement calling themselves ‘People following the traditions of the Prophet’ |
| <i>Alhamdulillah</i> | Phrase meaning ‘praise to God’ |
| <i>Alimah</i> | Female graduate of Islamic sciences |
| <i>Aqeeda</i> | Creed |
| <i>Awra</i> | Normative of covering for both gender in Islam |
| <i>Azan</i> | The call to prayer |
| <i>Baju kurung</i> | Malay traditional female dress |
| <i>Barelvi</i> | Sunni movement that promotes following Sufi practices |
| <i>Bidah</i> | Innovation in Islamic practices |
| <i>Buibui</i> | Overgarment traditionally worn by Muslim women along the East Coast of Africa |
| <i>Buloog</i> | Puberty |
| <i>Burqa</i> | Overgarment traditionally worn by Muslim women in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and India |
| <i>Chadur</i> | Shawl |
| <i>Chunni</i> | Scarf |
| <i>Darsa</i> | Lesson |
| <i>Dar-ul uloom</i> | Islamic institution of higher learning |
| <i>Deobandhi</i> | Movement Muslim movement originating from the Indian sub-continent |
| <i>Dupatta</i> | Shawl worn with the <i>shalwar kameez</i> |
| <i>Eid</i> | Feast that end the month of <i>Ramadhan</i> and the hajj pilgrimage |
| <i>Eid Mubarak</i> | Common greeting exchanged at the time of Eid |
| <i>Fiqh</i> | Understanding the application of the <i>Shariah</i> |
| <i>Fitna</i> | Term that connotes chaos, disturbance or upheaval |
| <i>Hadith</i> | Saying or action attributed to Prophet |
| <i>Hajj</i> | The Muslim pilgrimage |
| <i>Halal</i> | Permissible according to Islam |
| <i>Hanafi</i> | School of jurisprudence in Sunni following Imam Abu Hanifa |
| <i>Hanbali</i> | School of jurisprudence in Sunni following Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal |
| <i>Haram</i> | Impermissible according to Islam |
| <i>Haya</i> | Term covers concepts like self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple |
| <i>Hidaya</i> | God’s guidance |
| <i>Hijaab</i> | Commonly used for the Muslim women’s veil |
| <i>Ibada</i> | Worship |
| <i>Imam</i> | Leader – primarily one who leads a congregational prayer |
| <i>InshaAllah</i> | Phrase meaning ‘God willing’ |
| <i>Jilbab</i> | Long sleeved coat or garment |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Kadhi</i> | Islamic judge |
| <i>Kalmia shahada</i> | Statement of creed |
| <i>Khimar</i> | Scarf or wrap |
| <i>Lesso</i> | Sheet worn like a sarong by women around the waist or over the head in East Africa |
| <i>Madhab</i> | Schools of Islamic thought |
| <i>Madrassah</i> | School |
| <i>Mahram</i> | Unmarriageable kin |
| <i>Maliki</i> | School of jurisprudence in Sunni following Imam Malik |
| <i>MashaAllah</i> | Phrase praising God |
| <i>Masjid</i> | Islamic hall of prayer |
| <i>Maulud</i> | Commemoration celebrating the Prophet's birth and life |
| <i>Mitandio</i> | Scarves in Kiswahili |
| <i>Mutawas</i> | The moral police in Saudi Arabia |
| <i>Namaste</i> | Hindu greeting |
| <i>Niqaab</i> | Veil covering the face |
| <i>Purdah</i> | Seclusion |
| <i>Qasida</i> | Eulogy praising the Prophet |
| <i>Qiwama</i> | Concept of responsibility |
| <i>Ramadhan</i> | The ninth month of the Islamic calendar |
| <i>Salafi</i> | Sect advocating Islam of the time of the Prophet and his immediate followers |
| <i>Salah</i> | The Islamic prayer |
| <i>Stara</i> | Cover the body according to the rulings in Islam |
| <i>Shafi</i> | School of jurisprudence in Sunni following Imam ash-Shafi |
| <i>Shalwar kurta</i> | Suit of tunic top and trousers worn traditionally in the Indian sub-continent |
| <i>Shariah</i> | Path – term for Islamic law and rulings |
| <i>Sheikh</i> | Honorific title; also term used for a learned man |
| <i>Shia</i> | Second largest denomination of Islam |
| <i>Shura</i> | Consultation |
| <i>Subhanau wa taalla</i> | Phrase used to praise God meaning glorious and exalted |
| <i>Sufi</i> | The mystical form of Islam |
| <i>Sunnah</i> | Traditions of the Prophet |
| <i>Sunni</i> | The largest sect of Islam |
| <i>Surwali</i> | Kiswahili term for trousers |
| <i>Tabligh jamat</i> | Religious movement whose aim is the spiritual reformation of Muslims |
| <i>Telekong</i> | A veil worn at prayer time by South-East Asian women |
| <i>Tudung</i> | A veil worn in South-East Asia |
| <i>Thawb</i> | Sudanese sari-like garment worn by women |
| <i>Ulama</i> | Islamic scholars |
| <i>Ummah</i> | The Muslim community |
| <i>Umrah</i> | The minor pilgrimage |
| <i>Wahabi</i> | An Islamic sect advocating pure Islam |

IMAGES 1: MUSLIMS IN PERTH, AUSTRALIA



Muslim women in a Perth mosque



Muslims celebrating the *moulud* festival



Children at a *madrassah* event in Perth

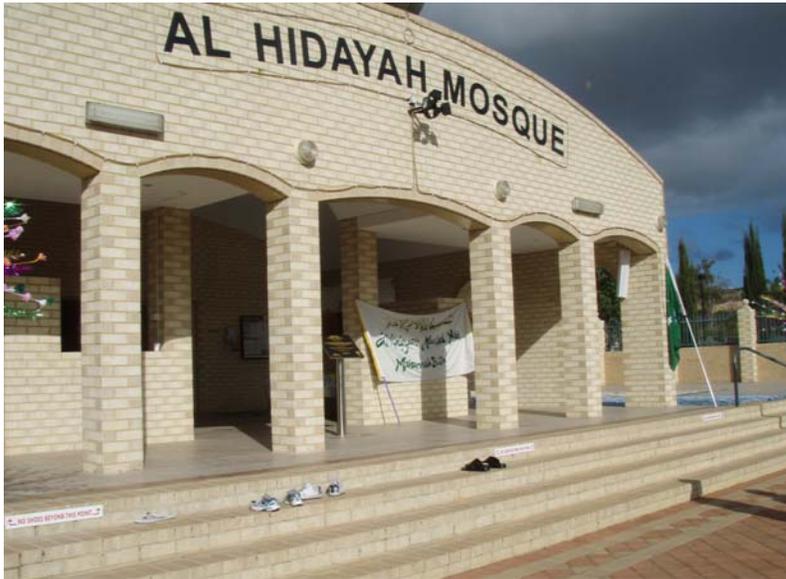
Courtesy: Canning Vale Community Centre Musalla



Children at a *madrassah* in Perth

Courtesy: Canning Vale Community Centre Musalla

IMAGES 2: RELIGIOUS SITES IN PERTH, AUSTRALIA



The Al-Hidayah Mosque in Perth



The Sikh Temple in Perth



Willetton Catholic Parish in Perth

IMAGES 3: MUSLIMS IN MOMBSA, KENYA



Children buying snacks outside a *madrassah*



Muslim women in *niqaab* on a Mombasa street



A boys' *madrassah* in a Mombasa mosque



Muslim girls heading home after school in Mombasa

IMAGES 4: RELIGIOUS SITES IN MOMBASA, KENYA



The Konzi Mosque in Mombasa



The Jain Temple in Mombasa



Inside the Catholic Cathedral in Mombasa

APPENDIX 1

Table 10: Selected indicators Muslim majority* countries

| Country | Total Population 2009 | % Urban population 2008 | % Muslims | HDI index value | Gender demographics | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | | | | % Female literacy 2003/2004** | % Labour force participation 2005*** | Total births per woman 2009 | Life expectancy at birth 2009*** |
| Afghanistan | 28,396,000 | 24.0 | 99.0 | na | 12.6 (2000) | 38.2 (1989) | 6.53 | 44.81 |
| Algeria | 34,178,188 | 65.0 | 99.0 | 0.722 | 60.1 (2002) | 37.46 | 1.79 | 75.77 |
| Albania | 3,639,453 | 47.0 | 70.0 | 0.780 | 98.3 | 54.72 | 2.01 | 80.89 |
| Azerbaijan | 8,238,672 | 52.0 | 93.4 | 0.729 | 98.2 (1999) | 66.23 | 2.04 | 71.34 |
| Bahrain | 727,785 | 89.0 | 81.2 | 0.846 | 83.6 (2001) | 30.71 | 2.50 | 77.76 |
| Bangladesh | 156,050,883 | 27.0 | 83.0 | 0.520 | 41.4 (2001) | 55.19 | 2.74 | 63.03 |
| Bosnia/Herzegovnia | 4,613,414 | 47.0 | 40.0 | 0.786 | 94.4 (2000) | 70.53 | 1.25 | 82.34 |
| Brunei | 388,190 | 75.0 | 67.0 | 0.866 | 90.2 (2001) | 46.03 | 1.91 | 78.07 |
| Burkina Faso | 15,746,232 | 20.0 | 50.0 | 0.317 | 15.2 | 79.51 | 6.28 | 54.91 |
| Chad | 10,329,208 | 27.0 | 53.1 | 0.341 | 12.8 (2000) | 66.0 | 5.31 | 48.77 |
| Comoros | 752,438 | 28.0 | 98.0 | 0.547 | 49.3 | 59.51 | 4.84 | 65.94 |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 20,617,068 | 49.0 | 38.6 | 0.420 | 38.6 (2000) | 40.1 | 4.12 | 56.28 |
| Djibouti | 516,055 | 87.0 | 94.0 | 0.495 | 58.4 (2003) | 54.76 | 5.06 | 44.89 |
| Egypt | 83,082,869 | 43.0 | 90.0 | 0.659 | 59.4 | 21.62 | 2.66 | 74.81 |
| Eritrea | 5,647,168 | 21.0 | 50.0 | 0.444 | 47.6 | 59.84 | 4.72 | 63.9 |
| Iran | 68,805,000 | 68.0 | 98.0 | 0.736 | 73.0 | 19.51 | 2.07 | |
| Gambia | 1,782,893 | 57.0 | 90.0 | 0.470 | 32.8 | 60.29 | 5.04 | 57.34 |
| Gaza Strip | 1,551,859 | 72.0 | 99.3 | 0.727 | 88.0 | na | 5.03 | 75.12 |
| Guinea | 10,057,975 | 34.0 | 85.0 | 0.466 | 18.1 | 82.65 | 5.20 | 58.60 |
| Guinea Bissau | 1,533,964 | 30.0 | 50.0 | 0.348 | 27.4 | 63.06 | 4.65 | 49.79 |
| Indonesia | 240,271,522 | 52.0 | 86.1 | 0.697 | 86.8 (2004) | 53.04 | 2.31 | 73.38 |
| Iran | 66,429,284 | 68.0 | 98.0 | 0.736 | 70.4 (2002) | 40.54 | 1.71 | 72.72 |
| Iraq | 28,945,657 | 67.0 | 97.0 | na | 64.2 (2000) | 19.51 (1999) | 3.86 | 71.34 |
| Jordan | 6,342,948 | 78.0 | 92.0 | 0.753 | 84.7 | 28.87 | 2.39 | 81.56 |
| Kazakhstan | 15,399,437 | 58.0 | 47.0 | 0.761 | 99.3 (1999) | 73.56 | 1.88 | 73.47 |
| Kuwait | 1,804,838 | 98.0 | 85.0 | 0.844 | 91 (2005) | 50.37 | 2.76 | 78.85 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 5,431,747 | 36.0 | 75.0 | 0.702 | 98.1 | 59.87 | 2.65 | 73.64 |

Table 10: Selected Indicators Muslim Majority* Countries (continued)

| Country | Total Population 2009 | % Urban population 2008 | % Muslims | HDI index value | Gender demographics | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | Female literacy 2003/2004** | Labour force participation 2005*** | Total births per woman 2009 | Life expectancy at birth 2009 |
| Lebanon | 4,017,095 | 87.0 | 59.7 | 0.759 | 82.2 | 35.72 | 1.85 | 76.31 |
| Malaysia | 25,715,819 | 70.0 | 60.4 | 0.796 | 85.4 (2000) | 48.10 | 2.95 | 76.21 |
| Maldives | 396,334 | 38.0 | 99.9 | 0.745 | 96.4 (2000) | 49.09 | 1.90 | 76.28 |
| Mali | 12,666,987 | 32.0 | 90.0 | 0.333 | 39.6 (2005) | 74.78 | 7.29 | 52.38 |
| Mauritania | 3,129,486 | 41.0 | 100 | 0.477 | 43.3 (2000) | 56.45 | 4.45 | 62.59 |
| Morocco | 34,859,364 | 56.0 | 98.7 | 0.631 | 39.6 | 28.67 | 2.51 | 74.30 |
| Niger | 15,306,252 | 16.0 | 80.0 | 0.281 | 15.1 (2005) | 72.98 | 7.75 | 53.85 |
| Nigeria | 149,229,090 | 48.0 | 50.0 | 0.453 | 60.6 | 46.59 | 3.83 | 47.76 |
| Oman | 3,418,085 | 72.0 | 99.0 | 0.781 | 73.5 | 23.61 | 3.44 | 76.55 |
| Pakistan | 176,242,949 | 36.0 | 95.0 | 0.527 | 36.0 (2005) | 33.72 | 3.60 | 65.64 |
| Qatar | 833,285 | 96 | 77.5 | 0.849 | 88.6 | 36.92 | 2.45 | 77.14 |
| Saudi Arabia | 28,686,633 | 82.0 | 100 | 0.772 | 70.8 | 18.47 | 3.83 | 78.48 |
| Senegal | 10,998,000 | 42.0 | 94.0 | 0.458 | 29.2 (2002) | 58.42 | 4.95 | 51.98 |
| Somalia | 9,832,017 | 37.0 | 100 | na | 25.8 (2001) | 60.99 | 6.52 | 51.53 |
| Sudan | 41,087,825 | 43.0 | 70.0 | 0.512 | 50.5 | 24.18 | 4.48 | 52.4 |
| Syria | 20,178,485 | 54.0 | 90.0 | 0.721 | 73.6 | 39.88 | 3.12 | 72.68 |
| Tajikistan | 7,349,145 | 26.0 | 90.0 | 0.652 | 99.2 (2000) | 49.46 | 2.99 | 68.52 |
| Tunisia | 10,486,339 | 67.0 | 98.0 | 0.753 | 65.3 | 31.10 | 1.72 | 77.70 |
| Turkey | 76,805,524 | 69.0 | 99.8 | 0.750 | 79.6 | 27.20 | 2.21 | 73.89 |
| Turkmenistan | 4,884,887 | 49.0 | 89.0 | 0.738 | 98.3 (1999) | 65.12 | 2.22 | 70.95 |
| UAE | 4,798,491 | 78.0 | 96.0 | 0.849 | 81.7 | 39.02 | 2.42 | 78.78 |
| Uzbekistan | 23,232,000 | 37.0 | 88.0 | 0.694 | 99.0 | 60.56 | 1.95 | 75.15 |
| Yemen | 23,822,783 | 31.0 | 99.0 | 0.489 | 30.0 | 30.77 | 6.32 | 65.33 |

* Muslims are the largest cultural group

**% aged 15 and over

***% of female population aged 16 – 64

Sources: CIA, The World Factbook at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> and NationMaster.com at <http://www.nationmaster.com/index.php>. Accessed on various dates

APPENDIX 2

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Personal details

Can you tell me about yourself?

- your ethnicity
- marital status and children
- education
- employment

2. Gender relations

- How do you perceive gender relations in your household?
- Have gender relations changed in Muslim communities over time?

3. Focus on Islam in 'war on terror'

- How do you perceive the focus on the Muslims today?
- How does it affect you and how do you feel about it?

4. Islamic revivalism

- Are you aware of different groups in Sunni Islam?
- How do you perceive people or leaders in the Muslim community insisting on a domesticated role for Muslim women?

5. Veiling

- How does your veiling or not veiling have a bearing on how you are perceived within the mainstream and the Muslim communities?
- Why do you veil or not veil?

6. Multiculturalism and inclusiveness

- What are your views on multiculturalism as a policy? – Australia
- What do you think about different ethnic group 'living side by side'? – Kenya
- Do you feel included in the Australian/Kenyan society?

APPENDIX 3

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals agreed to by 192 countries are eight international development goals. They were set up at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the largest gathering of world leaders who adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015. These goals have become known as the Millennium Development Goals. As seen in Table 11 they range from reducing poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease to developing a global partnership for development itself. Progress towards these has been uneven for various reasons including the lack of commitment to development assistance.

Table 11: The Millennium Development Goals

| Goals | Targets |
|--|--|
| 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day • Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger |
| 2. Achieve universal primary education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls will be able to complete a full course of primary education |
| 3. Promote gender equality and empower women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than by 2015 |
| 4. Reduce child mortality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 the under five mortality rate |
| 5. Improve maternal health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce by three quarters between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate |
| 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS • Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases |
| 7. Ensure environmental sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources • Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>water and sanitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers |
| <p>8. Develop a global partnership for development</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop further an open rule-based, predictable non-discriminatory trading and finance system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally • Address the special needs of the least developed countries – includes tariff and quota free access for least developed countries exports enhanced program of debt relief for HIPC¹⁰⁵ and cancellation of bilateral debt and more generous ODA¹⁰⁶ for countries committed to removing poverty • Address the special needs of land-locked countries • Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term • In cooperation with developing countries develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth • In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries • In cooperation with private sector make available the benefits of new technologies especially information and communications |

Source: UNDP 2004

¹⁰⁵ Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

¹⁰⁶ Official Development Assistance

