Exploring the (in)commensurability between the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism: implications for democratic citizenship education and islamic education

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

PhD in Philosophy of Education

in the

Department of Education Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

at

Stellenbosch University

Nuraan Davids

BA (Hons) HDE MPhil (UCT)

Promoter: Professor Yusef Waghid

December 2012

D E C L A R A T I O N

Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signature: …………………………………

Date: .. …………………………...

Acknowledgements

To Allah (SWT), for His rich blessings, and for guiding me, always.

To my promoter, Prof. Yusef Waghid, I thank you for your constant motivation, for challenging me, and for attaching as much value to this work as I did.

Immense gratitude is extended to the six women, who so graciously agreed to participate in this research study, and more importantly, to allow me into their life stories.

To Dr. Trevor van Louw, thank-you for your patient listening.

To my much loved three young children, who in the past two years, often had to deal with a distracted mother; you are my motivation for writing this dissertation. We have to find a way of living in a better world.

To my beloved husband, your love and support has made me the person I am.

Gratitude is extended to the NRF for its financial support.

And I wish to thank my three examiners for their invaluable time and contributions in improving the final draft of this dissertation.

Man 'arafa nafsahu fa qad 'arafa Rabbbahu,

'One who realises one's own self realises his Lord'

(Ibn al-'Arabi, 12th Century Muslim Saint & Philosopher)

A B S T R A C T

Abstract

I mpressions and perceptions about Islām, particularly in a world where much of what is known about Islām has emerged from after the tragic devastation of the Twin Towers in New York, are creating huge challenges for Muslims wherever they may find themselves. Women as the more visible believers in Islām are, what I believe, at the forefront of the growing skepticism surrounding Islām. And central to the modern day debates and suspicious regard meted out to Muslim women today is her *hijāb* (head-scarf). Ironically, it would appear that the same amount of detail and attention that Islamic scholars have devoted to the role of women in Islām and how they are expected to conduct themselves is now at the centre of the modern day debates and suspicious regard. Yet, the debates seldom move beyond what is obviously visible, and so little is known about what has given shape to Muslim women's being, and how their understanding of Islām has led them to practise their religion in a particular way.

This dissertation is premised on the assertion that in order to understand the role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, you need to understand Islām and Islamic education. It sets out to examine and explore as to whether there is commensurability or not between Muslim women and the notion of cosmopolitanism, and what then the implications would be for democratic citizenship education and Islamic education. One of the main findings of the dissertation is that the intent to understand Muslim women's education and the rationales of their educational contexts and practices opens itself to a plurality of interpretations that reflects the pluralism of understanding constitutive of the practices of Islam both within and outside of cosmopolitanism. Another is that inasmusch as Muslim women have been influenced by living and interacting in a cosmopolitan society, cosmopolitanism has been shaped and shifted by Muslim women.

By examining the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, and exploring the gaps between interpretations of Islam and Qur'anic exegesis, I hope to demystify many of the

A B S T R A C T

(mis)perceptions associated with Muslim women, and ultimately with Islām. And finally, by examining how Islamic education can inform a renewed cosmopolitanism, and by looking at how democratic citizenship education can shape a renewed Islamic education, the eventual purpose of this dissertation is to find a way towards peaceful co-existence.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
IUC	Islamic Unity Convention
MJC	Muslim Judicial Council
MSA	Muslim Students' Association
MYM	Muslim Youth Movement
PAGAD	People Against Gangsterism and Drugs
UDF	United Democratic Front
UCT	University of Cape Town

T R A N S L I T E R A T I O N   C H A R T

Transliteration Chart

Arabic Letter	Romanized Form
	A
or	Ā
	B
	T
	h (at end of the word)
	Th
	J
	H
	Kh
	D
	Dh
	R
	Z
	S
	Sh
	□
	□
	□
	Dh
	‘
	Gh
	F
	Q
	K
	L

TRANSLITERATION CHART

	M
	N
	H
	W
(as a long vowel)	Ū
	Y
(as a long vowel)	Ī
	'

Preface

The research study is located within the Muslim community of the Western Cape, South Africa, and commences with a contextualisation of the shift from an apartheid to a post-apartheid landscape.[1] For the sake of clarity, and very briefly, I need to explain that the term apartheid is an Afrikaans word, meaning separation. In very simplistic terms, the fundamental objective of apartheid was to maintain and ensure 'White' supremacy through the implementation of separation along racially-constructed lines, which was formally institutionalised in the apartheid laws of 1948, under the government of the National Party. Apartheid, in terms of the Population Registration Act (1950), classified South African citizens into three main racial categories: 'White', 'Black' and 'Coloured' (mixed descent), which included the two sub-groups of Indians and Asians.

As a product of apartheid, and as a Muslim woman still experiencing the remnants of an apartheid legacy, I refer to terms of race, such as 'White', 'Coloured', 'Indian' and 'Black', throughout this dissertation. In using these terms, I am neither endorsing them, nor am I attaching greater importance to race as a grouping of analysis. What I am stating is that it is impossible to explore and examine notions of identity and belonging within a South African context without reference to the vestiges of a racist bureaucracy. And while I recognise that it is restricting and restrictive to think about citizenship in racial terms, I am, however, testifying to a life experience, which has been both shaped and distorted by these very terms. The dawn of a post-apartheid society in 1992 held many good and misplaced assumptions, one of which was and is that we, as South Africans, know how to respond to notions of democracy and freedom. But to me, this response remains in suspension until we comprehend that notions of democratic citizenship are tied to notions of identity and identity construction.

---

[1] The Western Cape is one of nine provinces in South Africa.

P R E F A C E

This research study, therefore, is an exploration and interrogation of Muslim women's identity and   lived experiences in a post-apartheid society, and whether there is a possibility of a commensurable relationship with cosmopolitanism. And although Muslim women serve as the basis and context of this research study, the implications of this study are neither limited to Muslim women, nor to Muslim women living in South Africa only.

Chapter

1

(Un)mending Apartheid

1.1.   A Muslim Identity

Thanks to apartheid South Africa, my introduction into a world of different colours, religions and cultures was delayed until my 19th year when I first headed for the tertiary doors of the University of Cape Town. Until then mine had been a life of seclusion, surrounded by Coloured faces and where people's names signaled either a Muslim or Christian identity. There was little need or reason to unpack this limited experience, this life of isolation, where it was okay to have a Muslim name, attend the local mosque, and sing Christian hymns at the beginning and end of each school day. And if apartheid South Africa prided itself on the superiority of the White race, then Christian National Education ensured the teaching, learning, singing, praying and public holidaying of only one way of life. My Islamic identity lived at home, safe on the softness of the prayer mat, while listening to the strained voice of the local *imām* (Muslim leader), calling the faithful to prayer. Looking back, there is no denying, that apartheid South Africa inadvertently set itself up as the guardian of Islām and its adherents. Apartheid, maintains Erasmus, played a key role in the formation and consolidation of identities (2001: 16). With the forced removals of masses of people to the outlying and uninhabitable terrain of the Cape Flats, Islām was allowed to flourish as an alternative, in a society which legally stated that because of my skin colour, I was less than.[2]

---

[2] Cape Flats – also described as the 'dumping ground of apartheid'. The term refers to a large area in the Cape Town metropole that appears to be essentially flat when viewed from a distance. Historically, the Cape Flats was deemed to comprise what was predominantly previously disadvantaged communities – primarily due to forced removals. (The Cape Flats Website)

One of the most profound consequences on the Muslim community in the Western Cape, in particular, was an insularity of existence, an insularity of identity, and an insularity of citizenship. Vahed (2006: 2) states that residential clustering, as prescribed by the racially-based Group Areas Act, made it easy for Muslims to establish mosques and *madrassahs* (Muslim schools), and to safely practise their belief system. And so it was that at the end of my high school career I found myself in possession of a claustrophobic Calvinistic schooling, laced with little more than a smattering of a worldview that there are Muslims and there are others. It was a worldview, which would continually be undermined during my tertiary years. The mould of insulation was beginning to crack, and the uncertainty of displacement and de-rooted citizenship began to seep in. Central to all of this was the fact that South Africa had just had its first democratic elections, which theoretically signaled the unraveling of all that was unequal and debased. For a first year teacher, like me, it was also a time of profound irony, where, upon, stepping into a grade 11 classroom, I was ready to teach a group of White learners – the colour of learners with whom I had not been allowed to learn. If apartheid made it easy to demonstrably be a Muslim woman, then democracy, with all its freedoms, began to create the unease. With democratic South Africa came a confrontation with the others – not a fluid process, when all sorts of perceptions and opinions were soundly cemented inside a young Muslim woman, who had only ever thought of herself as a Muslim Coloured. With the entrance into diversity and multiplicity, came the agitation of identity and belonging.

I do not believe that this agitation was unique to displaced and disempowered people of colour, who had just entered into a democracy fresh from de-rootedness. I believe very strongly that this agitation persisted and still persists in any person, whose life and ideology have been tainted by a demoralising system, such as apartheid. It is an agitation that even today continues to manifest itself in our rhetoric, in our politics and in how we interact and experience our multiple layers of identity. And all the while it is premised on a widely held assumption that there is such a label as a South African society. The constitutional demise of apartheid has done little to unify specifically deconstructed

fragments of communities, previously known as *'tribes'* and *'nations'* and *'Bantustans'*[8]. Deconstructions of people cannot simply be resurrected through words on a Freedom Charter. Can we be brought together through race? Through languages? Through ethnic groups? Through religion? Through culture? This process of person formation, explains Keaton (2006: 15), *'is complex, as it involves ideological descriptors that are recast in terms of a prescribed culture that is presumed to connote a common heritage and shared modes of thought, values, dispositions, and even, perhaps, physical appearances.'* Apartheid was brutally simple: White was superior to Black, therefore White could oppress Black. Issues of culture and community were subjugated to a sub-discourse. It was the colour of your skin that mattered.

Today, under the guise of democracy and the promising umbrella of a Constitution, the Black and White discussions of race are being replaced by conversations about multiculturalism, diversity and tolerance, and social cohesion. How do you do this in a society which is not only fundamentally unequal, but where in terms of the notions of democratic organisation, you can exercise the right not to be a part of this nationalist drive? Immersed in my agitation of identity and belonging, lies the question of individualism versus conformity. But this in itself is a paradox, since even within individualism there is a leaning towards one set of conventions or another. The self is never short of orthodoxy. As citizens, states Benhabib (1992: 98), *'we enter the public fray with a set of more or less articulated, more or less preformed opinions, principles and values.'* And given the abstract nature of democracy, how does one begin to define identities in relation to society? According to Benhabib, the problems of individualism and egotism in modern societies can only be solved by a recovery or a revitalisation of some coherent value scheme. What this value scheme might be varies from religion to friendship, or perhaps values of democracy. Benhabib's (1992: 77) *'participationist'* viewpoint, however, holds that the problems of modernity are *'less in the loss of a sense of belonging, oneness and solidarity but more*

---

[3] In 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act established a basis for ethnic government in African reserves, known as 'homelands'. 'Africans' or 'Blacks' were assigned to these 'homelands' or independent states based on their origin. This essentially meant the de-nationalizing of millions of 'Blacks', forcing them to carry passports in order to enter South Africa.

in the sense of a loss of political agency and efficacy'. This loss, she explains, is not a consequence of the separation of the personal from the political rather it is as a result of the disagreement between the various arenas which reduces one's possibility for agency in one arena because of one's position in another.

A *hijāb*-wearing (head-scarf) Muslim woman, for instance, might experience some difficulty in being accepted in a modern society where a dress code of this nature is not the norm. Her position in a Muslim community, therefore, could be seen as limiting her possibility of agency in a modern society. What Benhabib's *'participationist'* (1992: 79) view seeks to do is to minimise the disagreements and contradictions; it encourages membership principles of non-exclusivity across the arenas. Modern societies, she asserts, are not communities integrated around a single conception of the human good. According to Benhabib (1992: 77), access to the public sphere has always been limited by issues of race, class, gender and religion, as well as money and power. She maintains that because of the ongoing subjection of tradition to critique, individuals are finding it increasingly complicated to develop a coherent sense of self. This development is further complicated by the assertion that the situated self cannot be de-linked from the community in which it has been shaped and in which it lives.

An individual, explains Wan Daud (2009) *'is only so when he realizes simultaneously his unique individuality and the commonality between him and other persons close to him and surrounding him.'* Benhabib (1992: 81) presents an argument for the extension of the principles of modernity - if the individual is to participate in this society – which is based on the notion that what one does makes a difference; that every self has the right to value and to be valued. In extending Benhabib's argument, Muslim women, as individuals, have the right to be valued, since their value is determined by what they do. And what they do can neither be separated from who they are, nor from the community which has shaped them. What I will be addressing is *how* this happens. *How* can Muslim women find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society? And *how* can a cosmopolitan society contribute to, and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women?

Before proceeding with the actual exploration of the afore-mentioned questions, I will present and discuss the research context of this dissertation. Briefly touching on the construction of the Muslim community in the Western Cape during apartheid South Africa, I will be paying close attention to the construction of Muslim identity in a post-apartheid society.

1.2. Research Context: Muslims in the Western Cape

At 2% (about one million) of the approximately 50.5 million South Africans, explains Vahed (2006: 4), Muslims are a minority group, with about 90% being termed as 'Malay' and 'Indian', and the remaining 10%, consisting of Africans. While most of the 'Indian' community members are descendants of trader immigrants who travelled from the Indian sub-continent in the 1860s, the Malays' ancestry is linked to the slaves who were imported from South and South-East Asia during the 17th century. By the mid-20th century, states Jeppie (2001: 80), *'… being Muslim was endowed with a singular ethnic marker – Malay – most often separate and distinct from the larger community of people termed coloured'*. By 1996, the post-apartheid Census, says Omar (2005), revealed that Islām had grown significantly amongst the black African communities, and made up to 12% of South Africa's Muslims. This growth, argues Haron (2003: 112), can be attributed to both the embracing of Islām by township youth as well as the growing number of refugees from countries, such as Malawi, Somalia, Burundi and Rwanda. This same post-apartheid Census also talks about four racial groups, in fact, the very same categories, employed by the apartheid government: White, Coloured, Asian and Black African, which in itself is a reflection of a deeply segregated Muslim community, additionally divided by ethnicity, language, class, politics, education, cultural beliefs and practices.

It needs to be understood that Muslims played a significant role during the struggle against apartheid – what Badran (2001: 49) refers to as an example of *'progressive Islamism'*, since it promoted progressive readings of the Qur'an and their application in everyday life. To understand the term progressive in this context, Gunther and Niehaus (2002: 115) quote Farid Esack in explaining that: *'According to him progressive Muslims, unlike modernist or liberal Muslims, distinguish themselves by a clear commitment and engagement and a leftwing or socialist*

identification. Modernist or liberal Muslims should be located more on an intellectual and academic level while progressive Muslims combine intellectual activity with an activist engagement for the marginalized.' An example of progressive Islām, therefore, would be applying a feminist reading to the Qur'an. Another example might be a woman delivering the pre-*khutbah* (sermon that precedes the prayer on the occasion of jumu'ah (Friday) or Eid prayers), as was the case of Amina Wadud, who was the first woman to deliver a pre-*khutbah* to a predominantly male congregation at the Claremont Main Road *masjid* (mosque) in Cape Town.

Muslim organisations, such as the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) (est. 1970), the Cape Muslim Youth Movement (est. 1961), and Call of Islam (est. 1984), were founded at a time when Muslim involvement in politics was very limited. The reasons for this limited involvement were numerous, one of which, explain Gunther and Niehaus (2002), was the Muslim pre-occupation with the improvement of the educational system for Muslims. This pre-occupation could be ascribed to the assertion and preservation of Muslim identity in a society and educational system, which ensured the systemic proliferation of Christian National Education. According to Tayob (2011: 4), this same pre-occupation, thanks to the apartheid state, created the motivation for Muslim parents who had the means to seek other forms of schooling for their children. Another reason was the hegemony of the *'ulemā* (religious scholars), who controlled religious life and dissuaded Muslims from getting involved in the political arena and the less mainstream *Al-Jihad* and *Qibla*.[4] Not all the *'ulemā* (religious scholars), however, were averse to political participation and opposition, and by the mid-1980s, during the height of the struggle against apartheid, organisations, such the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) and the Call of Islam, replaced the apolitical stance with one of

---

[4] Both these organizations were considered to be radical Islamic groups. Qibla, founded in the 1980s, was led by Achmad Cassiem, and inspired by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Al-Jihad was a pro-Shia organization, drew most of its support from the newly converted township Blacks

political activism, eventually leading to closer ties with more prominent anti-apartheid groupings, such as the United Democratic Front (UDF).

At this stage, I would like say something more about the MJC, which describes itself as a '*Muslim judiciary, whose main functions relate to religious guidance, spiritual and moral rejuvenation, education; fatāwā (religious decrees); Da'wah (religious outreach); halaal dietary provisions and certifier; marriage counseling services, socio-economic development and social cohesion.*' Bangstad (2007: 223-224) explains that the establishment of the MJC in 1945 was an attempt to attach greater professionalism to the role and function of *'ulemā* (religious scholars) in the absence of a *qadi* (Islamic judge). However, because the organisation included the majority of the Cape *'ulemā* (religious scholars), states Lubbe (1989: 62), it became a representative body rather than an exclusive fraternity of theologians. Its main focus at the time was purely religious matters, and as Bangstad (2007) explains, defined apartheid as a non-religious issue for as long as it did not infringe on the religious rights of Muslims. It was only with the implementation of the Group Areas Act, during the 1950s and 1960s, and its inherent threat to the location of *masājid* (mosques), that the MJC, as the first religious organisation to do so, condemned apartheid in 1961 (Bangstad, 2007: 224).

In 1994, the newly elected president Nelson Mandela introduced the '*Rainbow nation*' concept to a post-apartheid South Africa, which essentially called for people to understand their own identity. This need to understand their own identity led to curious interpretations thereof within the Muslim community, especially in the Western Cape. According to Jeppie (2001: 82), Muslims began to think of themselves in terms of multiple or layered identities, with the label of Muslim being just one of those identities. The transition in identity also represented a struggle in terms of how to maintain the primary identity, namely, that I am a Muslim. Taylor (1989: 27) explains that when people see their identity as being partly defined by a moral or spiritual commitment, they are not just attaching themselves to a particular background, but they are in fact saying that this is their frame of reference, and how they discern between good and bad. According to Taylor (1989: 34), what this highlights is the critical link between identity and a type of orientation, that self-knowledge is morally contextualised, and that: *We are selves only in that*

certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me'.

If apartheid South Africa had protected Islām and its significance for its adherents, then democracy, with its notions of equality, accessibility and self-determination, was also the beginning of two distinct binaries amidst the continuation of an ambivalence, which is to be found amongst any group of people: while younger Muslims were challenging traditional understandings of Islām, more conservative interpretations were being institutionalised (Vahed, 2006). Besides a renewed fervour in personal devoutness, which according to Vahed (2006), often included a specific affiliation with a *sheikh* (spiritual mentor), the notion of truth became synonymous with the *'ulemā* (religious scholars). The latter point is a critical one, since any form of difference or debate with the *'ulemā* (religious scholars) in fact meant a difference or debate with the truth.

With its entrance on to the delicate landscape of globalisation and its pride in a secular constitution, post-apartheid South Africa abolished the death penalty and adopted several policies, which are fundamentally at odds with a traditional Islamic worldview, such as the legalisation of abortion, gambling and pornography. According to Nasr (2010: 18), for traditional Islām, all morality is derived from the Qur'an and *ahādith* (words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), which are related to the *Sharī'ah*, or divine law. He explains that while traditional Islām accepts the possibility of giving new opinions or independent judgement *(ijtihād)* on the basis of traditional legal principles, these are always based on the principles of analogy *(qiyās)*, consensus of opinion *(ijmā)*, and judicial preference *(istihsān)*. And so, parallel to a nation's newly established democracy, began the stirring of a new struggle – one, which Omar (2005: 6) describes as Muslims beginning to turn inward and separating themselves from the dominant political discourse.

Essentially, two types of Muslim identities emerged out of post-apartheid South Africa. On the one hand, Muslims embraced the concept of a democratic government. According to Omar (2005: 6), they supported the broader vision of the nation, while simultaneously pursuing their own agenda, such as the recognition of Muslim Personal

Law within the South African legal system. Manjra (1999) argues that if one considers the number of Muslim candidates in the South African National Assembly and National Council of Provinces, of which the vast majority belongs to the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), then a critical identity shift has taken place from that of Muslim South Africans to South African Muslims. Perhaps this is best captured in the Western Cape in particular, where Ebrahim Rasool, a former leader of the Call of Islam, was elected as the first Muslim premier of the Western Cape – the first Muslim premier in any province in South Africa and, as of August 2010, the first Muslim ambassador to America.

The second type of Muslim identity is situated at the opposite end of the continuum, which Omar (2005: 6) describes as a negative tension between Islamic identity and South African citizenship – conceivably most vehemently characterised by the actions of two organisations in particular. One is the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC), which, in 1994, shortly before South Africa's first democratic elections, called for a boycott thereof by Muslims. And while this call might have been rejected by the majority of Muslims, its position was being echoed by another organisation, namely, People against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad). On the surface of it, this organisation was established in 1996 with the purpose of ridding mostly impoverished areas from the scourge of drugs and crime. According to Vahed and Jeppie (2005: 256), *Pagad 'drew on elements in Islamic religious sources such as the Qur'an and practices of Prophet Muhammed (sunnah), without regard to historic context, to emphasize the believer's imperative to take direct action to achieve a morally just society.''* The fact that it was overwhelmingly fronted and supported by *hijāb*-clad (head-scarf-clad) women and men in traditional Islamic wear, known as *thawbs* (garments resembling a robe), and later, by these same men clasping Qur'ans during any media coverage, made it easy for it to be stereotyped as just another 'fundamentalist' grouping. In fact, the majority of Muslims refused to align themselves with *Pagad's* dogmatically enthused ham-fisted approach.

It is Omar's (2005: 5) contention that the state's pre-occupation with looking into possible links between Pagad and international Islamic groups, such as Hamas and Hizbollah that prevented it from understanding the underlying political agenda of the

organisation. In my opinion, the source of the underlying agenda of Pagad is embedded in a particular understanding of Islām. As Nasr (2010: 18) expounds, the Islamic world is divided into three abodes: the abode of Islām *(dār al-Islām)*, where Islam rules as a majority religion; the abode of peace *(dār al-sulh)*, where Muslims live as the minority, but have religious freedom; and the abode of conflict or war *(dār al-harb)*, where Muslims are not only in the minority, but are also in conflict with their socio-political environment in terms of their rights to practise their religion. It is my opinion, that in terms of Pagad's agenda, post-apartheid South Africa had shifted from being *dār al-sulh* (where Muslims live in the minority, but have religious freedom) to *dār al-harb* (where Muslims are not only in the minority, but are also in conflict with their socio-political environment in terms of their rights to practice their religion). It is Omar's (2005: 6) view that while the supporters of Pagad might not have been politically sophisticated, their understanding and opinion of a democratic South Africa became increasingly problematic, to the extent where Muslims began to separate themselves from the dominant political discourse - thanks both to the media and the manner in which the security police chose to deal with the organisation.

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen greater access to education, which has led to economic mobility. So while more Muslims began to relocate to previously Whites-only areas and send their children to previously Whites-only schools, the Islamic media flourished in the form of two radio stations in the Western Cape, numerous shops selling only Islamic wear, books, CD's and children's games, numerous newspapers and a TV channel (Vahed and Jeppie, 2005: 259). The onset of democracy also saw the establishment of banks and investment companies and many Muslim based schools, which Tayob (2011: 42) describes as a new development in the encounter between Islamic education and modern education. He views the establishment of Muslim-based schools as a continuation of a long process through which Muslim communities attempted to provide Islamic and secular education to its adherents. Echoing the views of Tayob, Stowasser (1994: 5) explains that for numerous religious thinkers, the objective to strengthen Islām via internal renewal is linked with the desire to actively accept and foster modernisation, and to do so in a religious context which is in harmony with the

indigenous culture. In further explanation of the establishment of Muslim-based schools, Dangor (2005: 520) explains: *'adding the curricula of secular schools to the curricula used in religious institutions cannot be expected to bridge the chasm between two systems that differ in respect of origin, worldview, objectives, methodology, and epistemology'.*

Tayob (2011: 43) ascribes the significant increase in the number of Muslim based schools after 1990 to two causes. Firstly, the South African Schools Act of 1996 made specific provision for two types of schools in post-apartheid South Africa: public and independent schools. Statistics collected at the end of 2006, he continues, show that although the number of independent Muslim schools (74) formed a small percentage of the total number of independent schools (5.74%), it was significantly higher than the proportion of Muslims in the population as a whole (2%). The Western Cape, which is home to approximately half of the Muslim population in South Africa, had the lowest number of learners at Muslim- based schools. Fataar (2005: 29) holds the view that while the South African constitution allowed communities to establish parochial institutions on condition that they did not explicitly exclude people on the basis of religion, race, or disability, the community-specific character of Muslim and other such schools, however, effectively blocked access to groups outside of that community.

The second reason emanated from the parents' concerns about the racial and religious profile of public schools. According to Tayob (2011: 44), the choice of Islamic schooling appeared to propagate and preserve racial identities of apartheid South Africa, since they were overwhelmingly attended by Coloured and Indian learners. According to Fataar (2005: 25), Muslim-based schools after 1994 *'provide an apt spotlight for understanding the varied ways in which Muslims in particular localities have been negotiating the postapartheid democratic environment. They are an expression of a confluence of global and local Islamization and other discourses, which have been playing out within changing discursive and material circumstances. The schools' experiences illustrate the complex ways in which religious discourses are given meaning and expression within local contexts.'* The notion of Islamisation within the South African context was, on the one hand, explains Tayob (2011: 5), part of a greater trend towards the decentralisation of schooling. On the other hand, it emerged from a vision to integrate Islām and secular

subjects. Muslim-based schools, he continues, claimed to provide better time management, since both religious and secular subjects were taught in one institution, as opposed to the norm of Muslim children attending secular schools during the day, and attending the *madrassah* (Muslim school) at a separate institution afterwards.

For Muslim women, there was another identity split at play – one which turned inward and further internalised their seclusion through the readily constructed facet of patriarchy, and the other which turned outward and away from the traditional roles of Muslim women as a direct rejection of patriarchal Islām. One of the manifestations of this split was the physically visible change of the dress code of Muslim women. With democratic South Africa came notions of choice, no more so than outside the home. And with choice came the conscious decision to discard the *hijāb* (head-scarf) in order to fit into the new welcoming embrace of diverse South Africa. And at the other end of the continuum of identity re-definition, was the increase in the number of Muslim men, who began to shave their heads and grow long beards, in accordance with the practices of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), and the increase in the number of Muslim women who began to wear the *hijāb (head-scarf)*, with a significant number opting to wear the full veil and loose-flowing black *thawb* (garment resembling a robe), known as the *niqāb (*face-veil). Linked to the outer display of this Islām, says Vahed (2006), many Muslims were *'retreating to an Islamic identity in their private lives and constructing boundaries around various points of contact: between men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, Muslims and the state, Islam and secularism…'*

Women in particular, it would seem, have most grappled within their trafficking between veiling and not veiling, between practising their Islām based on the doctrines of their Islamic education, or according to the dictates of non-Islamic society. Interestingly, this grappling has had seemingly less to do with dictates from the outside than individual ambivalence. Notably, since the onset of democracy, the MJC in the Western Cape has received very few requests (no more than three per year) from Muslim women for assistance to exercise the right to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) at the workplace. The most well known case in the Western Cape involved a social worker who was re-instated in 2006 after being dismissed by the Department of Correctional services for violating the

department's corporate identity by wearing a headscarf and not tucking in her shirt. Other lesser known cases have involved popular retail stores, who might have required front-end staff not to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf). But, once again, these matters were quickly resolved once the various parties simply discussed the issue.[5]

In this section I have presented the context of my research focus, and the background to the women you will encounter in the seven cases. I have depicted a very brief overview of Muslims in the Western Cape during the apartheid years, and I have explored two types of primary identities which emerged after the end of apartheid, with a particular emphasis on Muslim women. In the ensuing section I will explain the focus and main objectives of my research study. I will also provide details of how the various facets of my research study are tied into the document.

1.3. Research & Document Overview

It is my viewpoint that even in his flowing white *thawb* (garment resembling a robe) and long beard, the Muslim man's Islamic dress code has in no way been as politicised as the veiling of the Muslim woman, even when she marries this cloth with that ultimate symbol of American working class - the denim jeans. The increased wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) among women in post-apartheid South Africa converges with the post-9/11 discourse of Islamophobia, which converges with the ensuing debates about the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) in public spaces from France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Turkey to Singapore which, in turn, collides with conceptions of identity, belonging and citizenship.[6]

---

[5] The MJC has no formal database on the number of women requesting assistance. This information was gained in a telephonic interview with a religious scholar, based at the MJC.

[6] Islamophobia: a relatively unexplored term, which refers to deeply ingrained prejudices and/or hatred towards Muslims and Islam. It is a term, which specifically entered the mainstream media after 9/11.

As a Muslim woman, I have witnessed and experienced many instances where what I wore and how I presented myself created a barrier to an authentic interaction. Throughout my time as a teenager, I have struggled to marry my identity as a Muslim woman with what I perceive to be the expectations of a non-Muslim society. And as a professional, I have deliberately been undermined and challenged simply because of my *hijāb* (head-scarf). I have been asked about why I wear it, if it is to please my spouse, if I enjoy wearing it, and even if there is something wrong with my hair. Within myself and through my interaction with other Muslim women, I know that I have made my own choices about who I am and how I choose to express myself. But I find that in living in a society, where my religious community is in the minority, and where 17 years ago, I could not live where I live now, there is something missing in my attempted interactions with others in a diverse society, and in their interaction with me. I have found that inasmuch as people do not understand why I wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), they do not grasp how Islām constructs and informs my Muslim identity. And allow me to quickly add, that the construction of my Muslim identity has not always informed and allowed me to interact and understand a community other than my own.

The decision, therefore, to pursue this research study has to a large extent, been about making sense of who I am, so that I and others like me, who are in the minority, are better equipped to live and express their identity in a pluralistic society. It has also been about the realisation and recognition that there exists as much difference and diversity among Muslim women as there does in a pluralistic society. Having your identity shaped within the guise and doctrines of any religion does not necessarily allow you to make sense of how and what informs the shaping. And it seldom encourages you to step outside yourself and openly interrogate whether any of it actually makes sense. This research study is my attempt to make sense of my Islām, to know myself better so that I might know others better, and ultimately, so that others might know me better.

This dissertation, therefore, seeks to explore whether there is commensurablility or not between the lived experiences of some Muslim women and the notion of cosmopolitanism. It seeks to extend this exploration into what this (in)commensurability

holds for democratic citizenship education, as well as Islamic education. The dissertation is premised on the knowledge and experience that there are certain educational practices, which lead to the construction of the identity and practices of Muslim women. As such, I will examine how notions of knowledge and education are constructed within Islām and Islamic education. And I will pay particular attention to the types of Islamic education and practices which lead to the construction of identity in Muslim women, and how these identities can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society. And perhaps more importantly I will explore how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in, the lived experiences of Muslim women. In terms of the context of this research study, and more specifically in terms of its location in a post-apartheid and newly democratic society, I believe it is critical to examine the implications of what a possible dialogical relationship between Muslim women and cosmopolitanism can hold for democratic citizenship education and Islamic education.

If cosmopolitanism is encapsulated in the notion of a single moral community to which all humanity belongs (Nussbaum, 1997), then it should both inform, and be informed by democratic citizenship education. Benhabib (2002: 134) maintains that in order for individuals to become democratic citizens, they need to be exposed to at least three inter-related elements: collective identity, privileges of membership, and social rights and benefits. Collective identity is only possible if people are taught about each other's cultural, linguistic and religious commonalities and differences – what Waghid (2011b: 198) describes as the establishing of civil spaces where democratic citizens are taught how to share commonalities, and how to respect differences. Waghid continues that not only should people be taught about their right to enter deliberation, but that if they are to become active participants in an educative process, which is informed by democratic citizenship, then that right should be recognised by all others. Waghid holds that the process of educating people about their civil, political and social rights would teach them about the rights to protection of life, liberty, freedom of conscience, and the rights of self-determination. Ultimately, argues Waghid (2011b: 198-199): *'A democratic citizenship education would also educate people to deliberate in such a way as to offer an account of one's reasons and in turn listen to the reasons of others, and to recognize and respect people's political and social rights.'*

Now that I have explained my motivation for wanting to do this research study, I will proceed with an overview of the dissertation. Primarily using an interpretivist approach within the theoretical framework of analytical inquiry, and by depending predominantly on literature reviews, case studies and conceptual and deconstructive analyses, chapter two will commence by examining the method of philosophy of education as a research design, with a particular focus on firstly, how Muslim women should contribute to a cosmopolitan society, and secondly, how cosmopolitanism should contribute to the lived experiences of Muslim women, so that both create opportunities for democratic citizenship. My interpretivist methodology takes a feminist bias when I continue with an examination of feminism and its relationship with Islamic feminism (if any). In this section I highlight the centrality of the women in Qur'anic exegesis and their critical role within the discourse of Islām in a deeply ensconced patriarchal community. The section on feminism and Islamic feminism is followed by an analysis of the narrative inquiry as a reinforcement of philosophy of education. Within this examination I will position myself and my understanding and analyses of these theories, as well as explain and elaborate on my framework of thinking. To summarise, I am working within the area of philosophy of education (predominantly analytical inquiry) and integrating this positioning with a narrative approach. My methodology, which is a combination of analyses (conceptual and deconstructive) and case study research, is an interpretive inquiry, intertwined with auto-ethnography and narrativism, and with leanings towards feminism.

The third chapter introduces the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, with a particular emphasis of the concepts of *ta'lim* (teaching and learning; instruction), *ta'dib* (just action; human behaviour) and *tarbiyah* (fostering; nurturing). Attention is also given to the notion of the islamisation of knowledge, the spaces of learning within Islām, and the relationship between Muslim women and education. Chapter three, therefore, serves as an introduction and Islamic educational context to the seven women detailed in the cases of chapter four, which serves as the analytical heart of this dissertation. In the fourth chapter I present, examine and analyse the Islamic identities of seven very different women by asking questions such as, whether a Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts is a truthful representation of Islam; whether Muslim women

experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere; what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women; and whether there is a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context.

The decision to include the voices of six other women, besides myself, in this dissertation is two-dimensional. On the one hand, it brings another element to the philosophical study, an element which states that my story cannot be told in isolation from others, and that my voice cannot be the sole narrative on Muslim women's experiences. On the other hand, by turning to multiple voices, I am demonstrating the diversity of identities among Muslim women, as well as the varied views of cosmopolitanism. It needs to be stressed at the outset that this dissertation is *not* about a juxtaposition of Muslim women against the western world. Rather, it has to do with the projection of Muslim women - how that projection interfaces with cosmopolitanism and how their identities enter discourses within the spaces in which they move.

Chapter five picks up on the seven different and complex formations of identity and different representations of Muslim women, as revealed in the cases. Here I extend the construction of the data in chapter four into three key images of Muslim women as revealed, notably: Domesticity and Patriarchy; Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf); and Public/Private Participation, which I employ in my analysis of identity as imagery, and the extent to which identity is (mis)construed as imagery, and imagery is (mis)construed as identity. I conclude this chapter by showing how the three images connect with notions of cosmopolitanism and in turn how the views of cosmopolitanism should take into account the different images, and what impact this would have on cosmopolitanism.

In the sixth and final chapter I commence by showing how the continuum of images of Muslim women link to cosmopolitan ideals and how the latter has been changed by the 'new' imagery of Muslim women. In addressing two critical components of my research

question, I proceed to explore how Muslim women can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society, and how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in, the lived experiences of Muslim women. Leading from the latter I show how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism guides what it means to be a democratic citizen, and a democratic citizenship can shape Islamic education, more specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing). I conclude the dissertation by examining a reformed approach to Islamic education, its connection to democratic citizenship education, and what the implications are for teaching and learning.

Chapter

2

Philosophy, Feminism and Narrative Inquiry

2.1. Philosophy of Education as Research Approach

Perhaps in examining the construct of philosophy of education as a research approach I need to clarify the purpose of this dissertation. Is it to ascertain how Muslim women interact within a cosmopolitan society? Are Muslim women's practices of Islamic concepts justifiable representations of Islām? How justifiable are the links, if any, between the perceptions of such representations and the lived experiences of some women? Can the implications of these explorations engender a credible form of democratic citizenship education? In the instance of this dissertation, the intent to understand some Muslim women's education and the philosophies of their educational context and practice opens itself to a plurality of interpretations, which in itself would be a reflection of the pluralism of understanding of the practices of Islām both within and outside of cosmopolitanism.

By using an interpretivist methodology, I am creating space for multiple understandings and interpretations, rather than objectively verifiable truths. As such, I am in agreement with Biesta's (2001: 125) viewpoint that: *'Philosophy of education is not there to provide ultimate answers… It exists to raise and introduce doubt'.* As a research study in philosophy of education, my discourse is aimed at identifying and analysing a problem, and then looking or offering different options to addressing the problem. As such, there will always be the space for uncertainty and doubt. How does one justly establish how Muslim women should contribute to a cosmopolitan society in order to create an opportunity for democratic

citizenship? And indeed, how should a cosmopolitan society justly contribute to the lived experiences of Muslim women in order to create an opportunity for democratic citizenship? And who determines this? Heyting (2001: 2) refers to a distinction that could be made between '*knowledge of an objective world*' and '*knowledge of a humanly perceived and experienced world*'. And so when this dissertation talks about the need to understand what Islamic education - and there are different types of education - seeks to achieve with and through some Muslim women, and what some Muslim women seek to achieve through Islamic education, the type of knowledge produced here is that based on perception, interpretation, lived experiences and stimuli of practices, that are both contextual and inter-cultural. Consequently, this study is framed within an interpretivist methodology.

Dewey (2004: 173) provides, in my opinion, a more lucid description of this type of knowledge. He states that it is more appropriate to associate philosophy with thinking in its dissimilarity from knowledge. Knowledge, he argues is science, representing objects that have been ordered. Thinking, on the other hand, says Dewey, is projective in reference. To this end, as much as philosophy of education *'exists to raise and introduce doubt'* (Biesta, 2001: 125), the multiplicity of human experiences, thinking and practices are in themselves manifestations of the plurality of elucidation and understanding. So perhaps in striving towards answers to a specific question as a methodological approach, the justification lies embedded in respecting other positions as opposed to positioning the opinion of the self. And so a re-hypothesised question could be how a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women, and how this attempt at a dialogical relationship could lead to an opportunity for democratic citizenship.

According to Dewey, philosophy of education is not an external application of ready-made notions to a system, but rather an unambiguous formulation of the problems faced by contemporary social life. In support of Dewey, my understanding of philosophy of education is neither one based on abstract theories, nor is it just conceptual. To me it offers the space and opportunity for real life experiences, for tangible narrative inquiry. And inasmuch as philosophy of education creates the forum for an investigation of

contemporary social experiences, narrative inquiry, serves as an underpinning of philosophy of education as research approach. Muslim women, as one element of contemporary social life, are perceivably expected to practise Islamic concepts in a particular way. To contemporary social life these practices might be perceived as being instances of oppression. And again the latter viewpoint could easily be dismissed as an opinion based on ignorance. On the same basis, cosmopolitan society lays claim to offering a haven to all of humanity, which is linked via moral and ethical codes, rather than political alliances. Yet, Muslim women's experiences of this abode are increasingly being politicized to the extent, that questions needs to be asked about identity within, and belonging to this community.

By using an interpretivist methodology within the tradition of analytical inquiry, the interpretivist analysis aims *'to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, analyzing and understanding his or her reasons for their actions.'* (Waghid, 2003: 47). In order to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, one also needs to recognise the purpose, process and nature of the specific action. He avers that interpretivist methodology requires two core inquiries: firstly, the self-understanding of the individual which form the basis of all social interpretation; secondly, human consciousness is transparent, since it does not obscure any deeper understanding of circumstances. But there is another layer to Waghid's contention, and that is that attention needs to be given to the origin and context of the situation to which he refers. Situations are often not just a state of affairs and circumstances. They are informed and constructed by individuals. As Harding (1987: 6) explains: '*Reflection of how social phenomena get defined as problems in need of explanation in the first place quickly reveals that there is no such thing as a problem without a person (or groups of them) who have this problem; a problem is always a problem for someone or other.'*

In the context of this dissertation it is recognising the purpose of not only Islamic education in terms of Muslim women, but it is also recognising the purpose for which they employ this education. So for some Muslim women the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) might be an action of their understanding of their Islamic education. It might also

be a process of how they choose to live their Islamic identity and action their citizenship. In addition, states Nasr (2010: 69), *'Their specific applications have depended over time on the different cultural and social milieus in which Islam has grown and have therefore been very diverse'.* He goes on to describe how different Muslim women from different geographical regions display their Islām in very different ways, for example, some forms of veil only cover the head, while others include most of the face. Besides the fact that the Pakistani woman's Islamic dress is decidedly different from that of the Senegalese or the Syrian, explains Nasr (2010: 69), the mere understanding of the covering called *hijāb* (head-scarf) has never been the same among nomads, villagers and city dwellers. In agreement with Nasr, Harding (1987: 7) explains that: *'Not only do gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience.'* Of course, there are Muslim women for whom both the action and the living process of wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf) or any other distinctive attire, such as a loose cloak or the traditional *jallabuyyah* (long dress), is not a requirement in terms of their (self) understanding of their Islamic education.

Philosophy of education as a design approach offers both rationale and doubt, which is not a contradiction in terms if you share Dewey's understanding of it being an unambiguous formulation of the problems faced by contemporary social life. In theory, Islamic education holds designated roles and identities for its adherents. One of these roles might be that a Muslim woman is obligated to practise her Islamic identity via a physical garb, which announces her social distinctiveness before she introduces herself. In contemporary social life, her distinctive identity might be problematised enough for her practice to be (re)-defined as politically and socially oppressive and repressive. In between the rationale and the doubt is the narrative, which in the case of this dissertation, will be constructed in a feminist mould. This dissertation, then, is a philosophy of education study where a particular problem has been identified and where I look at interpretivism with feminist leanings to address the problem.

2.2. The Capricious Voice of Feminism

The masculine and feminine, states Harding (1987: 7) are always separate groupings within every class, race and culture, which means that within every race, class and culture, the lived experiences of women and men are different. She continues that: *'Not only do gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience'.* These varying gender experiences, behaviour patterns and viewpoints, says Harding, have neither received enough attention, nor have traditional theories been applied in a way that would have given new understandings to women's participation in social life, or to men's, for that matter. To Ahmed (1992: 69), *Women's invisibility, and the invisibility of the concept of gender as an analytic category, has meant not only that the import to women of historical change has remained unexplored but also that the extent and the specific ways in which dominant cultures and societies have been shaped – in all areas of thought and socialization – by the particular conceptions of gender informing them have similarly remained unexplored'.*

One avenue to redress these unexplored understandings is to construct it in a feminist mould to which I referred in the previous section. A feminist methodology, Harding (1987: 3) explains, would look for illustrations of newly recognised patterns. In a similar vein, Shaikh (2003: 147) explains that in feminism there is sensitivity to the structural marginalisation of women in society; it engages in activities geared at altering gender power relations in order to strive for a society that facilitates human wholeness for all, meaning a society that is based on principles of gender justice, human equality, and freedom from structures of oppression. The problem, however, with feminist theory, debates Butler (1999: 4), is that it is premised on the assumption that there is some existing identity, tacitly understood via the category of women, that both instigates feminist interests and objectives, and comprises the subject for whom political representation is pursued.

To Butler (1999: 6), the construction and design of a language that sufficiently embodies women, as ensconced in feminist theory, has seemed necessary to cultivate the political visibility of women – both in terms of Ahmed's physical invisibility of women and the invisibility of the concept of gender as an analytic grouping. The theoretical simplicity,

however, of Butler's proposal of a designated language to adequately represent women belies the multifarious substance of the real life experiences of women. Indeed, it is this marriage between the political element and feminist theory which has created a tension within feminist discourse, since, the very subject of women is no longer understood in unwavering or enduring terms. Consequently, contends Butler (1999: 5), instead of only focusing on how women might become more fully represented in language and politics, *'Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women", the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought.'* It is problematic, maintains Butler, for feminism to assume that the term 'women' signifies a common identity.

In Riley's (1987: 35) estimation, the construction of 'women' is historically and indirectly linked to categories which themselves are in flux. She describes 'women' as a *'Volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on; "women" is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity while for the individual "being a woman" is also inconstant and can't provide an ontological foundation; yet instabilities of the category of "women" are the sine qua non of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and in short, without any life.'* In extending Gadol's (1976) distinction between gender and sex, namely that sex is a given, as opposed to gender being both socially constructed and contested, Butler (1999: 5) argues that '*being a woman'* cannot be the sine qua non. The term 'woman', asserts Butler, is in itself restricted, since gender is not always composed coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with social, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively comprised identities.

Butler (1999: 6) deliberates that the political assumption that there must be a collective or universal basis for feminism is often conflated with a similar assumption that the oppression of women is singular in nature. Implicit in this assumption of singularity of experience is the belief that women own a singular identity regardless of culture, class or race. But this presumed universality of the subject of feminism, explains Butler (1999: 7), *'is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions'*. As

Badran (2009: 199) clarifies, gender, as an analytical construct, is always tainted by elements of race, class, ethnicity and culture. What this means is that the constructions and goals of feminism as understood within one type of society might not necessarily be applicable to another society. Furthermore, states Shaikh (2003: 149), *The homogenization of women within dominant Western feminist paradigms relates to the construction of women as a priori victims and as "powerless"*. This means that women are labeled as an oppressed group before the process of analysis. To Shaikh, this type of construction prevents the examination of particular ideological frameworks that might generate a certain context of disempowerment for a specific group of women.

Benhabib (1994: 2) claims that women no longer know who the 'we' in women are, which makes it politically suspect. It attempts to establish a so-called community of opinions and estimations where there are in fact none. She contends that the identity of every 'we' is a consequence of the collective struggles for power among groups – both by excluding and oppressing others. Benhabib (1994: 2) describes contemporary feminist theory and practice as *'basking in fragmentation, enjoying the play of differences and celebrating the opacity, fracturing, and heteronomy of it all'*. To Butler (1999) it is the projection of feminism as a flawless and seamless category of women that has led to the fragmentation of feminism from the very women that feminism claims to be representing. What this misplaced assumption reveals, maintains Butler (1999: 8), is the de rigueur limits of identity politics, but also the possible opportunity for a 'postfeminist' cultural politics: *Within feminist political practice, a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity appears to be necessary in order to formulate a representational politics that might revive feminism on other grounds'.*

On the one hand, then, the notion of a collective or communal woman is an unsubstantiated one. On the other hand, even if this collective woman is corroborated, there is still the persistent issue of which women are constructed within the 'we' and which remain outside. The question for this dissertation is: where in these (de)constructions does the Muslim woman fit in? Can one even talk about feminism within an Islamic paradigm given (mis)perceptions of the role of Muslim women? It's a question, which to some, as Jeenah (2006: 29) points out, might be a contradiction in

terms, where the idea of a movement for women's liberation having the qualifier Islamic might seem strange. As a Muslim woman living in a post-apartheid South Africa, and particularly within a post 9/11 climate, it is difficult to separate notions of identity of Muslim women from that of the identity of Islām, and citizenship. In order for me to express my identity and lived experiences as a Muslim woman, I need to have a sense that both that identity and lived experiences are understood and valued in the society in which I find myself. Inasmuch as my citizenship as a South African has a place within who I am, I can expect that who I am not only holds a place for me in my society, but that who I am adds value to the type of citizenship I am able to offer.

2.3. Islamic Feminism and Muslim Women

Issues of dress code, inheritance, marriage, divorce, sexuality, purity, modesty, abuse, honour killings, polygyny, education, leadership, social expectations and interactions in Islām are all couched in the debates surrounding women. To Stowasser (1994: 5) the centrality of the Muslim woman is symbolic of the primary aspects of the *'Islamic struggle for the maintenance of indigenous values and cultural authenticity'*. In her understanding, the questions about Muslim women provide a parameter of a greater pursuit for the role of Islām in a modern world. Having knowledge of which factors restrict women in concert with their interpretation and implementation of textual sources says Wadud (2006: 77), demonstrates that patriarchal actions among Muslims are evidence of factors other than the religious sources themselves.

I am of the view that a large part of the answer to the question of whether we can even talk about Islamic feminism lies in the (misplaced) notion of the Muslim woman as somehow being symbolic of something. What or whom is she supposedly symbolising, other than herself? Who constructed her as the symbol? Perhaps the discussion of any kind of feminism in Islām is only plausible and real if two conditions are met. One is that the objectification of the Muslim woman is replaced by a subject. And two is that the construction of feminism is indigenous to an Islamic worldview, rather than one which has been constructed within a secular or western feminist discourse. Shaikh (2003: 150) asserts that within many western feminist discourses the norms of First World women

have often been set as the norm against which to measure Third World and non-western women. The comparison includes the imposition of western cultural ideals on women, who live and come from very different religious and cultural traditions.

In agreement with Shaikh, Badran (2009: 2) contends that unlike Islamic feminism, which locates religion (Islām) as central to its construction, western feminism has been largely secular in the sense of being constructed and voiced outside of religious frameworks. The two conditions, then, of Muslim women as subjects, and a construction of feminism from an Islamic worldview, are especially important to Shaikh. She argues (2003: 151) that if Muslim women construct and accept feminism only as a western concept, they are in fact forfeiting feminism as the property of the west, which serves only to trivialise the indigenous histories of remonstrations against patriarchy by non-western women.

Wadud's (2010) understanding of feminism in Islām is in fact the principles of Islām. She explains that not only does Islamic feminism critically examine the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* (living example of the prophet Muhammad PBUH), *ahādith* (pl. sayings and acts of the prophet Muhammad PBUH) and the *fiqh* (jurisprudence), but it takes responsibility for the formulation of Islām as a living reality of which women were, and continue to be, a part. The challenge for Muslim women, and the reason they continue to be excluded and marginalised, continues Wadud (2006: 8), is because Muslim men assume and maintain authority not only based on their own interpretations of the sources (the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*), but also because the conception of the public domain of an Islamic paradigm still focuses upon a fixed centre in public space as predominantly defined and inhabited by men. To Jeenah (2006: 30), an understanding of Islamic feminism is firstly, an ideology that uses the Qur'an and the Sunnah to provide the ideals for gender relationships, as well as the weapons in the struggle to transform society in a way that gender equality is accepted as a principle around which society is structured. Secondly, it is the struggle of Muslim women and men for the emancipation of women based on this ideology.

To make sense of the understandings of Wadud, Jeenah and Badran, one has to look at the foundational emergence of Islām. History, says Esposito (1988: 4), depicts the

prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the messenger of the Qur'an, to be a protector of women's rights. Esposito explains that the Qur'an outlawed infanticide, stressed the woman's right to a contract marriage, granted her rights to inherit, control over her dower and property, and provided for the protection of the widow and orphans, with a specific emphasis on the girl orphan. According to Esposito and DeLong-Bas (2001: 4), some of the most important and fundamental reforms of customary law introduced in the Qur'an were designed to improve the status of women and strengthen the family in Muslim society.

The three primary arenas of reform were marriage, divorce and inheritance (Esposito and DeLong-Bas, 2001: 4). The Qur'anic verses referred to are found in the fourth *surah* or chapter *An-Nisā* (The Women), in which the principles governing Muslim law and social practice are explained. Concerning the orphans, an excerpt from verse two reads:

وَآتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ ۖ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا

To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin.'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah An-Nisā [Chapter: The Women] 4:2)

On marriage, an excerpt from verse four states:

وَآتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِن طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَن شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا

'And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah An-Nisā [Chapter: The Women] 4:4)

Regarding the principles of inheritance, a portion of verse seven reads:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۚ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا

'From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,— a determinate share.'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah An-Nisā [Chapter: The Women] 4:7)

According to Wadud (2002), there are more passages in the Qur'an that address issues pertaining to women, as individuals, as part of a family and, as members of a community, than all the other issues combined. So strictly speaking from a point of religion, the Qur'an introduced far-reaching changes to the personal and social conditions of Muslim women under circumstances of a deeply ensconced Arabian patriarchy. It is important to have an understanding of the centrality of the Qur'an in the construction of Islamic feminism in order to make sense of the relationship between Muslim women and Islām. But as Wadud (2006: 22) states, it is probably more important to recognise that women and women's experiences are mostly excluded from historical and current methods of interpretive reference: *Therefore interpretations of the textual sources, applications of those interpretations when constructing laws to govern personal and private Islamic affairs and to construct public policies and institutions to control Islamic policies and authority, are based upon male interpretive privilege'.*

For some Muslim feminists, explains Shaikh (2003: 153), without claiming that there is a monolithic Islamic identity, *'Islam is not one among many equally weighted identities but rather a primary source of understanding one's very being in the world.'* As a result, says Shaikh (2003: 155), the majority of Muslim women reject those feminist discourses that have been implicated and continue to be implicated in attacking Islām and Muslim culture. But the same

Muslim women who reject these discourses also sit in criticism of their own Muslim communities, where notions of patriarchy are the dominant discourse.

Islām as the primary identity among Muslim women can have far-reaching effects for themselves, if they have no understanding of Qur'anic exegesis. As Barlas (2002: 3) points out, *'Even though Muslim women directly experience the consequences of oppressive misreadings of religious texts, few question their legitimacy, and fewer still have explored the liberatory aspects of the Qur'an's teachings. Yet without doing so, they cannot contest the association, falsely constructed by misreading scripture, between sacred and sexual oppression'.* While inequality and discrimination are not directly derived from the teachings of the Qur'an but rather from Qur'anic exegesis (the secondary texts), explains Barlas, the association between sacred and sexual oppression serves as a strong argument for inequality and discrimination, especially in light of the fact that many people have either not read the Qur'an or have unquestioningly accepted its patriarchal exegesis.

In stark contrast to western constructions of feminism, Badran (2009: 2) points out that from the very outset religion has been fundamental to the feminisms that Muslim women have constructed – this regardless of whether they have been labeled 'secular feminism' or 'Islamic feminism'. To her, the secular model of feminism is located within the context of a secular territorial nation-state composed of equal citizens, protective of religion, but regardless of religious affiliation. At odds with this model expounds Badran, Islamic feminism rejects the dichotomy between the concepts of secular and religious. It emerged as a new discourse or interpretation of Islām and gender, based on *'ijtihād* (independent analysis) of the Qur'an and other religious texts. As such, she continues, Islamic feminism is not simply a reform of religion and society; it is in fact a fundamental alteration towards an egalitarian Islām, which in fact makes it distinctly different from secular feminism.

Central to the difference between these two feminisms is Badran's (2009: 2) assertion that *'Emergent secular feminism insisted upon the implementation of gender equality in the public sphere while acquiescing in the notion of gender complementarity in the private sphere or the domain of the family'.* They used Islamic modernist debates, she states, to insist upon equal access for women to

the public sphere, such as the workplace; they called for the rights of Muslim women to participate in congregational worship in the mosque; and they demanded complementary roles and responsibilities in the family, with a specific challenge to men to honour their duties, which essentially limited them to a patriarchal construction of the family. Through their own *'ijtihād* (independent analysis), argues Badran (2009: 4), Islamic feminists had made convincing arguments that the patriarchal representation of the family does not agree with the Qur'anic principles of human equality and gender justice. Similarly, Islamic feminism does not locate the spheres of public and private on opposite ends of a continuum. Instead, she explains, by supporting an egalitarian model of both family and society, Islamic feminists promote a more flowing public-private continuum of gender equality, which not only discards the public-private division, but also insists upon gender equality within the religious domain of the public sphere, essentially focusing on religious professions and mosque ritual.

When we examine the South African landscape of Islamic feminism, two critical features are highlighted. One is that feminism transpired out of the national liberation struggle against apartheid in the 1980s, and as Jeenah explains, that Islamic feminism in particular was born out of the association between the liberation struggle and the Islamic movements, such as the Call of Islām and the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM). In describing the emergence of Islamic feminism from the national struggle, Jeenah (2006: 31) states, *'From a Muslim perspective the process began with an Islamist discourse influenced mainly by international Muslim politics. Islamic anti-Apartheid activists were also part of the nationalist (and class) struggle and attempted to develop discourses of this experience. These discourses, overlapping with the general human rights discourses, led to attempted Islamic discourses of human rights. These Islamic human rights discourses then interfaced with the South African women's rights/feminist discourses, and were heavily influenced by international Islamic modernist discourses and international Islamic discourses on gender equality, to result in indigenous South African feminist discourses'.*

The other feature which surfaces is the illustration of Islamic feminism as emerging from a public-private domain. According to Jeenah, there were four groups of people responding to the challenges of Islamic feminism: women with the liberation movement

as a background; men with the liberation movement as a background; women who came from an Islamic movement background; and men who came from an Islamic movement background. But, he stresses, the two groups – dissected along gender lines – wanted different things. To him, it was as if the women had the world, but were trying to find their space in the mosque, while the men, who already had the mosque and the world, were open to sharing the world in terms of the death of apartheid, but were not prepared to share the mosque. And so while the men felt secure to have the women as their partners in the struggle against apartheid, they felt less secure about having them in the mosque, since as Jeenah (2006: 34) explains, this was too close to home, *'And home is where patriarchy is most starkly powerful in the personal relationships between men and women.'*

At the time of the *'women in mosques campaign'* two parallel events were re-defining the spatial and political positions of women in apartheid South Africa. On one level women were demanding spatial recognition in their rights to access and pray in the mosque. This demand is a profoundly ironic one, since when any South African woman travels on her pilgrimage to Mecca, there are two acts of worship, which are of sacred significance. One is praying in the second holiest mosque in Islam, *al-Masjid al-Nabawi* in Medina, also known as the Prophet's mosque, since it is not only located on the site of a mosque which was built by him, but it is also next to his house and contains his tomb. Two is praying in the most sacred mosque, *al-Masjid al-Haram*, the Holy mosque, home of the *Ka'aba*, in Mecca.[7] The incongruity deepens when you consider that when the South African woman, like any other Muslim woman, prays in *al-Masjid al-Haram* she could do so by standing alongside the very men, who deny her the more basic courtesy of designated space in her hometown. Add to this the overwhelming sentiment that to the majority of Muslims in South Africa, Saudi Arabia, the location of these two great mosques, and to a large extent, the theological heart of Islām, is looked upon as the abode of Islam *(dār al-Islām)*, then the paradox begins to border on the farceical. The point I am trying to make here is that as the geographical birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia holds emotional

---

[7] The *Ka'aba* is the most sacred site in Islam, believed to be built by the prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail. The *Ka'aba* is used as a point of direction for all Muslims around the world when they perform their daily prayers.

attachment for all Muslims. This does not detract from the fact that in reality there continues to be serious political criticism levelled at the Saudi regime from all sectors of South African Muslims – for amongst other matters, the desecration of historical sites, and the violation of human rights.

While not as common in the Western Cape, to this day women in other provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, continue to experience immense difficulties in their right to access.[8] Perhaps the farceical can be explained in terms of the identities of men and women, and more specifically how these identities are politicized in terms of their respective relationships and interactions with public and private spaces. To Hassim (1991: 73), *'Women are defined primarily in relation to their location within the private sphere, roles defined in terms of family. For men, it is the public role outside the family which is emphasized.'* It is patriarchy, she states, which forms the barrier between the public and private space, to such an extent that the western political tradition has tended to limit its politics to the public realm, thus marginalising women. Consequently, says Hassim, a whole range of 'private' issues, such as child care and family violence are omitted from the mainstream political debate, instead being labeled as moral concerns.

On another level, another challenge was rattling the *ulemā* (religious scholars) – a challenge which Jeenah (2006: 35) describes as a development which affected Muslim women very directly in the private domain, that is in the sphere of life where patriarchy thrives – the campaign for a Muslim Personal Law. The absence of a Muslim Person Law struck at the very core of the identity and legitimacy of the Muslim community in South Africa. Since Muslim marriages were not recognised in terms of South African law, any children of these marriages were considered to be illegitimate, ultimately implying an illegitimate community. In another ironic twist, while the apartheid government at the time significantly dangled the promise of a Muslim Personal Law, it was obstructed by certain elements of the Muslim community, no more so than by the Muslim Youth Movement, who, like other progressive Muslims at the time, viewed any offer by the apartheid government as synonymous with its reprehensible policies (Jeenah, 2006: 36).

---

[8] Like the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng are provinces in South Africa.

PHILOSOPHY, FEMINISM AND NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Some 30 years later this same determination for an establishment of a Muslim Marriages Bill, situated within a Muslim Personal Law has evoked varied responses. There are those, mostly Muslim women and feminist organizations, such as the Women's Legal Centre, who offer unconditional support for a Muslim Personal Law. There are groups, such as the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) and the *Majlisul Ulama* (body of theologians based in Port Elizabeth) and the *Jamiat-al-Ulama* in KwaZulu-Natal, who outrightly condemn the Law, going as far as denigrating it as un-Islamic. Then there is the United *Ulemā* Council South Africa, which has bestowed on itself the unenviable task of trying to broker a 'process of engagement' between these two opposing viewpoints, and who (the United *Ulemā* Council) initially wanted a parallel system of *Sharīʿah* (Islamic law) courts. They have since agreed to having Muslim assessors present during trials to assist judges on matters pertaining to *Sharīʿah*. Inasmuch as the first two mentioned groupings in particular have exchanged emotional diatribes, most notably over the airwaves of the two community radio stations of Voice of the Cape (in support of the Bill) and Radio 786 (opposed to the Bill), the debate has given voice to the different interpretations of the lived experiences of Muslim men and women. One voice sees the proposed Muslim Marriages Bill as a legal framework which will protect women, and put a stop to the entrenched inequality which mostly women experience when their marriage dissolves, or when her husband dies intestate. The other voice argues that the state has no business legislating on matters of religious doctrine.

Thus far, in this section, I have introduced philosophy of education as a research approach. I have explained that by using an interpretivist methodology, I am creating space for multiple understandings and interpretations, rather than objectively verifiable truths. And in relation to the interpretivist methodology, I have clarified that when this dissertation talks about the need to understand what Islamic education seeks to achieve within and through some Muslim women and what some Muslim women seek to achieve through Islamic education, the type of knowledge produced here is that based on perception, interpretation, lived experiences and stimuli of practices, that are both contextual and inter-cultural. Next I presented various viewpoints on feminism as an introduction to the essential differences between what can be understood to be secular

feminism and Islamic feminism. In concluding this section I focused on the contextual base of this research study by examining the emergence of Islamic feminism from within an apartheid society to a post-apartheid South Africa.

In further elucidation of the framework of this dissertation, the next section will look at narrative inquiry as an instance of an interpretivist methodology, as well as an introduction to the narratives contained in the case studies.

2.4. Narrative Inquiry as an Instance of an Interpretivist Methodology

In the former section on Philosophy of Education as a research approach I elaborated that this dissertation would have a feminist moulding, which I then proceeded to introduce and discuss in the two sections dealing with feminist theory and Islamic feminism. In attempting to address the purpose of this dissertation, which is to examine and analyse the identity and role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, and whether there is a possibility of a dialogical relationship for the sake of democratic citizenship, I need to define and describe my role and the roles of the women included in the cases, and why specifically I have turned to narrative inquiry as method. Let me start by describing this dissertation as a combination of an autobiography and a narrative inquiry, couched in philosophy of education, while simultaneously underpinning interpretivist methodology. By this I mean that in terms of this dissertation I do not simply approach philosophy of education as conceptual, but that I use it as an opportunity for narrative inquiry.

Essentially, the research methodology I am employing is interpretivism - one that closely connects narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography. By bringing my own personal narrative to this dissertation, I am exploring my own life experiences in relation to research. And I am also explicitly stating that in exploring the identities of some Muslim women, there is only subjectivity – in what they describe, and indeed in what I construct. To me, it is a dual resonance of subjective life experiences giving shape to a theoretical understanding of what is meant by Muslim woman identity. My life story, therefore, provides meaning to

my research study, and, in turn, my research study provides meaning to my life story. But this does not mean that I am the protagonist; if anything, I am a character looking to the stories of others, in order to make sense of my own life story. Ellis (2004: 13) describes auto-ethnography as an auto-biographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness. I do not hold the answers, I do not hold the dominant perspective, and I do not yet know what I hope to find out about myself. As such, this dissertation is a deeply personal process, at once revealing and critically analysing my identity as a Muslim woman.

The decision to include the stories of six other women, besides myself, is premised on the assertion that ultimately I cannot begin to tell my own story without looking at and listening to the stories of those around me – to whom I am linked, have been shaped by, and through whom my own story makes sense. I am reminded of Kristeva's (1980: 36) post-structuralist intertextuality – the shaping of texts by other texts, where meaning is not directly transmitted from author to reader, but rather through the sifting of codes, which are conveyed to both the author and the reader via other texts. Every text, therefore, is influenced by prior and other texts; every human story is fashioned by prior and other human stories. It is within the spaces of other human stories, cultures, traditions, politics and society that my own story lives. No human story is singular in meaning or experience. Consequently, maintains Fay (1996: 186), *'no life can be a story "in itself" because the stories of lives are not self-contained: as new causal outcomes resulting from that life emerge, new stories can and will be told about it'*.

According to Conle (2000: 49), humans tell and listen to stories; they use narrative to communicate and understand people and events, which takes place at both an individual and social level. To Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2), *'humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives'*. They say that while the study of narrative therefore is the study of the ways humans experience the world, they caution that there is no one definitive story to be told about a life. Fay (1996: 178) describes human lives as enacted stories, which offer an essential unity and meaning to both our own experiences and to those of experiences of others. To this end, he argues, both self-knowledge and the

knowledge of others are needed in order to clarify the story. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) contend that education and educational research are the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories. According to them, narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study, which suggests that narrative is methodologically interpretivist. Consequently, elaborate Connelly and Clandinin, people lead storied lives and tell stories, but narrative researchers describe such lives, tell stories of them and write narratives of experiences.

From an educational perspective, state Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 3), the narrative inquiry brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived. They say that one of the critical components immersed within the inquiry is the relationship between the one who tells the story and the one about whom the story is being told. This relationship needs to be one which is clearly constructed, one in which a lucid distinction is drawn between a need to establish the human story, or to generate a story which actually does not exist. In other words, is this inquiry genuinely about understanding the other person, or am I seeking to fashion something which merely serves to support my own perceptions? This is exactly why Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 4) emphasise the importance of an equal voice between the researcher and the participant. To them it is essential that the participant gets to tell his/her story first, so that she/he, *'who has long been silenced in the research relationship is given the time and space to tell his or her story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long held'*. The authors state that by galvanising the voice of the participant, the two narratives of the researcher and the participant evolve into a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through inquiry.

The key difference between more traditional uses of didactic and strategic narrative, and narrative inquiry, elaborates Conle (2000: 54), is the open-endedness and empirical nature of the latter. This open-endedness is a critical point within the narrativeal methodology, since the story must be open to being re-told – *'The narrative insights of today are the chronological events of tomorrow.'* Narrative inquiry, state Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 7), depends on other criteria besides those of validity, reliability and generalisability, such as

scene, plot, authenticity, selectivity, plausibility, familiarity, or narrative truth. Data can be drawn from field notes, journals, interview transcripts, storytelling, letters, as well as autobiographical writing – all of which lend themselves to informing the temporal and contextual facets of the research study.

Not without its complexities, it is not always easy to make sense of the stories being told and re-told in the narrative inquiry. The reason for this elucidate Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 9), is that the researcher is still relating her own ongoing life story, while it is being lived, re-lived and re-told: *'We re-story earlier experiences as we reflect on later experiences so the stories and their meanings shift and change over time'.* Danto (1962: 146) refers to this practice as the 'narrative sentence' in which an earlier event or object is described in terms of later events or objects. For Fay (1996: 189), *'the relation between the past, and the present, and their interpretation is not simple or unidirectional; rather it is dialectical.'* Fay argues that narratives are not discovered, but constructed from one's own point of view. Consequently, say Connelly and Clandinin, we re-story earlier experiences as we reflect on later experiences to the extent that stories as well as their meaning alter and vary over time. Within this altering and varying of story and meaning lies a serious pitfall in that truth and meaning can be replaced by misperception and untruth. This, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 10), can (mis)lead the researcher down two possible paths: one is that she fakes the data and the other is she may use the data to relate an untruth or deception.

Narrative, however, is about and from humans; it is about life and is life. And this is in essence what sets it apart as a qualitative method of inquiry. It gives shape and meaning to the personal lived experiences of humans, which is at the heart of this dissertation – assigning voices to Muslim women, so that an understanding can be gained of their lives, their practices, and their being. And in so doing, that these voices can begin to find their place within a cosmopolitan society, while simultaneously experiencing the notions of cosmopolitanism within their Muslim identities.

If I could briefly return to Kristeva's intertextuality, then the narrative is that vehicle through which the reader is able to enter and live within the texts/the stories of the

women in chapter four. The narrative has the capacity to incorporate you, the reader, it allows for spaces of reflection, both in commonality and difference. In preparation for introducing the seven women in the cases, the ensuing chapter will begin with an examination of my own exposure to Islamic education, followed by an analysis of the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, and ending with a look at the depiction of Muslim women in Islamic education, and indeed how Islamic education shapes the identities and social practices of Muslim women.

Chapter

3

Conceptions of Knowledge and Education in Islām

3.1. Introducing my Islām

*M*adrassah (Muslim school) classes were intensely boring, the content of which was undeniably eclipsed by the sternness of the *mu'allima's* (female Muslim teacher) drone. That she managed to deal with quite a number of areas within Islamic education would only dawn on me years later. Unlike my school programme, the *madrassah* (Muslim school) programme as a formal curriculum was non-existent. If most of the children were struggling to recite their daily Qur'anic lessons, then that would become the entire week's programme. And if she stumbled on the fact that half of us had no idea how to perform our daily prayers, the focus would shift accordingly. Thankfully, there were no examinations or projects, the likes of which are the norm at *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) today. So it was with great wonder that in my mid-teens two realisations dawned on me. The one was that I knew quite a bit about Islām. The other was that given that I was pretty much living my life according to the religion of Islām and its tenets, I clearly did not know enough. This thought process is not as much disjointed as it is an accurate reflection of my conscious understanding of what I was doing, and what I was supposed to be doing as a young Muslim woman.

Up to this point my education in Islām occurred through three parallel mediums – one through the one dimensional monotony of the *madrassah* (Muslim school), the other through the selective emulations of my parents, and the other through the daily rituals of my life. The use of the word 'selective' here is not fortuitous – while I was happy to

accept and own certain roles and responsibilities as enacted by my parents, there were others I intentionally steered away from. Wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf) was definitely one I chose to ignore. It was just simply and simplistically too distinctive in a society whose members were only just beginning to know one another. With the clarity of hindsight, I now accept that to a certain extent, I applied the laws of Islām within my own reference of understanding. So I might have omitted voluntary prayers, once I realised that they were not compulsory, as one instance. But there was another layer to these distinctly drawn parallels – something beneath the surface that needed to separate the experience of being Muslim from what it meant to be Muslim. My usual questioning was beginning to be replaced by a different kind of interrogation. Some received answers which satisfied the questions, a few received responses, that simply evoked more queries, and yet more questions emerged to which, in my mind, were unsatisfactory answers. So the nagging persisted, most of which centred on my own role as a Muslim, firstly, and secondly as a Muslim woman. It wasn't easy– not for me having to ask and certainly not for my *mu'allima* (female Muslim teacher), who by now had begun to resort to a standard reply: *'why don't you find out?'*

Looking back now I see that a lot of the murkiness was about the blending of religion with culture and tradition, exacerbated by the dismantling of the ideology of apartheid. As a community we were no longer *apart*. Instead we were now being invited to become *a part of*. It was in fact the beginning of two simultaneous processes – the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity/identities. And this called for another type of identity – one which emphasised the willingness to be absorbed into a diverse society – a society in which all notions of separateness had suddenly been dismantled, to be replaced by one which celebrated our sameness, rather than our differences. And as much as this was a long and hard fought for ideal, it spelled great uncertainty and insecurity for a community for whom the insularity of an apartheid system had offered closely held protection. The shift from blinkered existence to integration introduced a precarious balancing act between holding on to an identity of Coloured, Muslim young woman and the desire to assimilate with the dominant culture of a non-Muslim society. The deconnotations of a

post-apartheid South Africa far surpassed the values of democracy and equality. For someone like me it served to open my eyes to my own otherness.

What was the otherness, you might ask? And what constituted that otherness? The primary focus of this chapter, then, is to begin to disband this otherness by providing an understanding of the educational undertones and shaping of Muslims, in particular the identity of Muslim women – how this is informed, shaped, and lived both in terms of Islamic parameters and in relation to a diverse society. I need to emphasise from the outset that there is not one type of Muslim woman. Inasmuch as the Muslim woman living in South Africa encapsulates multiple identities, there are different interpretations among Muslim men and women of what this identity means. The issue of the *hijāb* (head-scarf), as one example, worn by Muslim women serves as an intriguing metaphor of identity, as the veil itself is just another veil of identity. Theoretically it's no more than a physical mask, which masquerades as the signifier of what we are, ought to be, or should be. In practice, it's another concept and act altogether – simultaneously shrouded in religious adherence and political innuendo, indeed another process of deconstructing and reconstructing identity/identities.

The very existence of multiple identities within Islām implies a multiplicity of understanding of the religion and its teachings. So before I can turn my attention to the distinctiveness of the Muslim woman, I need to provide some insight into how she arrives at that identity. This chapter, therefore, will commence with providing an overview of my understanding of the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, while also examining the notion of the islamisation of knowledge. Next I look at the spaces of learning in Islām, where attention is given to the different types of learning institutions, how these were constructed and the categories of knowledge which were taught and learnt. Thereafter I spend some time expanding on what Islām says about education and women, the type of education and practices that Muslim women are exposed to, how these are instilled and, more importantly played out in society. This will serve to provide a conceptual understanding of what connects these identities to other Muslim women by contextualising their voices, what they reveal and how their identities unfold in relation to

their education and its practices. Linked to this, an understanding of how these identities influence cosmopolitan society will be provided, and also, how cosmopolitan society influences the identities of Muslim women.

3.2. The Concept of Knowledge in Islām

Rosenthal (2007: 38) cites a quotation from *'Kitab al-Huquq'* of al-Hakim, which states that *'God brought forth knowledge ('ilm) in the beginning. From knowledge He brought forth wisdom (hikmah). From wisdom He brought forth justice ('adl) and truth (haqq).* *'Ilm* (knowledge), explains Akhtar (2010), is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education. Rosenthal explains that in the Islamic theory of knowledge there are three fundamental facets. One is human or secular, the second is religious or sacred, and the third is the facet of divine knowledge. The most significant characteristic, states Rosenthal, is that according to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), these three facets are mutually contingent, and that without knowledge possessed by God, there can be no secular or sacred knowledge. In Islām, explains Akhtar, there is no dissimilarity between the knowledge concerning the physical world and the knowledge of God. Indeed, to have knowledge of the physical world and the self is to have knowledge of God. It is on this premise that the religion of Islām propagates the seeking of knowledge as a religious obligation. It is an obligation which is not outside of the understanding and practice of one's beliefs. It is the belief and practice in itself. According to Nasr (2010: 131), it is not only the knowledge itself which is sacred, it is the intelligence which allows humans to know, which is in itself sacred.

While Muslims believe that all knowledge originates from God, the concept of knowledge as *'ilm* stems from two primary sources, the Qur'an and *ahādith*, which literally means 'news' or 'report' and refers to the words, actions and traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). Knowledge, explains Farid al-Attas (2008), is acquired by humans via various mediums - via the Qur'an itself, via those who already have knowledge, via the senses, reason and intuition. The Qur'an, which literally means 'the recitation', has other associated names, such 'the gathering' of all bona fide knowledge, 'the mother of all books', and 'the guidance' (Nasr, 2010: 130). It is fundamentally different to its precursory Abrahamic religious texts, namely the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible, explains Lunde (2002:

25), in that it *'is not about God, it is the very word of God, speaking directly to humanity or addressing His messenger, Muhammed'* (PBUH). Lunde says that this clarifies the centrality of the Qur'an to Muslims: it is the foundation stone of Islamic society, its constitution, and permeates all aspects of life (2002: 25). The Qur'an, together with the lived example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), define the points of reference for all Islamic spheres of life – the individual, the social, the economic, and the political (Ramadan, 2001: 78).

Knowledge in Islām is intimately linked to faith, and therefore mandatory on all Muslims. And herein rests one of the most significant differences between Islām as a philosophy and other religions: that the acquisition of knowledge is a religious responsibility by virtue of the fact that all knowledge is of God and from God. Consequently, the dichotomy of sacred and secular has no bearing on knowledge in terms of the Islamic understanding. Al Attas (2005: 11) explains that the Islamic worldview encompasses both *al-dunya* (life on earth) and *al- ākhirah* (life in the hereafter), in which the *dunya* aspect must be linked in a meaningful way to the *ākhirah* aspect, and in which the *ākhirah* aspect holds the final and ultimate significance. The only distinction drawn is that knowledge which is beneficial for the Muslim and by extension, the community, and that which is not. The acquisition of knowledge, then, is not an end but a means through which to strive towards a deeper consciousness of oneself and one's relationship with God. Akhtar (2010) explains that in many Qur'anic verses *'ilm* (knowledge) is referred to as *nur* (light), while God is depicted as the ultimate light, drawing to the understanding that *'ilm* (knowledge) is tantamount to the light of God. And that although knowledge is located within a particular human soul, explains Wan Daud (2009: 7-8), it is not a product, it is a gift.

For Muslims, the fact that the first recipient of the message of the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was unlettered, further serves to fortify the belief that the Qur'an is a divinely revealed text, and the role of the Prophet (PBUH) in relation to the Qur'an is that of transmitter only. The revelations, both received and transmitted orally, would span over a period of 22 years, the last being revealed just nine days before the Prophet's (PBUH) death in 632CE (Mernissi, 1995: 29). It was only 20 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that the various transmissions were compiled by the third

caliph, Uthman, which is still in the exact same form today. Consisting of 6000 verses, the Qur'an has no palpable chronology; it is a series of revelations and guidelines encompassed in a complex narrative structure. According to Qur'anic exegesis, in underscoring the notion of the Qur'an as a text to be read, when the archangel Gabriel addressed an illiterate Prophet (PBUH) in 610CE in the very first revelation, he was instructed to:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

'Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created—'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah Iqraa or Al-Alaq [Chapter: Read] 96:1)

Ahādith (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), as the other key source of knowledge, are considered critical both in understanding the Qur'an as it was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) until his death in 632CE, as well as a source for understanding the concept of knowledge in Islām. The *Sahaba* (Companions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) are the source for the *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH). Each *hadīth* (saying and act of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)*,* explains Lunde (2002: 33), consists of two parts: it is introduced by a chain of authorities, and then followed by the actual report. Mernissi (1995: 35-36) explains that the person who had to record the oral *hadīth (saying and act of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)* into a written collection faced a host of methodological problems. These problems involved not only the correct recording of the *hadīth (saying and act of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)*, but also establishing the *isnad* (chain of authorities or transmission chain). All of the *ahadīth (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)* accumulated from the oral transmissions form the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet PBUH), and together with the Qur'an, *Ijmā* (consensus) and *qiyās* (analogy) constitute the four major sources of jurisprudence in *Sunni* (one who follows the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and accepts the four caliphs as his rightful successors) Islām.

Islām differentiates between two types of knowledge, which are hierarchical in nature: the *‘ilm al-’aqliyah* (acquired knowledge)*,* which is rational and which is attainable through the use of *‘aql* (intellect), and *‘ilm al-naqliyah,* which refers to revealed knowledge (Hashim, 2004: 31). Waghid (2011a: 8) explains that while *‘ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) refers to the transmitted religious sciences such as the Qur’an, *Sunnah* (life experiences of the Prophet (PBUH) as captured in the *ahadith (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)*, *Sharī‘ah* (Islamic law), theology, *al-tasawwuf* (Islamic metaphysics), and the Arabic grammar (including its lexicography and literature), *‘ilm al-’aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) or non-revealed knowledge includes the rational, intellectual and philosophical sciences such as the human sciences, applied sciences, comparative religion and linguistic sciences.

The hierarchical nature of these two categories is encapsulated in their respective descriptions. While *‘ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) is described by Hashim (2004: 34) as fulfilling the spiritual needs of the individual, *‘ilm al-‘aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) fulfills the physical and intellectual needs. Both types of knowledge are deemed to be necessary in terms of individual contentment and happiness. But while *‘ilm al-’aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) is described as *fard’ayn*, meaning that it is compulsory for every Muslim individual, *‘ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) is described as knowledge which is *fard kifayah* (collective obligation). Although not compulsory, it is obligatory, since it concerns knowledge, which encompasses the sustenance of a community – sciences, law, education, literature, etc. The two categories of *‘ilm al-’aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) and *‘ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) have direct bearing on human actions, which according to Islamic principles are divided into five groupings, namely obligatory (*wājib*), recommended *(sunnah)*, reprehensible *(makruh)*, forbidden *(harām)* and permissible *(hārus)*.

Knowledge, says Wan Daud (2009: 7), is regarded as *‘sine qua non as being human, having Adam, the first historic man and prophet, been taught “the names of all things” by God Himself, making him thereby even superior to angels’.* This commendable position, explains Wan Daud, manifests itself in the human’s role as God’s trusted servant and vicegerent on Earth. Humans, therefore, are created and charged with fulfilling a trust with God on earth, which according to Wadud (2006: 33-34), is the most essential feature of humankind as

moral agents. All humankind, she asserts, is created with the purpose of trusteeship for God on earth.

Wadud stresses the Qur'anic exegesis that humans have free will, which means that they are equally capable of consciously surrendering to and honouring the relationship of trust with God, as they are making choices that essentially violates the trust. This faculty of free choice explains Al-Attas's (1977: 12) emphatic assertion that: *'The purpose of seeking knowledge in Islam is to inculcate goodness in man as man and individual self.'* He describes the acquisition of knowledge as *'both the arrival of meaning in the soul as well as the soul's arrival at meaning.'* (Al-Attas, 2005: 22). Al-Attas explains that the end goal of education in Islām is to produce a good man, rather than a good citizen, as a good man will become a good citizen, who serves society and its values. By contrast, he argues, a good citizen might not be a good man. Al-Attas's understanding of a good man is defined by his conceptualisation of the man living within his self; that the self is a living space, meaningful only when and if it is of benefit to himself and to society.

Ramadan (2001: 33) explains that the teaching of Islām is so socially based that there is no real practice of religion without personal investment in the community. Wan Daud (2009b) encapsulates these two concepts by clarifying that the purpose of knowledge in Islām is to enable each human being to fulfill the dual role of vicegerent and servant, and by servant here is meant serving both God and the rest of humanity – Al- Attas's good man. The question for Islām, asserts Nasr (2010: 68) has not been about making everyone happy, since it is impossible in this world, rather it has been about creating conditions in which there would be a maximum amount of stability and equilibrium in human life.

In summary, then, the acquisition of knowledge is a means through which to strive towards a deeper consciousness of oneself and one's relationship with God. Central to this relationship is, firstly an understanding and acceptance of God's dominion, and secondly, a reflective awareness and engagement as God's moral agents. And so while Muslims are expected to accede both to the dominion and will of God, they are also expected to actively exercise the trusteeship of free will, which in fact manifests and

extends the link between humanity and God. This would mean that if God is an embodiment of all that is just and good, then humans, as operating within a relationship of trust and vicegerency, are the reflections of that goodness and justice. By implication, the absence of goodness and justice, then, is as a result of the absence of knowledge.

In re-examining Al-Attas's understanding of knowledge, I can now infer that I am only able to recognise God if I recognise meaning and purpose within myself. And this recognition would implicitly encapsulate knowledge which is both *'ilm al-'aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge), since the physical and the intellectual cannot be fulfilled without the spiritual; the profane cannot be realised without the sacred. Both are required in the pursuit of individual contentment, and both are required in a society of just and fair interaction. The concept of education, therefore, which I will discuss in this chapter, remains an unfulfilled and incomplete one if it is not conditioned and shaped by the individual's trusteeship with God. Education, in essence, becomes the enactment of the dominion of God, which is in direct proportion and relation to both the depth of education of the individual, and the relationship with God. It is this type of paradigmatic understanding and framework of knowledge that forms the basis of examining the education of the women in the case studies.

3.3. Islamisation of Knowledge

Islamisation, as first mentioned by Al-Attas and Al-Faruqi at the World Congress on Islamic Education in 1977, can be viewed in juxtaposition to secularisation, which Al-Faruqi (1988) explains as the setting free of the world from religious and semi-religious understandings of itself; it is man or woman turning his or her attention away from the world's beyond and toward this world and this time. According to Halstead (2004: 521-522), islamisation is viewed as a key process in countering the influence of western secularism on Islamic institutions. Abushouk (2008: 39) explains that islamisation stems from the premise that because contemporary knowledge has been designed by western scholars who have their own cultural, historical and secular worldview, it is neither value-free nor universal. Islamisation, Abushouk continues, can therefore be described as a revivalist response to modernity and its secular impact on Muslim society. In agreement

with Al-Attas and Abushouk, Nasr (2010: 270-271) describes islamisation as the application of intellectual and spiritual principles of the Islamic tradition to counter the challenges and premises of modernism, which are viewed as a threat to the principles of Islām.

Islamisation of knowledge, as proposed by Al-Faruqi was a direct response to what he defined as the malaise of the *ummah* (community)*,* while also providing a resurgent alternative to modern society and its impact on Islamic society. Al-Faruqi's (1988) proposal of islamisation involves a detailed 12-step work-plan, which incorporates the mastery of modern disciplines, the mastery of Islamic legacy, a survey of the *ummah's* (community's) major problems, to recasting the disciplines under the framework of Islām and the dissemination of Islamised knowledge. The objective of his understanding of islamization is to re-approach the disciplines - such as sociology, economics and anthropology – so as to foreground Islām. Al-Faruqi (1988) defines islamisation as an actionable theory through which the reform of education should be the islamisation of modern knowledge itself. To him islamisation means the recasting of every discipline on the principles of Islām in its methodology, in its strategy, in what it regards as its data, its problems, its objectives, and its aspirations. And the foundation of this recasting, says Al-Faruqi, is a triple axis constitutive of *tawhīd* (oneness of God), of which the first is the unity of knowledge, the second is the unity of life, and the third is the unity of history. Wadud (2006: 28) describes *tawhīd* (unity of God) as the operating principle of equilibrium and cosmic harmony, which, on the one hand, operates between the physical and the metaphysical, and on the other hand, within them both. She expounds that God, in his oneness, unites existing multiplicities or apparent dualities in both the corporeal and metaphysical world. The unity of knowledge, explains Al-Faruqi, will eradicate the distinction between rational and irrational knowledge. And while the unity of life will quell the differentiation between value-oriented and value-free disciplines, the unity of history will replace the division of knowledge into individual and social sciences with humanistic disciplines.

Unlike Al-Faruqi, Wan Daud maintains that the theory of islamisation has little to do with the re-working of textbooks, or the re-structuring of academic disciplines, but fundamentally to do with the re-constituting of the right kind of human being – Al-Attas's person of *adab* (right action). According to Wan Daud (2009: 8), Islamic epistemology recognises that knowledge – *'stripped of the faulty opinions, doubts, and conjectures, as well as negative influence of the various human interests generally termed as hawa, is indeed universal'*. This universality rests on the contention that in Islām all knowledge comes from God, and therefore, regardless of whether its source is divine revelation or human intellect, it is sacred. For Wan Daud (2009: 9), islamisation, because it engages with different but interrelated personal, societal and institutional facets, provides the most natural and comprehensive response to foreign colonisation as well as spiritual deficiencies. Islamisation not only refers to the 'external other', states Wan Daud, it also refers to the negative forces within the individual self. These negative forces within the individual self are what Rahman (1970a) describes as the *al-nafs al-ammara* (lower self), which refers to the instinctive nature of humans, i.e. hunger, sex, desire for recognition. By contrast, the higher self, says Rahman, longs for the values of truth, beauty and closeness to God, which brings us back to Al-Attas's person of *adab* (right action). If we return to Al-Faruqi's assertion that the objective of islamisation is to provide a resurgent alternative to modern society, then the question is whether this is at all realizable.

On the one hand, states Halstead (2004: 522), islamisation has been criticised for its unquestioning acceptance of western classification of knowledge, and for not paying enough attention to either the sources of knowledge established in Islām, or to the methodology followed by eminent Muslim thinkers. And on the other hand, it is the opinion of Farid al-Attas (2008) that because the islamisation of knowledge has more to do with an epistemological framework than with an actual discipline, not much progress has been made in terms of islamising disciplines, and the work that has been done tends to rest between being too abstract and vague. To Dangor (2005: 528) there are numerous reasons for this lack of progress, of which he highlights: (1) the distinctly anti-western nature of some of the literature; (2) an unclear formulation of the principles of an Islamic epistemology, and (3) the absence of textbooks in 'Islamised' social sciences. But perhaps,

as Farid al-Attas explains, the vagueness and lack of progress can be explained in terms of the fact that the result or product of islamisation is not the actual integration of this concept in a specific discipline or curriculum, but rather in the means towards the de-secularisation of knowledge. To this end, states Waghid (2011a: xi), *'Islamisation relies heavily on the logical soundness of arguments, explanation of the meaning of concepts, construction of reasonable arguments, and rational and intuitive reflection that would enable a person to provide philosophically rigorous examinations, critiques, justifications, analyses and syntheses of education'.*

In the previous section I explained that because all knowledge is possessed by God, there can be no distinction between secular and sacred knowledge and that, indeed, to have knowledge of the physical world and the self is to have knowledge of God. I clarified that to have knowledge of God and of oneself implicitly meant having both *'ilm al-'aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge), since the physical and the intellectual cannot be fulfilled without the spiritual; and that both are required in a society of just and fair engagement. And it is on this premise that Islām propagates the seeking of knowledge as a religious obligation. I concluded that not only is (good) conduct determined by the individual's understanding of knowledge, but that the acquisition of knowledge is a means through which to strive towards a deeper consciousness of oneself and one's relationship with God. This understanding of knowledge, then, relates to the notion of islamisation on the basis of a non-bifurcationist approach to Islamic education. Nasr (2010: 131) explains that since there is no distinction between sacred and secular knowledge, the goal of Islamic education is to impart knowledge through training the whole being of the individual, rather than just the mind or the soul. As a process of meticulous engagement, then, islamisation can be considered as the rationale, which organises knowledge in such a way that it integrates revealed and non-revealed or acquired knowledge. I will be using this approach to Islamic education when I examine the lived experiences of the women in the cases.

3.4. The Concept of Education in Islām

Al-Attas (2005: 24) derives his definition of education from his definition of knowledge. If knowledge is *'the arrival of meaning in the soul, and the soul's arrival at meaning, and this is the*

recognition of the proper places of things in order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence', then education in Islām is the *'Recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things, in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of God in the order of being and existence'* (Al-Attas, 1977: 11). But, he cautions, the acquisition of knowledge does not mean the attainment of education. There is a condition. Al-Attas (2005: 23) explains that unless the acquisition of knowledge includes moral purpose that activates in the one who acquires it, it cannot be called education. He refers to this as *adab* (right action) - the *'right action that springs from self-discipline founded upon knowledge whose source is wisdom'*. According to Wan Daud (2009: 12), the starting point of *adab* (right action) is when one acknowledges one's dual nature – the rational and the animal – and is able to ensure that the rational controls the animal. Reaching this state, he explains, is justice to one's self. Education, Al-Attas asserts, is the absorption of *adab* (right action) in the self.

To Nasr (2010: 151-152), the objective of education in Islām is to enable the soul to actualise all potential possibilities, hence perfecting and preparing it for eternal life. He maintains that knowledge acquired through education is in fact the definitive sustenance that feeds the immortal soul, while actualisation of what is potential in the soul is of *wujud* (existence) itself, the means of human existence that does not die with death. Subsequently, he maintains, that while education prepares individuals for life in this world, its ultimate goal is *al-ākhirah* (life in the hereafter). The centrality of the focus that Islām places on the individual is so fundamental, explains Wan Daud (2009), because the ultimate purpose and end of ethics in Islām is the individual.

Taking Al-Attas's definition into account - that education entails the recognition and acknowledgement of God in the order of being and existence - I can infer that Islamic education is about recognising God in order to know and realise myself. Fundamentally, then, education in Islām, because of the understanding that all knowledge is of and from God, serves as the fundamental premise on which one's relationship with God is created, reached and sustained. So, what does Islam say about education? According to Halstead (2004: 517), Islamic scholarship led the world for hundreds of years in practically every

known academic discipline, there were numerous schools through the Islamic empire and the greatest universities, such as the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, which was established by the Fatimids during the last quarter of the 10th century, predate western universities by several centuries.[9] Yet, as I will now briefly explicate, there exists a tension between the notion of a philosophy of education and education within the Islamic understanding.

According to Halstead, both the terms philosophy and education are problematic within the Islamic framework, but for dissimilar reasons. The term philosophy, *falsafa* in Arabic, is not mentioned in the Qur'an at all. It was, however, as Halstead explains, an early import into Islām during the rapid expansion of Muslim Arab civilisation in the 100 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which brought the faith into contact with Greek, Persian, Egyptian, Syrian and Indian cultures, and which led to the incorporation of those cultures into Islām. According to Halstead (2004: 518-519), while there have been a number of intellectual developments in the Islamic world, such as the rational theology of the *Mu'tazalites* (Islamic school of speculative theology), the more systematic philosophy of *al-Kindi* (known as the father of Islamic or Arabic philosophy), who asserted the supremacy of reason over revelation in matters of morality, and *al-Farabi* (Islamic philosopher), who asserted the insufficiency of revelation and the priority of philosophy over religion in many areas of knowledge, the general perception of philosophy is that it is a foreign importation. That being said, asserts Nasr (2010: 166), Islām established an influential philosophy within the scholarly domain of Abrahamic monotheism and the Quranic revelation, while integrating into its intellectual tradition those aspects of Greek philosophy that adhered to the Islamic Unitarian worldview. Consequently, he elaborates, for the majority of traditional Muslims the term philosophy still implies *al-hikmah* (wisdom), which they associate with the prophets as well as the Muslim saints and sages.

---

[9] The Fatimids had their origins in modern-day Tunisia and eastern Algeria. The dynasty was founded in 909 by ʿAbdullāh al-Mahdī Billah, who legitimised his claim through descent from Muhammad by way of his daughter Fātima as-Zahra and her husband ʿAlī ibn-Abī-Tālib, the first Shīʿa Imām, hence the name *al-Fātimiyyūn* "Fatimid".

Accepted Muslim opinion, continues Halstead, has leaned towards the understanding that anything outside the divine truth of the Qur'an is unessential. According to Fakhry, the philosophers and theologians soon found themselves in disagreement – this despite their community of purpose in their quest for religious truth. The Aristotelian worldview, explains Fakhry (1997: 3), with its twin tenets of causality and the uniformity of nature which, in the words of Aristotle, 'does nothing in vain', was perceived by the theologians to be contrary to the Qur'anic worldview. The Qur'anic worldview referred to holds that not only is God unaccountable for any of His actions, but He can effect His designs in the world without any limitations. As a result, states Fakhry (1997: 4), as of the tenth century the theologians implemented an 'occasionalist' metaphysics of atoms and academics, which meant the *'Qur'anic concept of God's 'omnipotence and His sovereignty in the world for it belonged to God alone to create and recreate atoms and accidents which made up physical objects in the world and to cause them to cease as He pleased and when He pleased'.*

Halstead (2004: 518) contends that until the time of al-Ghazali (1058 – 1111), the debate was fairly evenly balanced between the philosophers and rationalists. On the one hand, the philosophers and rationalists asserted that rationality was separate from religion and could in fact provide objective support for religion. And on the other hand, the theologians, commonly known as the al-Ash'ariyya maintained that rationality was valid only within the boundaries defined by religion. This balance between the philosophical and rationalistic schools of thought, however, was thrown with the immense influence of al-Ghazali, who reasserted the dominance of religion over reason and gave superior status to revelation as a source of knowledge (Halstead, 2004: 518). During later centuries, in most of the Arab world philosophy as a distinct discipline became assimilated into either *Sufism* (mystical dimension of Islām) in its intellectual aspect or philosophical theology *(kalām)* (Nasr, 2010: 141-142). He states that: *'The Islamic philosophical tradition, although of great diversity and richness, is characterized by certain commonly shared features that are of special significance both for the deeper understanding of this philosophy and for an appraisal of its import for the world at large as well as for its central role in the confrontation of Islam with modern thought. This philosophy lives in a religious universe in which a revealed book and prophecy understood as sources of knowledge dominate the horizon'.* Essentially, and above all, says Nasr, Islamic philosophy, as

the whole message of Islām, is concerned with the doctrine of *al-tawḥ d* (oneness of God).

The dilemma with the term education has less to do with its denotations than its connotations. Halstead (2004: 517) explains that the problem is not that the term education does not exist in the Arabic language, but that its central meaning in Arabic does not correspond with the meaning of education as commonly understood by western philosophers of education. The Arabic language, he expounds, does not make any of the distinctions between education, schooling, teaching, training and instruction. Waghid (2011a: 1) is of the opinion that the concepts associated with Islamic education do not have a single meaning, but that *'meanings are shaped depending on the minimalist and maximalist conditions that constitute them.'* There are, however, three terminologies that have been translated as education, two of which Al-Attas dismisses as erroneous. One of these terms is *ta'lim*, which refers both to the teaching and seeking of knowledge. Waghid (2011a: 2-3) extends this teaching and seeking of knowledge into a matter of public deliberation, which he says ensures that meanings are shared and deliberated on the basis that something new might originate. The other is *tarbiyah*, which encompasses the fostering of the ethical and spiritual essence of humankind. As a process of socialising people into an inherited body of knowledge, explains Waghid, *tarbiyah* (nurturing) includes teaching Muslims about their faith, its practices and about the Prophet Muhammmad (PBUH). The third terminology is *ta'dib*, which refers to the social dimension of human behaviour – to be well mannered and to act justly (Wan Daud, 2009b). *Ta'dib* (just action), says Waghid, proffers respect to every individual, regardless of any otherness.

According to Wan Daud (2009b), Al-Attas rejects the concepts of *ta'lim* (instruction) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing) as adequate descriptions of education – either as singular terminologies or an amalgamation thereof. He maintains that it is only the concept of *ta'dib* (just action), if properly understood and competently explicated, which accurately defines education in Islām. His argument is that since the concept of *ta'dib* (just action) already incorporates the essentials of *'ilm* (knowledge), *ta'lim* (instruction) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), there really is no need for the additional conceptual understandings. He dismisses *tar'biyah* (nurturing) as

being too confined to the physical and emotional descriptors of human development, while *ta'lim* (instruction) is too contained by the cognitive and academic facets of education. According to Wan Daud (2009b), Al-Attas draws on the *hadīth* (saying and act of the prophet Muhammad PBUH) in which the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *'My Lord educated me, and so made my education most excellent'*, in order to explain the link between *adab* (right action) and *'ilm* (knowledge). He paraphrases this *ahadīth* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) to read: *'My Lord made me to recognize and acknowledge, by what (i.e. adab, right action). He progressively instilled into me, the proper places of things and the order of creation, such that it led to my recognition and acknowledgement of His proper place in the order of being and existence; and by virtue of this, He made my education most excellent.'* Wan Daud views *ta'dib* (just action) as not only conceptually integrated, but as also providing an influential framework for Islamic educational thinking and practice.

It would seem that in order to make sense of the concept of education in Islām, I need to have a clear conception of the notion of knowledge in Islām. I have already explained that knowledge is understood by Muslims to be of and from God; that the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory on all Muslims; that the acquisition of knowledge is the light of God, and therefore has to be beneficial to humanity. Al-Attas (2005: 22) describes knowledge as *'both the arrival of meaning in the soul, as well as the soul's arrival at meaning'*. Al-Attas also explains that the objective of seeking knowledge and education is to produce a good person, so that, as Wan Daud (2009b) clarifies, the self will attain happiness in this world and in the hereafter. What emerges here is that knowledge ought to guide education; that knowledge ought to inform how we interact with others, how we establish and conduct our social interactions, ensuring that it is shaped and practised with *adab* (right action) – meaning, incorporating the discipline of the body, mind and soul. The Islamic educational systems, contends Nasr (2010: 131), *'never divorced the training of the mind from that of the soul and in fact the whole being of the student. It never considered the transmission of knowledge or its possession to be legitimate without the possession of appropriate moral and spiritual qualities'.*

It is my understanding, therefore, that education in Islām can be understood to speak of the discipline of the mind and the soul, which leads to wellness of being, which allows for the proliferation of a good society, and perhaps even a just society. Hashim (2004: 33) maintains that in Islām the fundamental goals of education include spiritual, moral, social, intellectual, and physical goals, and that in effect, *'There is no conflict between societal and individual aims because there is unity of purpose'.* And unity, according to Al-Attas (2005: 33), has two facets – external unity, which discerns itself in the form of community and cohesion, and internal unity, which reveals itself in the form of spiritual lucidity, way beyond the confines of communal or national identities. In order for Muslims to realise the first facet of unity, argues Al-Attas, they need to have a real understanding of who they are spiritually and intellectually. And so, Wan Daud (2009b) explains, while Al-Attas accentuates the development of the individual - the individual, because of his or her social nature cannot be separated from society.

Wan Daud (2009b) describes this commonality between individuals and others as follows: *'An individual is meaningless in isolation, because in such a context he is no longer an individual, he is everything.'* He explains that an individual of *adab* (right action) is an individual who is fully aware of his individuality and of his or her proper relationship with God, society, and other creations of God. This individual, expounds Wan Daud, can deal successfully with a plural universe without losing his identity. In stating that diversity and pluralism might be the vehicle through which to elevate humanity, Ramadan (2001: 64) asserts that the first principle of co-existence in diversity is that of respect and justice. Waghid (2011a: 7) explains that, *'Now considering that the Qur'ān is one of the primary sources of Islamic education – another being the Sunnah or life experiences of the Prophet (SAW) – that the Qur'ān clearly emphasizes the importance of achieving justice for all, it would be plausible to claim that the rationale for Islamic education is the achievement of 'adl (justice) in relations among people.'* He clarifies that this justice is not just meant for Muslims, or any other particular group, but for all people and all groups. To this end, states Waghid, the enactment of justice is a global enterprise. The loss of *adab* (right action), as an essential element of justice, according to Wan Daud (2009: 17), would automatically lead to a pervasiveness of injustice.

So, what does all this mean to me as a Muslim woman, who has already acknowledged in the opening chapter of this dissertation that I grappled with my identity in a post-apartheid and plural society? Was I aware of my individuality? I would have to respond by expanding on this question: Was I aware of my individuality in relation to whom and what? At school I was completely aware of my individuality by virtue of the fact that my schooling experience was pre-dominantly Christian-based. I was both the same as and different to others around me. Collectively, our multiple identities allowed us to find identities of resemblance, similarity and comparison, but also of distinction, contrast and disparity. We were similar, while simultaneously adhering to principles of different religions and cultures. And we had multiple identities and were diverse despite our belonging to the same religion. At *madrassah* (Muslim school), however, my individuality was assimilated into an identity of uniformity by virtue of garb, conduct and belief system. Our multiple identities were harnessed and connected through ritual, conduct and belief system. But the two systems – public Christian-based schooling, and *madrassah* (Muslim school) - were not in discord with one another.

As an individual connected to multiple identities within a restrictive social construction of apartheid, I was able to comfortably shift between the two spaces. Ironically, apartheid played a pivotal role in facilitating community building across the two groups of Muslims and Christians. Aided by a common skin colour, which was central to the racist apartheid discourse, communities, like mine, which were commonly spread in contained pockets across the Cape Flats landscape, consciously focused on cohesion and commonality and agreement, rather than the already state entrenched milieu of segregation and otherness.[10] It was therefore not uncommon to witness the side by side erection of churches, synagogues and mosques, as well as a high incidence of inter-religious (mainly Christian and Muslim) marriages, and the subsequent existence of dual-faith families.

---

[10] Cape Flats – also described as the 'dumping ground of apartheid'. The term refers to a large area in the Cape Town metropole that appears to be essentially flat when viewed from a distance. Historically, the Cape Flats was deemed to comprise of what was predominantly previously disadvantaged communities – primarily due to forced removals . The Cape Flats Website

3.5. Spaces of Learning in Islām

Now that I have provided a conceptual understanding of knowledge in Islām, as well as its link to the Islamic concept of education, I want to look at how knowledge and education are manifested in the various institutions which shape the lives of Muslims, and more specifically, begin to look at the roles and interactions of women in these spaces. My motivation for including this section is based on my argument, that not only do different religious spaces provide different types of Islamic education, but that these spaces are shaped and defined by the people who occupy them. Of particular interest to me, in examining the spaces of the *maktab* (Muslim primary school), the *madrassah* (Muslim school) and the *masjid* (mosque), is whether and how the Islamic education of the Muslim women I will be presenting in the cases, have been influenced by these spaces.

History reveals that Islām's formal place of worship, the *masjid* (mosque), was also the earliest site of teaching, learning and knowledge production. According to Makdisi (1981), the *masjid* (mosque) was the centre of the Muslim community. It was a place for prayer, meditation, religious instruction, political discussion, and a school – *'Once established, mosques developed into well-known places of learning, often with hundreds, even thousands, of students, and frequently contained important libraries.'* As such, the *masjid* (mosque) played a crucial role in the proliferation of Islām. He explains that the first school linked to a *masjid* (mosque) was established in Medina in 653 AD. As the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) *masjid* (mosque) mosque, it served as the focal space for worship and informal instruction of religious laws and related matters.

The *masjid* (mosque), explains Tibawi (1962: 226), was for the teaching of *al-'ilm* (tradition or religious sciences in general) or *ahl al-adab* (literature) and later *al-hikmah* (philosophy), depending on the accomplishments of the teachers and the scholars. Makdisi (1981) differentiates between two types of mosques – one being the congregational mosque, the *jami*, well known for its particular brand of teaching, through a study circle, referred to in Arabic as *Halaqat al-'Ilm,* or *Halaqa* for short. This literally means *'a gathering of people seated in a circle'* or *'a gathering of students around a teacher',* where students were encouraged to

challenge the knowledge of their teachers, which dealt principally with issues of Islamic law. One of the better known *jamis* (congregational mosque), still in existence today, is the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, which was established by the Fatimids during the last quarter of the 10th century.[11] Its name was later changed to *Jamiat al-Azhar, jamiat* here meaning 'universal', as in the context of a complete course of study. According to Wan Daud (2009a), it is within this institution that we may find the origins of the modern universities.

The second type was the everyday *masjid* (mosque), which was primarily operated as a space for the teaching and learning of Islamic sciences, literature, grammar and philosophy. Both of these types of *masājid* (pl. mosques) continued their spatial function of worship, teaching and learning throughout the first three centuries of Islām. Religious learning expanded and the study of religious law became more detailed and sophisticated, reflected in the establishment of the four prominent *Sunni* (one who follows the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and accepts the four caliphs as his rightful successors) schools of law. These are the *Hanafiyya* (a school of thought, named after Imam Abu Hanifa), the *Malikiyya* (a school of thought, named after Imam Mālik ibn Anas)*,* the *Shafiyya* (a school of thought, named after Imam Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi), and the *Hanbaliyya* (a school of thought, named after Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal). The four mainstream schools of thought or *madhāhib* of these prominent Muslim jurists are in agreement with regard to the basic fundamental principles of Islām, but differ with regard to the domains of worship and social affairs. What this means is that there is *ijmā* (consensus) regarding the *fard'ayn* (individual obligation) knowledge. It is the *fard kifayah* (collective obligation) knowledge around which different interpretations and methodologies have been systemised. However, explains Ramadan (2001: 77), these different interpretations are *'numerous with regard to the domains of worship, just as they are substantial in that which concerns social affairs (in their ramifications)'.*

---

[11] The Fatimids had their origins in modern-day Tunisia and eastern Algeria. The dynasty was founded in 909 by ʿAbdullāh al-Mahdī Billah, who legitimised his claim through descent from Muhammad by way of his daughter Fātima as-Zahra and her husband ʿAlī ibn-Abī-Tālib, the first Shīʿa Imām, hence the name *al-Fātimiyyūn* "Fatimid".

While the *Malikiyya* or *Maliki* school of thought recognises four sources of Holy Law, which are the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)*,* customary law of Medina and the *ijmā* (consensus) of the jurisconsults (*'fuqaha'*), the *Hanbaliyya* or *Hanbali* school accepts only the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) as sources. The *Hanafiyya* or *Hanafi* school of thought, in recognizing the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) as law, also turn to the principle of reasoning by analogy in the absence of specific guidance from the latter and the former. The Shafiyya or Shafii school of thought holds that the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) serves only to elucidate the Qur'an, and that law can be derived from the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) (Lunde, 2002: 36). According to Ramadan (2001: 77), each of the scholars – imams Hanbali, Hanafi, Shafii and Maliki – after whom the schools of thought are named, developed his own method with its rules of reading and modalities of verification, which were all influenced by their respective historical contexts. As the points of reference in Islām, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (way of life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) provide both a conceptual worldview as well as a framework of guiding principles for the conduct of Muslims. As is apparent by the diversity of the four major schools of thought, *'Islamic law swiftly accepted, in its formulation, the idea of plurality in interpretation and this even in rules of worship and from as early as the time of the Prophet himself (PBUH)'* (Ramadan, 2001: 77).

With the advancement of religious learning in Islām came the emergence of two new teaching arenas; the *maktab* (Muslim primary school) and the madrassah, which, at the time, referred to a college or an institution of higher education, which essentially sprung from the homes of private tutors. While the primary focus of both these institutions was to eliminate illiteracy (Tibawi, 1962: 226-227) and to provide basic instruction in the reading and recitation of the Qur'an, the *maktab* (Muslim primary school) was geared at lower elementary education, and the *madrassah* at secondary and higher education. As time progressed the curriculum developed to include subjects such as calligraphy, grammar, arithmetic, penmanship, horsemanship, poetry and swimming. As the principle sites of

learning for much of this time, these schools soon spread through parts of Europe, such as Spain and Sicily, parts of Africa, and throughout Iran and the Arab world.

Parallel to the spread of the *makātib* (Muslim primary schools) and *madrassahs* (college), the *masājid* (mosques) continued as sites of instruction for both elementary and advanced students, wishing to pursue interests in the various Islamic sciences. In time and because of its limited curriculum, the *madrassah* (college) evolved to include the teaching of subjects, such as, Quran exegesis, theology, jurisprudence, grammar and syntax, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), literary studies, music, medicine, metaphysics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, logic and mathematics (Al-Attas, 1977). This institutional and pedagogical evolvement, in the opinion of Makdisi (1981), was the final phase in the development of the Muslim college, linking the teaching function of the mosque with a lodging function, which follows in the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whose mosque in Medina was connected to a building which served as a school and as a hostel for poor students and those from abroad.

So if this was the range of educational sites, how was knowledge and education understood and practised within these institutions? How was learning and teaching constituted, and how did education unfold at these institutions? Starting with the scholars at these institutions, most who sought education stopped at the stage of the *maktab* (Muslim primary school) or the *madrassah* (college), after which they pursued different interests in the circles of traditionalists, linguists, mystics and philosophers. The teachers who taught at these institutions received remuneration from the parents of the scholars, but this payment applied only to the teaching of subjects other than the teaching of the Qur'an or any other religious science. Pious teachers, explains Tibawi (1962: 226), generally refused any monetary compensation. This goes back to both the concept of knowledge of Islām, and the centrality of the Qur'an. Unlike the Torah of the Jews, and the Bible of the Christians, which are believed to be inspired by God, Muslims hold all knowledge is of and from God, and the Qur'an is the directly revealed text from God. This is a crucial distinction, since it begins to explain the sensitivity of Muslims when it comes to a critical analysis or examination of the Qur'an. The knowledge of this

knowledge is 'un-ownable'; it belongs only to God, and as such payment for the dissemination of this knowledge can be made only to God. This understanding would further begin to clarify the crucial role of the memorisation of the Qur'an within Islām.

At all of the institutions, whether it was the *maktab* (Muslim primary school), the *madrassah* (college) or the *masjid* (mosque), oral transmissions were considered to be more authentic and accurate. In addition, the one who memorises the Qur'an in Islām in effect becomes the preserver of God's words, which in turn leads to the preservation of the self. While the primary method of learning the Qur'an and *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) was through memorisation or *dhakara* (to remember), explains Afsaruddin (2005: 150) the importance of *diraya* (understanding) was emphasized and students were expected to reflect on what they had learned. Afsaruddin states that athough the concept of *diraya* (understanding) is related to the activities of memorisation and transmission, it was considered to be a more sophisticated form of learning since it expected the student to comprehend and use, in particular *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) in relation to Islamic law, as opposed to just passively memorising them.

According to Waghid (2011a: 44-45), at all of the aforementioned institutions, *'the learning was systematic, reflective and imaginative – that is, attuned to a maximalist understanding of Islamic education'*. While according to Afsaruddin (2005: 149), the main methods of teaching were lecture and dictation, and in the case of legal studies, disputation, the importance of understanding was emphasised and scholars were expected to reflect on what they had learned. Islamic education at these institutions was composed both of socialisation and individuation, knowing content and having skills. - referring to both knowledge and *'amal* (practice) (Waghid, 2011a: 45). Nasr (2010: 154-155) explains that the method of instruction chosen by the teachers was required to fit the nature of the student. To this end, the teachers were required to possess *hikmah* (wisdom), have insight into the character of their students, as well as judge their aptitude for pursuing different fields of knowledge. In effect, the type of education practised at the *makātib* (Muslim primary schools) and the *madrassahs* (colleges) embodied the two facets as explained by Al-Attas,

namely the external unity, which discerns itself in the form of community and cohesion, and the internal unity, which reveals itself in the form of spiritual lucidity, way beyond the confines of communal or national identities.

For Waghid (2011a: 40-41), the difference between the *makātib* (Muslim primary schools) and the *madrassahs* (Muslim secondary schools) lies in the reasons for their establishment. He avers that the *maktab* (Muslim primary school) is different from the *madrassah* (college) by virtue of the different 'thought' or reason which led to their establishment in the first place. He maintains that because of this, in order to attain any understanding of Islamic institutions, one has to make sense of the meanings which comprise the practices of these institutions. In addition what becomes apparent from the learning at the *makātib* (Muslim primary schools), the *madrassah* (college) and the *masājid* (mosques) is that the learning was systematic, reflective and imaginative – what he refers to as a maximalist understanding of education (Waghid, 2011a: 44-45).

As a space which encouraged debate and disagreement *(ikhtilāf)*, the *halaqas* or study circles, promoted a type of education for the dialogue and engagement of commonalities and differences. According to Waghid (2011a: 33), Islamic education cannot be education if people do not engage with one another's difference: *'Islamic education (maximally) is about connecting with the other, recognising his or her presence, and creating opportunities for oneself and others to talk back – that is, a matter of practising shurā'* (consultation). This conception of Islamic education is concretised in the four *madhāhib* (mainstream schools of thought) - *Hanafiyya*, the *Malikiyya*, the *Shafiyya,* and the *Hanbaliyya* – where the mere existence of different jurisprudential understandings of Islām is a vivid demonstration of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). Sahin (2006: 7) holds the view that while these four authorities derive their traditions and interpretations from the same source – the Qur'an – the plurality of these interpretations can be ascribed to a large extent to the different places and times in which these schools of thought developed.

Thus far, in this chapter, I have examined the concept of knowledge in Islām, while briefly touching on the discourse of islamisation. I have also explained the link between

knowledge and education, paying particular attention to the concepts of *ta'lim* (instruction), *tarbiyah* (nurturing) and *ta'dib* (just action). This was followed by an examination of the early sites of teaching and learning of Islamic education as an illustration of how different religious spaces provide different types of Islamic education, and these spaces are shaped and defined by the people who occupy them. I explained that the inclusion of the latter section was in preparation for my exploration of how Muslim women interact in these spaces, which follows in the next section, and whether the Muslim women who I will discuss in the seven cases, have shared or share similar experiences.

3.6. Women, Education and Islām

To whom was Islām taught after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) began to receive the first revelations? Qur'anic exegesis teaches Muslims that the first person in whom the Prophet (PBUH) confided the revelations from the Archangel Gabriel was his wife Khadījah bint-Khuwailid, who became monotheistic Islām's first adherent after the Prophet (PBUH) in the polytheistic society of Mecca. And hence, as Islām began to take shape via more and more revelations from God, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) repeated the revealed verses to the both the men and women of the first cohort of Muslims, who became known as the *sahaba* (the companions). Lunde (2002: 32-33) explains, that since the *sahaba* (the companions) had direct contact with the Prophet (PBUH), they were sources for the exact wording of the revelation itself, the day-to-day behaviour of the prophet, as well as his deeds, sayings, and even his silences. They are thus the source for the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet PBUH).

In agreement with Lunde, Ahmed (1992: 47) expounds that although these recordings were written down by men, a noteworthy number of accounts of Muhammad (PBUH) and his times were related on the authority of women, that is *'the accounts in question were traced back as having been first recounted by a woman of Muhammad's generation, a Companion, and often a wife or daughter, of Muhammad'*. She continues that women therefore, and most notably, Aīsha, one of the Prophet's wives, were not only significant contributors to the oral texts – such as the *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and

sīra (history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) – of Islām, but in fact constituted the largest contribution to the *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), which alongside the Qur'an, forms the foundation of Islām. These texts, according to Ahmed, not only shaped the official history of Islām, but also established the normative practices of Islamic society. Aisha, elaborates Ahmed, being acknowledged as having special knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) ways, sayings and character, was not only consulted on these ways and practices, but also gave decisions on sacred laws and customs. Nasr (2010: 70) states that the eminent personalities and roles of women, such as the Prophet's (PBUH) wives, Khadjījah and Aīsha, his daughter, Fatīmah, and his granddaughter, Zaynab, as well as the Sufi saint, Rabi'ah, and Sayyidah Nafīsah, a renowned authority on *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and Islamic law, shows that learning as well as various other fields were open to those women who wished to pursue it.

What, then, does God Himself say about women in his revealed text, the Qur'an? Perhaps the most succinct verse regarding the status and role of women in Islām is encapsulated in the following Qur'anic verse:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

For Muslim men and women— for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men

> *and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise— for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.'*
>
> *(Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab [Chapter: The Confederates] 33:35)*

The essence of equality between men and women is very clearly expressed here. It can be described as the basis of any Muslim's identity. According to Nasr (2010: 63), both men and women were created for immortality and spiritual deliverance, both are obliged to follow God's laws, and both will be held accountable and judged accordingly. But there is a greater significance to this initial verse, and that is that it was specifically revealed in response to a question posed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by women about women in Islām.

Ahmed (1992: 64) describes this verse as: *'Balancing virtues and ethical qualities, as well as concomitant rewards, in one sex with the precisely identical virtues and qualities in the other, the passage makes a clear statement about the absolute identity of the human moral condition and the common and identical spiritual and moral obligations placed on all individuals regardless of sex'.* These obligations would include the obligation of Al-Attas's (1977: 15) understanding of education in Islām – *'Recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things, in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of God in the order of being and existence.'* These obligations would also include Wan Daud's (2009b: 7) description of the dual role and purpose of humanity, namely vicegerent and servant. And it would include the primary goal of education, as described by Hashim (2004: 32), which is for both men and women to recognise and acknowledge their Creator. In addition, says Stowasser (1994: 21): *'Many of the Qur'an's women's stories bear the lesson that a woman's faith and righteousness depend on her own will and decision, and that neither association with a godly man, nor a sinner decides a woman's commitment to God.'*

The depiction, therefore, of women in medieval Islām could be described as participatory in nature. Ahmed (1992: 72) describes this as follows: *'Women of the first Muslim community attended mosque, took part in religious services on feast days, and listened to Muhammad's discourses. Nor were they passive, docile followers but were active interlocutors in the domain of faith as they were in other*

matters.' Were women amongst the scholars described in the preceding section? Afsaruddin (2005: 163) asserts that the dominant narrative on Islamic education in both Islamic languages (Arabic, Persian and Urdu, among others) and Western languages has traditionally minimised the role of women in scholarship, which has created an impression that their influence has been minimal. According to Ahmed, girls attended the *madrassahs* (colleges), where they learnt reading and reciting the Qur'an.

Afsaruddin (2005: 164) maintains that the notion of *'sexually segregated space that one takes for granted as a defining feature of medieval Muslim society is challenged'.* Women, she states, are described as freely studying with men and other women – both in the *halaqas* (study circles) and the *madrassah* (college). And after receiving their *ijāzas* (certificates), they would continue to teach both men and women. Ahmed (1992: 72-73) concurs that a small minority of women, who advanced further in learning, became renowned scholars and teachers, who taught *ahadīth* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and *tafsīr* (interpretation of the Qur'an). Both Afsaruddin and Ahmed explain that these women belonged predominantly to the *'ulemā* (religious scholars) class and came from elite backgrounds. They came from families which were well known for their knowledge and were supportive of their female relatives' rights to education. Afsaruddin (2005: 164) describes it thus: *'Clearly, these women were empowered by their specific social and familial circumstances which appear not to have recognized a gender barrier in the acquisition and dissemination of religious scholarship.'* She continues to explain that there was no difference between academic training received by the men and the women, as is evident by the academic recognition given to these female scholars.

The position of the woman in Islām is a precariously central one. The challenge in the Qur'an is that it has had to address two assemblies of women – one of which is the women of 7th century patriarchal Arabia, and the other is the assembly of women of the present. The essential message of justice, parity and egalitarianism amongst men and women remain the same. It is how these messages are transmitted and interpreted which has led to vastly different understandings of the Qur'an. According to Qur'anic exegesis, as the earlier cited verse illustrates, there are no distinctions between men and women in

terms of obligation or accountability. Stowasser (1994: 21) highlights the point that many of the stories about women in the Qur'an relay the lesson that *'women's faith and righteousness are dependent on her own will and decision-making and that no association with any man (good or bad) determines her commitment to God'.* And inasmuch as the woman is afforded her own individual identity, her social role and responsibility are intricately linked to moral purpose, as she represents the sanctity of Muslim family life, and by extension Islamic society. Rahman (1970b: 2-3) explains that according to Islamic theology, the woman as mother is three times more honourable than the father.

Traditionally in her roles as wife and mother, declares Stowasser (1994: 7), *'the woman fights a holy war for the sake of Islamic values where her conduct, domesticity, and dress are vital for the survival of the Islamic way of life. Religion, morality, and culture stand and fall with her'.* Ramadan (2001: 56), in challenging the domesticity of the Muslim woman, contends that just because Islām centralises the priority of the family, this does not mean the inertia of the woman. Priority rather suggests the notion of a hierarchy, not the declaration of exclusivity.

In medieval Islām, explains Stowasser (1994: 98), domesticity was defined as the *'core of female social righteousness, indeed the crucial criterion of a Muslim woman's true citizenship in the community of her faith'* The word community, as used by Stowasser, is significant in the context of this dissertation, since part of what I am seeking to understand and clarify is who and what constitutes the community of Muslim women, and how their community engages with other communities, which begs for an understanding of a new type of community. A minimalist understanding of Stowasser's community of their faith, and certainly within the context of a medieval Islām, would lead me to interpret it as referring to their immediate community in which they are situated. Halstead, however, embraces what I believe a more inclusive depiction of community when he states that the sense of community in Islām extends from the local level of the family to the global community of believers *(ummah).* This greater community, explains Halstead (2004: 523) is connected through the equality of all believers in the eyes of the divine law, as already illustrated through the earlier cited Qur'anic *surah* (chapter) *Al-Ahzab* (33:35)

Today there are women who long to actively participate in the construction of a new type of community, a new society, but who do not want to refute any of their faithfulness to Islām: *'They defend both access to modernity and the principles of their religious and cultural practices at one and the same time. They are 'modern' without being 'western.'* (Ramadan, 2001: 57-58). I am one of the women, as described by Ramadan – one of the Muslim women who continually try to live her specific identity in a diverse society. I am one of the Muslim women who on occasion look around in exasperation in a desperate need to just to make sense of who and what I am in a society, which places such tremendous emphasis on how I look. My *hijāb* (head-scarf) has already made its own statement before the courteous introductions have passed. I cannot divorce myself from this garment. For me, it encapsulates the essence of my submission to Islām. It is not something separate to me; it is who I am. But that's just me. It is not true of or for all other Muslim women. It is not true for a few of the women related in the cases that follow in the next chapter. Their Islām does not need to be on public display. To them it is a more private affair, and not any less truthful to their understanding of Islām than mine is to me.

In chapter four I will be introducing you to seven Muslim women (including myself). You will have glimpses into their singular journeys, their multiple identities, their varied stories, and their common but differentiated Islām. Through my own story and the stories related in the cases, you will learn not only about personal understandings of Islām and Islamic identity, but you will also begin to witness the workings and dynamics of a Muslim community – a community succinctly described by Shamima Shaikh (1997) as a mixture of Islām, the context, an interpretation of Islamic text – Qur'an and *ahādith* (sayings or acts of the prophet Muhammad PBUH), culture, traditions, customs and the interests of those who are dominant in the community – those who hold the reins of power. The mixture of Islām, culture and context captured in the stories of the cases are not just incidental stories; they are Connelly and Clandinin's storied lives. Their storied lives are as important to my storied life as mine is to theirs, since as earlier illustrated by Fay, both self-knowledge and the knowledge of others are needed in order to clarify the story.

Chapter

4

Journeying Identity

4.1. Living a Story

In clarifying my decision to focus on the cases in this dissertation, Keaton 2006: 24) best explains it when she states that: *'Clearly, the role of the researcher is neither neutral nor ideologically free.'* What this means is that not only is my research study, especially in terms of my auto-ethnographical approach, premised on assumptions and pre-conceived notions of identity and belonging, but that as a researcher and now as a research tool, my research is limited. Wadud (2006: 78) explains that the academic expertise of the person doing the analysis contributes in other specific ways to clarifying and understanding the details of the study itself, but that this expertise cannot be used as the sole basis for explaining the nature of Muslim women's experience. To me, the language of the narrative facilitates two concurrent processes. While it designates signs and codes to the lived experiences, it deconstructs the constructions of these lived experiences.

Taylor (1989: 34) is of the view that we cannot describe ourselves without reference to others around us, and he continues by stating that: *We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me'.* What he means by this is that there is a fundamental link between identity and a type of orientation, or moral space (one of which can be religion), which provides us with a language of moral or spiritual acumen, to which we are first exposed as we are brought up. Consequently, says Taylor, we have to have an understanding of what and how we have become in order to have a sense of who we are and where we are going.

Chapter four is the essence of this dissertation. It looks at who these women are, and what has shaped their identity as Muslims. It encapsulates the lived experiences of seven Muslim women in terms of their Islamic identity, their understanding of what Islām means to them, how they choose to exercise it, and to what extent it defines them. It looks at which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of their Islamic identity, how they interact in both their own Muslim communities, as well as the community of a greater society. It explores whether there is a space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context, and ultimately what implications this holds for democratic citizenship education, as a vehicle through which to engage with the otherness of others. A space for a dialogue is only possible and plausible if there is a willingness to take heed of the other, and this willingness can only be engendered through a recognition of the rights of others My rationale for exploring the cases is to construct images of Muslim women for which I require evidence. My positioning as one of the seven cases is an extension of my introduction in the opening chapter. My story is just one of the stories of Muslim women. It is a story which is meaningless without the stories of others. My story makes sense because of the stories of others.

4.2. The Case Study as Method

According to Burgess (1984: vii), there is much to be learned from those stories or reports that do not merely focus upon qualitative methods as a set of techniques, but also examine the relationship between theories, methods and substantive issues (political, social and ethical problems), which surround the research process – *'Indeed, first person accounts that combine together discussions of the research process with research technique can help us to advance knowledge of research practice'.* While all research methods involve an examination of the literature, defining research questions and analytic strategies, and using formal data collection protocols or instruments, states Yin (2006: 112-113), the case study requires an additional proficiency, which is doing data collection and data analysis together, as opposed to conducting data analysis as a separate stage.

Yin (1984: 17) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. As a research strategy, then, the case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. George and Bennett (2005: 5) extend this definition by maintaining that the detailed examination of a phenomenon may be generalisable to other events. My decision to use the case study as a research method is premised on two factors. Firstly, as Eisenhardt (1989: 535) explains, the case study can employ an embedded design that incorporates multiple levels of analysis within a single study. The opportunity to incorporate multiple levels of analysis presents a pertinent research strategy to analyse the multiple identities of Muslim women within Islām, and indeed the multiple understandings of Islām.

Secondly, as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, I link the case study method to the interpretivist approach, which accentuates the meaningful nature between real-life contexts and their participants. In the case of this dissertation, then, I am looking at some Muslim women as participants in the real-life context of their lived experiences in an Islamic milieu. By using myself as one of the cases I am exploring an understanding of the self in relation to the selves of other Muslim women. This then becomes the foundation of not only the social interpretation of this research, but in fact, the building blocks of theory. As individual Muslim women we do not just find ourselves in situations, we shape them, we inform them. According to Wadud (2006: 85), '*It is not too much to expect Muslim women to advocate the particulars being identified as Muslim, while simultaneously crossing numerous contextual planes of diversity in other aspects of their identity'.* We construct the real-life contexts in which we find ourselves.

The case study method facilitates the process of observing these real-life contexts while simultaneously questioning and probing them. It allows the researcher, says Yin (2006: 113-114), to analyse data while the data is being collected. It is about constructing data through acquiring them while simultaneously making meaning of them. To Eisenhardt (1989: 539), this is a valuable advantage for the researcher and the study, since not only

does it provide a head start in analysis, but it allows the researcher to take advantage of open data construction. As a vital feature of theory-building case study research, the construction of data allows the researcher the space to make certain changes or corrections during the collection process, which could involve looking at additional cases, or investigating specific themes or theories as they emerge.

When I first started writing this dissertation I knew that I wanted to bring clarity about the position and role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, and certainly of the role of cosmopolitanism in the lived experiences of Muslim women. When I first put pen to paper, the research that I had in mind was pretty much something out there – the lived experiences of Muslim women, which needed exploration and clarification. The decision to employ case study research had not yet been formulated. The topic was separate from me - I thought that I could stand on the outside from it. I'm still not entirely sure why this was my original positioning. Perhaps because I did not necessarily see myself as part of these Muslim women, as if some application to belong had not yet been submitted, or maybe I had consciously removed myself based on my own sense of identity agitation, which I discussed in the opening chapter. Either way, there was a disconnection between the Muslim women I was about to explore, and my relationship with these women. So it was with deep surprise that I could not dislocate myself from the writing process as it first emerged. The words became of me, and by the end of my introductory chapter, it was all me. Almost unconsciously this exploration into an understanding of Muslim women and why they do the things they do, and why they represent Islām in a particular manner, became a journey into myself.

As the writing continued, and I began to immerse myself in the rich literature about Islām and Muslims, I felt completely overwhelmed by finding both consensus with my own views, as well as viewpoints oppositional to what I had always held dear. And here I refer specifically to my own reading and understanding of the Qur'an as a sacred text, and my naivety in accepting the abundance of patriarchal interpretations as sacred as well. And by this, I am not asserting that all patriarchal interpretations are necessarily bad or questionable. It was an unnerving process, one which led me to question my intentions to

write this dissertation, but more importantly, to make me realise that my story and my understanding of Islām and Muslim women are not enough to authentically encapsulate and do justice to something which is as sacred as the Qur'an itself, and that is to those who live by it. This realisation led me to look to other women in the Muslim community.

By Muslim community here, I am referring to the Muslim women in the community of the Western Cape, and more specifically in Cape Town, and its surrounding areas. Cape Town in itself is home not only to a diverse group of people, but to an equally diverse group of Muslims. The decision to locate this research study in the Western Cape is two-dimensional. One is that it is the kaleidoscopic landscape of who I was, and who I have become. Two is that, as I have already mentioned in the first chapter, the Western Cape is home to distinct and varied communities of Muslims, consisting of the 'Malays' (or 'Coloured' Muslims), 'Indians', 'Black' and 'White', as well as a host of refugee groupings from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Morocco, Egypt and Pakistan. On the surface, the Western Cape offers a rich texture of multi-cultural Muslim (co)existence, and as such it presents an opportunity for a novel research context. The decision to construct the stories of other women from this community is as important in terms of giving voice to the diverse context from, and in which they engage, as it is to articulate their views and experiences. The voices of others, therefore, are critical not only to the philosophical underpinnings of this dissertation, but also in terms of the importance of projecting a particular enactment of cosmopolitanism.

The decision to pursue case study research as the core of my dissertation proved to be more challenging and de-motivating than I could ever have imagined. I knew that it would not be a simple exercise to find women who would participate in the research. I knew that I lived in a community where women have seldom assigned to themselves the capacity to speak out on matters about Islām. Yes, there are conversations about the paraphernalia of Islām – the elements needed to be good Muslim women; good Muslim wives; good Muslim mothers. But even with the best of intentions, these conversations can easily be questioned as posturing. And I am not denigrating these women or these conversations. I am, however, asking where the substance is. Why have we as Muslim

women, disengaged ourselves from our own lived experiences as Muslim women? Who are we in Islām? If we are not simply representatives of a religious philosophy, then what are we in Islām? And while it is impossible to pose and answer these questions devoid of culture, tradition and other social constructions, I am, however, insisting that attention needs to be given to the philosophy of Islām as learnt, owned and lived by Muslim women.

So, it was with difficulty that I tried to assemble a group of Muslim women willing to ask themselves what Islām actually meant to them. I had no intention of including twenty cases in the dissertation, but I thought that an initial group of twenty would provide me with enough scope and diversity to compile a representative sample of cases. I also knew that even though I had invited twenty women, not all would want to participate in the research study. So I was prepared, when of the twenty, fifteen of the women, when first told about the research, reacted with positive support and interest. Almost all of the fifteen echoed the sentiment that more of this type of research needs to be done. This sentiment, however, did not mean that they wanted to participate. Many reasons and justifications were proffered in explanation of these refusals. These ranged from the questions I had decided upon in my interview schedule were too complicated; they had never given it any thought, and would not be able to properly answer them; to them feeling uncomfortable in answering some of the questions as they were too personal and not wanting others reading them. My reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity did little to quell the reluctance and refusal. I think I probably would have received more positive responses if my approach had been one of using surveys or a simple checklist. But how does one checklist a life? I found all of this very frustrating. But I think within these refusals there is enough substance for another type of story to be told – one of silence, a taciturn choice not to give expression to something, which so clearly and visibly defines so many of the women that I approached. I refer to this as the muted voices of Muslim women.

I am not asserting that their refusal to participate is equivalent to being ignorant about Islām, or that they lack a desire to have a self-understanding. It is a certain opting out,

which says one of two things: either that I am not capacitated enough to speak about my own religion, or that I choose not to speak about my religion. So, could I have avoided my difficulty in sourcing participants, if I simply only approached women who knew about Islām? Most of the women I approached have had experience of *madrassahs* (Muslim schools), had spent some time in learning about Islām, and there were also women, who had pursued an education beyond school and were qualified in various fields. They are confident in their chosen careers; they are articulate about current issues, the negative impressions and perceptions about Islām, the oppression that Muslim women face most fundamentally from Muslim men, and how this is a misrepresentation of Islām. But this is where the conversation lingers off. It is as if the language of identity is incommunicable; it is as if the communiqué of Islām between the sender or teacher and these women has been a one-way stream of instructions, rules, guidelines, principles and boundaries. And it is as if the space to query was never open, and that the very act of querying overstepped the boundary in itself. Two questions emerge for me. One, is the identity of Islām too close that it cannot be disentangled from the identity of person and woman? Two, is this choice of disengagement as a consequence of embedded patriarchy, or is it in actual fact one of the corroborators of patriarchal discourse?

It took me four weeks to finally narrow down my search to twelve possibilities. By the fifth week, the twelve dwindled to ten, of whom I knew that only four were real possibilities. I began to focus my attention on these four participants, since I really did not want any of the other six to feel coerced in any way. By this stage I had decided that I needed the stories of six women. Finding the remaining two participants happened almost by chance. One of the six participants, who eventually refused, referred me to another Muslim woman who, I think, because of her profession as a journalist, immediately agreed. It also became apparent during the interview that she saw her participation as intricately linked to her own investigation of Muslim women in her work, as well as to an exploration of her own Muslim identity. The other participant was stumbled upon when an acquaintance mentioned a flourishing Muslim community in one

of the numerous township areas in South Africa.[12] I was immensely relieved. The search for participants, and the numerous letdowns had both exhausted and de-motivated me.

Ideally, it would have been wonderful to focus on a bigger sample of twenty women, but given the depth of information I was planning to extract from the interviews, I realised that much of my data construction would depend on my relationship with these women. I was conversing with six women I did not know well – two of whom I had never met before - to open up about their beliefs, their understanding of Islām, their relationship with God and, ultimately, not only whether they were comfortable with their identity as Muslim women, but whether they in fact knew themselves. It was inevitable that questions of this nature would serve as stimuli for discussions of an intimate nature. If the data that I hoped to construct was going to be authentically representative of who and what Muslim identity is and implies, then I needed to create and ensure a safe and trustworthy space of engagement. I did not think that I could do this with many women, and in hindsight, I now know that given the degree of access to which I was privileged, I would not have wanted to interview more than the six women. Certainly, for me, throughout the times of conducting the interviews, I experienced intense anxiety about doing justice to the information which I was privy to, and about constructing this information in a way that would most resonate in the women from whom it originated.

By the time I had completed my last interview, I believed that I had constructed enough data to justly articulate the voices of the diverse lived experiences of Muslim women in the Western Cape. This certainty was soon replaced by a nagging suspicion that the voices I had heard were not enough, and more importantly, were not broad enough to depict a representative picture of different types of Muslim women. Ultimately, although different in background, and different in life experiences, there was a similarity in self-expectation and societal-expectation amongst my six cases, which made it difficult to differentiate a voice of otherness. I realised that this silence of otherness was becoming glaringly obvious, since my cases were in fact not a defensible representation of all Muslim women

---

[12] Township: refers to the predominantly underdeveloped or undeveloped areas for non-Whites, which flourished under Apartheid, and were usually built on the outskirts of the town and city.

in the Western Cape. At this stage I had not formulated what or who this otherness was; I only knew that if I did not find another type of voice, I would not produce coherent research. Many possibilities crossed my mind – should I have pursued the woman, who had left Islām? But then how would she have shared her identity and lived experiences as a Muslim, if she was no longer Muslim? I realised something else about all my existing cases – that their lives are all intricately woven into the lives of men, which has given shape to a particular shaping of Islām. What if the male were not such a large figure? And this is what led to my decision to include a Muslim gay woman as one of my cases. The label of Muslim gay as used here was a replacement of my initial gay Muslim woman. In my head I had already placed this woman into a box even before having ever set eyes on her. Why did I automatically assume that her identity of being gay fore-grounded that of her Muslim identity? This was not given any thought during my constructions of the data on any of the other six case studies – nobody was labeled a straight Muslim woman.

I was fortunate to establish communication with an organisation, known as *The Inner Circle* very quickly, and was even more fortunate to find a willing participant in one its employees, Thania. Briefly, *The Inner Circle* was established in 1996 in response to a need to create support for sexually diverse Muslims. The organisation describes itself as operating *'on the premise that everything needs to be questioned and reasoned out as opposed to blindly followed, without disregard to the Qur'an as the primary source of guidance'.*[13] It was here that I met Thania, who ultimately replaced one of the original six women, who had agreed to participate.

For the purpose of this dissertation I will not be using the real names of participants. Where applicable and where permission has been granted I will reveal true professions and ages. The six women come from different backgrounds and parts of the Western Cape. Of the seven women in total (including myself), four of the women grew up and had experience of an apartheid society. The other two were both born just at the birth of post-apartheid South Africa. Nadia, 40 years old, is what is referred to in South Africa as an Indian Muslim. Socially, most Indians in South Africa are descendants from migrants

---

[13] The Inner Circle: Fact Sheet 2010

from colonial India. In terms of South African apartheid structures, the Indians, who are Hindu, Muslim or Christian by religion, are distinct from the Cape Malay Muslim, who are descendants from slaves who originally hailed from the South-East areas of Java and Indonesia, as discussed in the opening chapter. An accountant by profession, Nadia was born in the Coloured-only area of Maitland, where she grew up in a predominantly Christian community. She attended the local high school and later pursued her tertiary education at the University of Cape Town. Currently, Nadia is married with one son and lives in a formerly Whites only community, where the Muslim community is a rapidly growing one.

At 44 years old, journalist Mariam is divorced with no children. She grew up in the area of Strand, an Afrikaans word for 'beach', and originally a fishing village. Mariam's profession as a journalist has gained her almost unlimited access to the Western Cape Muslim community. At 21, Leila is the youngest participant. She is unmarried, has no children, and lives at the family home with her two parents and two siblings. Leila's community, in which she has been living since birth, can be described as a typical Cape Flats suburb, with a predominant Muslim community. She is currently completing her studies in hospitality management, and is experiencing immense difficulty in marrying the expectations and demands of her chosen profession with her lived experiences and expectations as a Muslim woman. Yumna, 39, is a qualified dental hygienist, but has recently left the profession to pursue a career in counseling. She grew up in the same community in which Leila lives, so has the experience of a typical close-knit Muslim community. She shares a home with her husband and two sons.

Shameema is a 22 year old Black woman, who grew up and lives in the township of Gugulethu on the Cape Flats.[14] As a young girl she would often go to the Gugulethu Islamic Centre, where she knew she would receive food. As time progressed, she became more interested in Islām, even though she came from a Christian household. She started to attend Islamic classes, and began to feel at home there. At age ten she converted to Islām, which created great unhappiness between her and her mother. Even at such a

---

[14] Gugulethu is one of many townships established for Blacks only during apartheid to ensure racial segregation.

young age, Shameema maintains that she knew that she wanted to be Muslim, even if her mother did not approve. This disapproval eventually forced her to move out of her mother's home when she was fifteen years old. She moved into the Islamic centre, and married the sheikh, according to Muslim rites. Out of respect to her African culture and to her mother, she has not yet taken her husband's surname, as he has yet to pay *lobola* (Xhosa term for dowry). Currently, she stays home to care for her two young children, and is studying to obtain her grade 12 certificate.

Thania is 26 years old. She holds a national diploma in Human Resource Management, and is employed as the head of Education Training and Awareness at *The Inner Circle*. She grew up in a conservative, predominantly Muslim community – the same one as Leila and Yumna. She describes herself as having always struggled with her identity, and knew from a young age that she was 'different'. When she was 19 she informed her parents that she was gay. This became the beginning of an immensely painful home situation and the eventual deterioration of her link to her family. Currently, Thania lives with her partner, and while she maintains contact with her father, they never discuss her sexuality. The relationship with her mother fluctuates, depending on whether the latter chooses to engage with her or not.

Lastly, in the previous chapter I drew attention to three types of educational institutions within Islamic education: the *maktab* (Muslim primary school), which was geared at lower elementary education, the *madrassah* (college) which focused on secondary and higher education, and the *masjid* (mosque) which provided instruction for both the elementary and the advanced student, wishing to pursue interests in the various Islamic sciences. I also explained that over time the *madrassah* (college) evolved to include the teaching of subjects, such as, Quran exegesis, theology, jurisprudence, grammar and syntax, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), literary studies, music, medicine, metaphysics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, logic and mathematics (Al-Attas, 1997).

At this point, I need to clarify that the conception of *madrassah* (Muslim school) in the context of the seven case studies is decidedly different from what I have described in

chapter three. While reference is made to both the *madrassah* (Muslim school) and the *masjid* (mosque), the *maktab* (Muslim primary school) is never mentioned for the simple reason that none of the women attended a facility of this nature. The understanding of *masjid* (mosque) remains the same: a place of study, especially for the advanced student, as well as the central place of worship for Muslims. The notion of *madrassah* (Muslim school), however, neither refers to a Muslim secondary school, nor does it necessarily offer instruction in Qur'anic exegesis, theology, jurisprudence, grammar and syntax, *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH)*,* literary studies, music, medicine, metaphysics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, logic and mathematics. It is only recently that the use of the term *madrassah* has been streamlined to refer only to secondary school. Currently, a typical *madrassah* (Muslim school) curriculum in the Western Cape might include *aqīdah (*Islamic belief system), *akhlāq (morality), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence),* and Qur'anic recitation and memorisation.

For the purpose of the remainder of this dissertation, then, unless otherwise indicated, I will use the term *madrassah* (Muslim school) in terms of its Arabic understanding, which literally means school. The *madrassah* (Muslim school) in Cape Town generally operates from Monday to Thursday after school hours from about 16h00 to 18h00. In some instances, the more established *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) might offer two slots of teaching, one for the younger students from about 14h00 to 15h30, and accommodate the older students thereafter. There is, however, a growing trend amongst *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) to also offer classes on a Saturday and a few on a Sunday, normally from 9h00 to 13h00, specifically geared at those students who, due to public school and extramural commitments, are unable to attend during the week. It is not uncommon for teachers at these *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) to also be full-time teachers at public schools, which means, as Waghid (20011b: 119) explains, that they tend to possess a college diploma, with the possibility that some of them might have completed a course in Arabic and Islamic studies. The *madrassah* (Muslim school) is not to be confused with the Muslim-based schools (which were discussed in chapter 1), which essentially attempt to combine Islamic and secular education at one institution, which in many instances means that the child does not necessarily have to attend *madrassah* (Muslim school) as well.

4.3. Limitations of the Study

Neither this dissertation as a research study, nor my positioning as its central voice is typical of philosophical studies. I am not seeking to develop an argument in the context of what others have articulated or written. As a philosophy of education research study I have identified a particular problem, and by way of a case study method, I am seeking to address the problem. The problem, and subsequently the research study are premised on the assertion that in order to understand the role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, one needs to understand Islām and Islamic education. Muslim women, as social and political agents of Islām, by virtue of their specific practices, shape a particular experience of their world, and the world of them. There is a particular (mis)conception associated with Muslim women, which cannot be divorced from their identity. This (mis)conception has serious implications for identity, belonging, participation and democratic citizenship. Understanding Muslim women and education in the Western Cape, therefore, would contribute towards the understanding of identity, democracy and cosmopolitanism. The seven different voices that emanate through the cases are representative of a cosmopolitan Islām in the Western Cape, while also providing commentary on democracy, cosmopolitanism and Islamic education.

As a novel research study, I did not have access to a pre-ordained research design or methodology of research. Just as the decision to implement a case study method occurred well into my writing process, I have had to rethink and rework the types of questions I eventually asked in the interviews. Because of the diverse group of Muslim participants, the questions that were pertinent to some were not relevant to others. While three are married, one is divorced, and another is single. I was fascinated to find how large a role the male plays in the lives of all but one of these women. The role of apartheid, as another instance, was not directly experienced by two of the women. As another example, one of the women is a convert to Islām, so has no home-based or family influence on her understanding and identity as a Muslim. This turned out to be a wonderful bonus, as it was as much a gap in her identity as it was a commentary on the construction of identity. Consequently, while I deliberately omitted certain questions on certain occasions, I added others based on the specific participant.

J O U R N E Y I N G   I D E N T I T Y

It was important to me that the participants had a good understanding of the types of questions they would be expected to answer during the interview. I wanted them to be as comfortable as possible, and to flag any concerns. All of the participants received a copy of the question schedule prior to the interview. One of the participants attempted to answer all of the questions prior to the interview, which she found gave her more space to offer additional comments during the interview. During all of the interviews I asked the questions, wrote the responses, and asked clarifying questions, as the need arose. Sometimes I would read back the response in order to ensure that I had heard correctly. On many of these occasions the participants would either re-phrase their response, or add to the original. At the end of each interview session, I asked the participants if they had any additional questions, or if they wished to return to any of the questions already asked. Most of the participants chose to share substantial information about their respective backgrounds and very personal moments of their lives – some of which I have deliberately omitted. Invariably, this sharing led to other questions. These unintended consequences varied from participant to participant. Consequently, no two participants experienced the same interview.

After I had typed up their responses, I emailed or took a hard copy to the participant, and asked them to carefully read through the answers and to communicate any discrepancies, amendments or additions to me. A few of them were surprised to read their responses – stating that it read differently to when it was said, or questioning themselves rather than me as to whether they really had that particular view. I found this fascinating, and I enjoyed getting even more feedback from these participants when they attempted to explain or re-explain a particular thought or view. At the outset it had been decided not to use a recording device of any kind, as it made the participants uncomfortable. I found it very difficult to take notes as fast as the participants spoke, and often had to ask them to repeat their responses. I think this practice often interrupted a natural flow of thoughts, and possibly created more uncertainty about responses than what there could or should have been. I think that by taking notes all the time, I missed out on other more nuanced forms of communication or thoughts had I simply been able to sit and listen.

JOURNEYING IDENTITY

In my dual roles as both a research subject (as a case study participant) and a researcher, I often found myself testing participant responses against my own opinions or experiences. And I am not sure whether my own body language revealed more than it should have, but participants often asked whether I shared their view on something. This was most prevalent and uncomfortable with those participants, with whom I had a connection outside of this research study. I experienced a unique set of challenges with Shameema. As a Xhosa-speaking individual, she would often answer questions in a very simplistic manner, given that the interview was conducted in English. I would therefore ask additional questions in order to solicit a more substantial response from her. She was also less adept than the other five participants in her use of Arabic terms, which interestingly enough gave way to a more distinct understanding of certain aspects of Islām. The participants, of course, also brought their own questions to the process. Their questioning of me during the interview process often led us to explore other related avenues, and in some instances, while technically unrelated, equally relevant to the exploration of identity. In all of the cases participants articulated the view that the interview questions had led them to consider issues pertaining to themselves which they would not otherwise have done.

As much as I wanted to assemble a diverse group of participants, the types of questions that I am seeking to address and explore in this dissertation limited whom I could approach, and who would agree to participate. At best the diversity of the women in this case study could be ascribed to their home backgrounds, ethnicity, socio-economic contexts, language, access to education, role of the family, relationships with their respective communities, marital status, and professions. The interview questions call for a particular awareness of Islām, which I do not think could be answered by someone, who was not practising Islām. One of the women I initially had in mind no longer considered herself to be a Muslim. I thought it would be interesting to include her, as I am not of the view that only Muslim women are qualified to speak about Islām. I am, however, of the view that only women who have experienced Islām can provide insight therein. After initially meeting this woman it became apparent that she had no desire to commit herself to answering any of my questions, but was instead seeking to tell her own story of why

she had left Islām. As interesting as this is, it is not pertinent to the objective of this dissertation, which is primarily focused on understanding Muslim women in a dialogical relationship with a cosmopolitan society. And while the focus is on Muslim women, the problem identified is not a Muslim problem. It is a problem experienced by Muslim women, just as it is a problem which can and does present itself to any other minority group, existing in a cosmopolitan culture, and perhaps even among majority groups.

4.4. The Cases

4.4.1. Nadia

All my initial communication with Nadia was conducted via email. She was one of the few participants, who agreed to participate without hesitation. The reason for the initial email communication was simply that she was just too busy to meet in person. By the time we eventually sat down for our interview, she had already attempted to answer most of the questions. She complained about the intensity of a few of the questions, and wanted me to provide clarity both about the question itself, and why I was asking it. I enjoyed this with her, since it became clear that she had really interrogated the interview schedule, which I think brought a much needed element of critical thinking not only to the questions, but to my entire research process.

In responding to the question of what Islām meant to her and how she would describe her relationship with and within Islām, Nadia's response was that she viewed Islām as a practice and a way of life, and a moral standard by which to live. It is a question to which she had previously not given much thought. But she wondered about this lack of reflection, and mentioned that she had discussed this question with her husband, who she describes as *'grounding her'*. She surmised that the lack of reflection could be attributed to her not having had any serious identity difficulties where she has needed to ask herself what Islām meant to her. I found it interesting that she associated reflection on her relationship with Islām as being tied to difficulty. And that because there was no difficulty with her understanding of Islām, there was no need for reflection. It is a view which threads itself through most of her responses to me. Nadia accepts Islām as a given, it is

JOURNEYING IDENTITY

just there and she is comfortable with it. Upon further prodding, she described her relationship with Islām as strong, and as providing her with solace and a sense of identity. She acknowledged that while she had not reflected upon her relationship with Islām, she knew that she turned to it during times of difficulty. She neglects it, however, when times are good. She paused here, as if to caution herself and pointed out that she does not give Islām enough attention when things are going well. So essentially, to her, Islām is a soft place when needed. And her awareness of it is only drawn when there is difficulty in her life, and not when things are going well.

In trying to clarify her relationship with Islām, Nadia began to share some background information about her family. She described her home background as being a *'staunch family, but within a modern context'*. She defined staunch as being expected to perform the daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, performing pilgrimage, and having a clear sense of what it means to be a Muslim. When I asked her to explain what she meant by *'modern context'*, she described her father as being strictly speaking a non-practising Muslim. This non-practising element, it seems, provided another dimension to an otherwise staunch environment, most significantly, for Nadia, portrayed and lived by her mother. She could not recall being too concerned about the difference in approach to Islām between her parents. It was just the way things were in her childhood home – her mother was the voice of Islām. I gather from her description of her mother, that a lot of Nadia's self-understanding and self-definition has been drawn from the example of her mother. Her mother, one of ten siblings, she elaborated, was an assertive woman, who had dreams of becoming a doctor, but because of financial constraints had to work instead. Her brothers, though, were allowed to pursue their professional dreams. It is a subject which was and is often discussed amongst her family. Consequently, her mother, and her extended family in general, are very encouraging of the pursuit of education, particularly by women.

To Nadia, neither apartheid nor post-apartheid South Africa played any role in shaping her Islamic identity. This is not a peculiar statement, given the profound isolation, spatially and psychologically, of disenfranchised apartheid communities. The isolation was

such that it was easy to be unaware of the remoteness of one's life, or sometimes, the degradation of apartheid was so intense, that the option to self-isolate was the only crutch. She described her childhood setting as a so-called Coloured community, predominantly composed of non-Muslims, where Christians and Muslims freely interacted and exercised deep respect for one another's faith. She attended the local primary school, where she recited Christian prayers, which was a complete non-issue to her or to her family.

Like her relationship with Islām, Nadia has not given much thought to being a Muslim girl at a predominantly Christian school. I suspect that the integration in the community was so apparently seamless, that there was little reason to give this type of community much thought. To me it is evidence of the silo-like racially-restricted communities, which dotted the landscape of apartheid South Africa. Given this particular childhood context, it is not surprising when Nadia states her concerns about raising children in a multicultural community – the type of community in which she now finds herself raising her young son. She is very aware of the fact that his life experience will be quite unlike hers. She mentioned her fifteen year-old niece who wants to follow trends which, Nadia believes, should not be espoused by a Muslim child. When I asked what specifically she was referring to, she listed issues of dress, and wanting to assimilate into a dominant non-Muslim culture. She knows that as much as her son and niece have the privilege of democracy, they will face challenges which she was secluded from, and she expresses uncertainty in knowing how to deal with these.

In response to whether she ever felt at odds with her Muslim identity, she mentioned her teen years, but even this was minimal. She could not recall anything specific, and was ambivalent about whether she had actually had doubts about her identity. As a way of explanation, she mentioned that she had performed a minor pilgrimage to Mecca at the age of thirteen, which in her understanding, took care of all the later questioning which teens go through. But she could not elaborate how this pilgrimage made her any more secure in her identity than she would have been without it. Unusual in a traditional Muslim home, Nadia left home to work in another province after completing her university studies. I say unusual, since it is customary for both Muslim women and men

to continue living in their parents' homes until marriage. This custom is especially applied in the rearing of females. Nadia continues that even when she was free to come and go as she pleased, she stuck to the Islamic values in which she was raised, as she did not find an un-Islamic lifestyle attractive or tempting. She ascribed this choice to her unconventional upbringing. In terms of religion, she had nothing to rebel against, and she had no need to prove herself, and cared little about what others thought. She had a father who was decidedly different from her mother, and that created a home environment of difference, which led her neither to rebel against her mother's staunch view of Islām, nor her father's irresolute choice of Islām. She describes her circle of close friends as consisting of people from different faiths, and a few of no faith.

When asked whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt or an exacting manner, Nadia's initial response was that it is about personal choice. But then she conceded that *'it's probably what should happen'*. She explained that her choice not to wear *hijāb* (head-scarf) is not an ideological one. To her the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is just too entirely uncomfortable, but then, upon some reflection, she dismissed this as an excuse. This question, I think, caused the most ambivalence for her. On the one hand, she did not feel that she needed to display her Muslim identity in an overt fashion, and that people knew she was Muslim, but she also felt that Muslim women should not wear exposing clothes. Her elaboration was that there are many Muslim women who strictly wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) but indulge in un-Islamic activities. Realising that this provided little explanation of her choice not to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she explained that she would like to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) *'at some point'*. As an extension of the latter Nadia was asked why she thought Muslim women are expected to practise their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way. She couched her response in terms of a patriarchal community where there are different expectations of men and women, and where women are judged more harshly. She explained that she also had an expectation that women should act decently and modestly, since it is linked to their identity as Muslim women. She felt that Muslim women in a post-apartheid society experienced greater difficulty in practicing their Islamic identity, since they were no longer operating in only

one type of community. This is not the case for Muslim men. There is no expectation for them to display their Islamic identity in an overt fashion.

Nadia's response to whether Muslim women are obligated by Islām to display their Islamic identity, such as wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), was that it depended on one's own interpretation of Islām and the Qur'an. While some women, she explained, viewed it as compulsory, others like her viewed it as being dependent on your specific set of circumstances. She contended that she did not understand her Islamic identity to being limited to the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf). To me, this was an interesting point, as the *hijāb* (head-scarf) in contemporary society has become the symbol of Muslim women, as if it is the only factor which makes a Muslim woman Muslim. As such, she does not view the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts as the only truthful representation of Islām. To Nadia, there are various interpretations, which mean that there is more than one truthful representation. Some hold the view that a woman's voice should not be heard by men who are strangers to her. This is not a view to which Nadia subscribes, and it is not a truthful representation of Islām, but in fact a form of extremism.

As to whether Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, Nadia's response was a significant one, since it brings to the fore the ever-prevailing issue of patriarchy. While she has not experienced any explicit difficulties in her profession as an accountant, or in the public arena as a whole, she is, however, astutely aware that she is overlooked by Muslim men. She hardly gets work or referrals from them, even when they are working with her firm. She often has to travel outside of Cape Town for purposes of work, which involves working with non-Muslim men. Ironically, according to Nadia, not only is her Islām respected by non-Muslim men, but she is treated as an equal – something which is not forthcoming from the professional Muslim men, who generally do not treat her as their professional equal.

In reponse to the question of what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women, Nadia expressed the view that Islām expects Muslim

women to be educated in the same way as it does for men. The religion makes no distinction; society does. Society needs to realise that the more they educate women, the better off they will all be. In terms of what Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education, she maintained an earlier expressed view about herself that ultimately women are seeking solace in Islām. When I asked her about her own types of education in Islām, and whether she is currently attending any institution, she explained that she last attended *madrassah* (Muslim school) when she was 21 years old – that is 20 years ago. She acknowledged that she quite enjoyed *madrassah* (Muslim school), since she was taught by what she believes was a relatively progressive man. She described his approach as enlightened, and he expressed immense pride in the girls when they sought education. To her, more than just learning about Islām, this *mu'allim* (male teacher), through his approach of teaching, gave the girls self-confidence.

Nadia's description of her educational experience, her *ta'lim* (instruction; teaching and learning) is clearly evocative of an exposure to *tarbiyah* (nurturing) and *ta'dib* (just action). Because of her *mu'allim's* (male teacher) use of *tarbiyah* (nurturing), Nadia was motivated to seek more *ta'lim* (instruction), and the more *ta'lim* (instruction) she sought, the greater her sense of *tarbiyah* (nurturing). On a maximalist continuum, contends Waghid (2011: 2), *tarbiyah*, which he understands as rearing, suggests a process of socialising people into an inherited body of knowledge. To Nadia, the social aspect of learning about Islām – the way she felt - motivated her to attend the class. She confirms this when she says that she has not considered pursuing any classes in Islamic education, and humorously adds that only women with leisure time are able to do so. To her, these women pursue Islamic education because they are looking for solace and self-improvement. She explains that while she would like to attend a class, she did not have the time. Upon deeper reflection she said that she did not enjoy groups and was too impatient of others.

While Nadia credits her strong sense of Islamic identity to an excellent *mu'allim* (male teacher), she sees the combination of his enlightened approach to Islām and his pride in the female students as the cornerstone of the construction of her Islamic identity – pretty much how she has described her family and upbringing. She believes being taught by him

gave her the self-assuredness to be comfortable with her Islamic identity. But she also acknowledges that practising her Islām is a continuous struggle. She is constantly trying to *'beat the system'* in terms of performing her daily prayers, as one example, and struggles to find her rhythm. Once again, she turns to her mother as a constant representative of the Islām she would like to follow – she does not believe that her mother experiences any of the challenges or struggles with Islām that she does in her daily life. Her mother, says Nadia, always manages to do everything in terms of her faith, even under the most difficult of circumstances, such as the death of her only son.

Nadia describes her Muslim community, which is in a previously Whites-only area, as fragmented and self-centred, and having little understanding of Islām. In the community, which is still predominantly White, there are approximately 300 Muslim families. Interesting, while she describes the community as being fragmented, she also describes her relationship with this community as somewhat fragmented – one is not sure which has led to the other. Is her relationship fragmented, because of the fragmented community, or is it in fact her own positioning as being separate from this community, which leads her to describe it as fragmented? It is a question which she acknowledges she is in the process of addressing. She admits that had it not been for her son, she would have no need to intentionally connect with the Muslim community. When asked whether there are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which she deliberately tries to avoid, she admits that until recently she has never actually made any attempts to be involved in a Muslim community. She shares that she does not feel any obligations to greet people, or to extend courtesy visits, the likes of which her mother is quite happy to do. She further elaborates that her attempt to become more involved in her Muslim community is possibly due to her young son, who she realises will now grow up and attend the local *madrassah* (Muslim school) in this community.

It is Nadia's opinion that contemporary society tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression, because they have an inherent ignorant belief that the only right way of life is theirs - one of western conduct. But, she also holds the view that Muslim women oppress themselves by continually seeking approval from men before

making any decisions. To her it is most evident in community organisations, where even highly educated women will not make decisions without getting the male's approval. She cites her own recent involvement in her Muslim community, where a group of women met to decide on a fundraising activity. Even after the group had put together a detailed plan of action, the chairwoman indicated that she needed to run it by her male counterpart.

When asked how Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities, Nadia questioned whether they in fact do construct their own spaces. She maintains that regardless of whether they are educated or not, they do not have the confidence to do things without male involvement or approval – and this is especially pertinent when it pertains to decision-making within their own communities. So you will find the Muslim woman being an assertive leader at work, but she might be entirely different when interacting with her own community. When, women, like her, are self-assured and assertive, it makes other Muslim women feel uncomfortable, and Muslim men start frowning, and start using words like *'aggressive'* and *'pushy'*.

As to whether there is a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context, Nadia believes that it is a generational thing. While she recognises that Muslim women in the Western Cape live amongst a melting pot of cultures and traditions, different women respond differently to their contexts. She distinguishes between a less tolerant older generation and a younger generation which is split between being more tolerant, and leaning towards being more fundamentalist. She attributes this split to whether or not the individual has been educated, and the type of education received. She compares the degree of willingness among Muslim women to interact with others in their community to the level and type of education to which they have been exposed. The natural criticism of this viewpoint is that not all educated Muslim women are more inclined towards interaction and engagement with others, and similarly, being uneducated does not lead to an unwillingness to being a part of a diverse community.

4.4.2. Mariam

I approached Mariam to participate in this research study on the recommendation of a mutual acquaintance. My acquaintance was of the opinion, that as a journalist Mariam would not only be a willing participant, but that she would also provide great insight into Muslim women and their community, based on her own investigative work in this arena. Like Nadia, by the time I met her to do the interview she had a very good idea of the questions, and had given them a lot of thought. Mariam's opening statement to me was that Islām is her; that it is the founding principle of her life, and that she most defines her Muslim identity as being in service to her Creator and to people. She maintains that whatever she did or does always comes back to her being of benefit to humanity. She is continuously driven by this need, especially in her chosen profession as a journalist.

Mariam describes herself as being a deeply spiritual, not religious, person. She has a keen awareness of how her spirituality has intensified in relation to how the principles and philosophy of Islām have taken on meaning in her life. She vividly remembers when she first joined the Muslim Student's Association (MSA) at age fourteen, where she began to think critically about Islām and its tenets. This coincided with an incident at high school, where she was prohibited from wearing her *hijāb* (head-scarf), although she was allowed to wear it at primary school. This prohibition triggered a journey to a political awareness which became part of what she describes as her *'religious battle'*. Unlike most girls her age, who disliked wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she rebelled in order to wear it. Because of the school's refusal to allow the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she left and completed her schooling via a correspondence college. Even at a young age, she was not prepared to compromise on her right to display her identity. She believes that this incident was a defining moment in her relationship with Islām and how she defined herself.

In further explaining her understanding of Islām, Mariam offered to tell me about her brief marriage which, in her opinion, served to entrench her relationship with Islām. She did not know that the man she was about to marry was already married to someone else. He revealed this to her a few nights before the wedding day. She acknowledges that while she felt betrayed, hurt and let down that he had kept this information from her, she

decided to proceed with the marriage. I am not certain why she married this man – perhaps she felt compelled to marry, because of all the planning and the usual wedding pressures, or perhaps she doubted that she would meet another man. She responded by stressing that something had shifted in her expectation of her marriage, and that she was entering into it more for the experience thereof than for any romantic illusions of ever after. As to be expected, the marriage was complicated and stressful from the start. And it was not long before she decided to end the marriage, basing her decision on her willingness to compromise and accommodate, but her husband's refusal to meet her halfway. She views her short marriage as a valuable experience – one that drew her closer to Islām, and gave her the confidence to pursue her own needs.

Although Mariam grew up in an apartheid society, she believes that she was shielded from its atrocities thanks to her sheltered life in the secluded community of Strand. While she was sure that her parents and other adults in the area must have experienced oppression and inequalities, like Nadia, she cannot recall any instances of true racism, and so does not believe that apartheid played any role in shaping her Islamic identity. She describes herself as being socially unaware of political injustices. However, while she cannot see any real difference in her identity in a post-apartheid climate, she certainly sees it in the Muslim community. She believes that she has always had a strong sense of who she is; her fighting spirit, probably linked to her fight to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), gave her a strong need for social justice. She became more aware of this after 9/11 when Muslims were under intense scrutiny, even in a place like Cape Town, where they are a minority group.

As to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt and exacting manner, Mariam does not believe in being prescriptive. She describes the decision by women to display their Islamic identity as an eventual destination, which is linked to finding their spirituality. She holds the view that the display of Islamic identity should mean something to that person, a connection of sorts, and not just a display for the sake of itself. She describes herself as having a love for God, and having a meaningful relationship with Him. While Mariam believes that Muslim women are obligated by Islām to display their Islamic identity (such as in how they dress), she does not however, believe

that it's an instruction which should automatically be obeyed, without knowing what it means. She describes it as a gradual process. God, she asserts, wants conscious Muslims, who exercise their capacity to choose. But Muslims think that when they question, they are opposing. Mariam believes that Muslims should question, and engage in a process of interrogation with their faith. Muslim women, she argues, represent what their Islām is, but there is not enough introspection. As a result, they are culturally oppressed, since if women do not know who they are, they cannot have a link with their Creator.

According to Mariam, while Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, this has nothing to do with the public sphere or attitude at all. Instead, the responsibility of these difficulties belongs to Muslim women, who, in her opinion, play to a stereotype of trying to please everyone. This means that if she feels intimidated about wearing a *hijāb* (head-scarf) in the workplace, then she will remove it, and if she feels she has to wear one at Islamic gatherings, even though she never wears one, then she will do so. She ascribes this *'playing to a stereotype'* to a lack of education about Islām. Because the Muslim woman actually does not understand why she is wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she wears or does not wear it in response to others and her environment. If she had a clear understanding of the purpose of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) she would wear it regardless of public opinion.

Mariam believes that through Islamic education Muslim women are taught to serve God. God, she explains, needs us to need Him by serving Him. This can be done through any act of service, whether it is as a mother, a teacher or scientist. Education, she states, needs to link to serving God. To her, it is not enough to simply be a recipient of *ta'lim* (instruction); it needs to be enacted through *ta'dib* (just action), which will, in turn, lead to actions of *tarbiyah* (nurturing). I believe that her view on education is reflected in that of Al-ttas' (2005: 10-11), when he defines education as the *'Recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things, in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of God in the order of being and existence',* as well as in Hashim's (2004: 33) assertion that in education in Islām: *'There is no conflict between societal and individual aims because there is unity of purpose.'*

Mariam separates education into two dimensions: (1) the pursuit thereof; and (2) what you do with education once you have attained it. Many Muslim women she explains pursue an education in many fields, including Islamic studies, but they do not use it, or do not know how to use it once they have attained it. This parochial approach to education is found in Waghid's (2011a: 2-3) minimalist account of *tarbiyah* (understood by him as rearing), in which there exists an uncritical acceptance of most of the inherited facts about Islām – *'This implies that knowing* what*, knowing* how *and knowing* to be *get preference without having to know* why.*'* To Mariam, what matters is what is done with that education. What she is in fact alluding to is a dismissal of learning for learning's sake. Learning only becomes truly educational when it is accompanied by spaces of engagement. This concept of education is found in Al-Attas's (2005: 11) distinction between knowledge which is beneficial to the Muslim and by extension, the community, and that which is not. The acquisition of knowledge, then, is not an end but a means through which to strive towards a deeper consciousness of oneself and one's relationship with God. Many women, Mariam continues, stop using their education, especially upon marriage, because they do not necessarily see a connection between education and spirituality. This is exacerbated by a society which has not evolved enough to see the full potential of women. So while Islām is dynamic, she asserts, the Muslim community has not found a way to understand or accept what a woman can do with her education. Significantly, to me, it would also seem that Muslim women have not found a way to understand and accept their own education so that they can have a voice in their own community.

Like Nadia, Mariam attests the construction of Islamic identity to her mother. I think both Nadia and Mariam have drawn profound strength from their mother's determination to educate themselves. And as the primary educators, the mothers continue to play significant roles in how Nadia and Mariam define and assert themselves. Mariam describes her mother as a strong, intelligent woman, who fought hard to study her religion. But during the 1960s, this was not an acceptable thing for an Indian woman to do. So while her mother's brothers were allowed to pursue their education in India, she could not. After numerous efforts to secure funding, her mother eventually succeeded to study in India, where she met Mariam's father, a Cape Malay man, who offered to

continue teaching her after they were married. Mariam's mother, upon her return to Strand, a predominantly Afrikaner community at the time, did not restrict herself and continued to negotiate her way into her right to be a working and contributing woman to her community. Ironically, says Mariam, it was her father's decision to take a second wife which gave her mother the necessary space to do the community work she had always wanted to do.

Mariam is of the opinion that the Muslim community has evolved, both in terms of a post-apartheid society, and as a community within a global village of Muslims. She believes that Muslims in the Western Cape, and in South Africa, are aware of their opportunities and freedoms – opportunities which are not available to all Muslims around the world. But she also feels that as an informed community, it needs to engage more, so that this awareness of opportunities is not lost. This, she maintains, can only be done through a more mature leadership and media, which as far as the Western Cape community is concerned, lies in the strategic development of the MJC.

While I concur with Mariam, I have to question whether the types of engagement needed to create awareness about Islām and Muslims should be limited to organisations such as the MJC. Although established 66 years ago, the MJC has only recently (August 2011) decided to allow female scholars as members of the *'ulemā* (religious scholars) body. To the MJC, this move might be viewed as significantly progressive and critical in its recognition of the potential contribution of Muslim women. But to me, the intention to appoint women as members of the *'ulemā* (religious scholars), makes an even more profound commentary on the relationship between the MJC and Muslim women in the Western Cape. Implicit in their intention to make this appointment rests a particular view of Islamic education – one that imagines education to be the reserved ownership and domain of religious authorities, and in this case, religious authorities comprised entirely of Muslim men. What this type of imagined education creates and implies is a community of Muslim men and women, who should/could not form their own opinions. It is only the MJC, then, which has the capacity for commentary on Islām and its adherents. And still, there is another layer – one in which the MJC has expressed, together with its intention to

appoint female scholars as members of the *'ulemā* (religious scholars) body, the use of criteria by which to measure this appointment. My skepticism towards these criteria is supported in my earlier description of the MJC (chapter 1), and particularly in Lubbe's (1989: 62) portrayal of the MJC being a representative body rather than an exclusive fraternity of theologians. This portrayal, as well as the attitude towards Muslim women, is further problematised by Bangstad (2007: 223), who reminds us that since it was not required for an *imām* (religious leader) to be an *'alim* (an educated person in Islam; scholar), many of the Cape *'ulemā* (religious scholars) at the time had limited training. The question then emerges: which criteria were/are used in allowing male scholars as members of the *'ulemā* (religious scholars) body?

Although Mariam is a *hijāb* (head-scarf)-wearing Muslim woman, who is actively involved in community work, she does not allow her dress code to define how she lives her life. She holds the view that much of the oppression, which contemporary social life thinks Muslim women experience, is a stereotype which Muslim women themselves have ingrained. She asserts that because Muslim women are uncertain and uncomfortable about who they are, they allow the opinions of others to matter, and then they start fulfilling those stereotypes. Mariam, however, is also of the opinion that Muslim women are already creating spaces in which they can assert their Muslim identity while still participating in a diverse society, and by virtue of their own assertion, they are beginning to recognise that other types of identities have the same rights they do. To her, it is not so much whether Muslim women are assertive enough; rather, it is whether their Muslim identity is strong enough to cope in a multicultural society. She explains that often because of what she considers to be surface understanding of Islamic education, Muslim women begin to lose who they are when confronted by a heterogeneous community. But at the same, she maintains, Muslims were never meant to live in a silo, and that if they wish to participate in a cosmopolitan society, they need to be stronger in their own Muslim identity. She does not believe that Muslims have probed their own identity deep enough which is why they feel threatened and feel that everyone views them with enmity. They need to be easier with who they are.

4.4.3. Shameema

My first meeting with Shameema took place three months before the actual interview. I was completely taken aback by this young woman, who looked younger than her 22 years, but displayed a maturity way beyond her age. I was equally surprised by her willingness to reveal personal details about the strained relationship between her and her mother because of her conversion to Islām. When our interview took place I decided not to have it at her home at the Gugulethu Islamic Centre, since there really was not much room for a private conversation, and as our first meeting demonstrated, there were many interruptions from others. Shameema agreed to accompany me to a nearby coffee shop - her first visit to an establishment of its kind - as I would learn at the end of the interview. I would also learn that she had tried to write her answers to my interview questions, but gave up, explaining that she really was not sure how to answer most of them. I asked her whether this could be due to the fact that English is not her mother tongue. But she dismissed this, which I was able to believe, based on her very articulate answers to me during the interview. She ascribed not being able to write down her answers to never giving thought to Islām in any way, other than beyond what it gave to her. And while she could not write her responses, she could certainly describe them.

When asked what Islām meant to her, she instinctively spoke about the peace and contentment that it brings to her, which is gained through following the lifestyle and examples of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Her experience of Islām is one which is straightforward and truthful. There are no shortcuts or doubts in Islām. Islām, says Shameema, gives her comfort and gives hope to women who have no voices. One of the questions that I sat with, but only asked when we met again to ensure that I had captured her responses correctly, was to which extent her sense of contentment with Islām was in fact contentment with the relief that Islām brought through the acts of charities that Muslims outside of the area were bringing into Gugulethu. Sensing my awkwardness in asking the question, to my relief she acknowledged that it was a fair question and one which has often been stated accusingly by others in her community. She admits that initially, as a young child - a hungry young child - she went to the *madrassah* (Muslim school) only because she knew she would get food there. But she also knows that

somewhere between all the rushing from home to the *madrassah* (Muslim school), the desire for food also became a desire to learn about Islām.

Like Leila, Shameema did not grow up in apartheid South Africa, but unlike Leila, her experience of it is a lot more visible and acute – even after seventeen years of democracy. She explains that her parents often spoke about how they constantly lived in fear, cornered in a tiny shack in an ever-expanding township. She remembers the 'dompas' (a pass book) her parents had to produce at any time and at any place.[15] She voices her sadness for the lives that her parents lived – described graphically by her *'as lives unlived'*. Not much has changed in terms of Shameema's circumstances or for her community. Her mother still lives in a simple dwelling in the township. The Catholic Church, she explains, played a big role in the spiritual life of her mother – today she is senior member of her church, and she still holds hope that Shameema will one day follow in her footsteps. To Shameema this is a misplaced dream, as she has found her hopes and dreams in Islām. When asked whether her identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa, she answers only in terms of her Muslim identity, even though I deliberately omitted the descriptor of Muslim. To her nothing has changed. Muslims, she says are still struggling to assert their identity; their laws are still not recognised.

In response to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner, Shameema agrees that it is important for Muslim women to be recognised as such. She does not, however, believe that Muslim women are instructed to display their identity in an overt manner. She is also of the view that when anybody is proud of displaying his or her identity, it brings respect – respect for the fact that the person is comfortable with who he or she is. Muslim women, she explains, are required to worship God in all that they do. This includes the way in which they present themselves. She enjoys wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), since she is doing it for God's sake. As to why Muslim women are expected to practise their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way, Shameema views it as a requirement from God. She maintains that her behaviour is

---

[15]Dompas (pass book) – introduced to segregate and limit Blacks in their movement during the apartheid era. Blacks were required to produce their 'dompas' upon demand from any White person or child. Failure to do so often resulted in imprisonment.

affected by how she is dressed. Her *hijāb* (head-scarf) reminds her of her relationship with God. She is conscious of Him, and she feels protected. To her it is not just a truthful representation of Islām; it is representative of the modesty that should prevail in all aspects of Muslims' lives. One of the first practices which drew Shameema's attention to Islām was the act of *salāh* (prayers). She explains that she loved the unity of movement and the stillness of people. She says that she loved the motions of *salāh* (prayers) before she learnt the different verses and supplications that need to be recited.

Shameema offered to tell me about how and why she converted to Islām. It was something that she had not spoken about in a long time, because she is always busy trying to defend her actions to her community. She starts by stating that as a young child she went to the *madrassah* (Muslim school) for food. As time passed she began to enjoy learning about another religion. Her interest in Islām created a lot of trouble for her at home. It was difficult to shift between the two worlds of her home religion of Christianity and this new religion, Islām. She felt lonely and judged by others. She explained that she was very young, just ten years old, when she decided to embrace Islām. I asked her whether she had any idea of what she was actually doing. She assured me that she had a strong feeling that she was doing the right thing, and that it was meant to be. Her mother was devastated when she found out. Her mother has little regard for Islām, and faced a lot of criticism from members of her church and her community as to why her daughter had turned to this *'foreign'* religion. She is still trying to convince her to return to Christianity, and tries to take Shameema's children to church on Sundays. Because she does not want to hurt her mother's feelings, she always makes up excuses as to why they cannot go. Shameema, it becomes clear, carries tremendous guilt about the anger her mother feels towards her. In an effort to maintain the relationship with her mother, she has still not told her that she is in fact married according to Muslim rights, and not just living with a man, as her mother believes. And it is not just her mother she is afraid of losing, it is both her sisters, who refuse to accept her Muslim identity.

As to whether she believes that Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, Shameema says that she has and

still does. She shares that she is called bad names in her community, people scoff at her *hijāb* (head-scarf), and they accuse her of adopting other people's religion. There is a lot of ignorance about Islām in the township, she explains, which is very disturbing. They think all Muslims are terrorists. She is accused of abandoning her African traditions and her ancestors, and that she has *'forced herself on Islām'*. When asked how she defines herself, she states that she does not like labeling herself. She explains that she is not an African Muslim, or a Muslim African; she is just Muslim-Muslim. Even though Shameema's mother is a devout Catholic, her mother places a strong emphasis on the honouring of African customs, and when her children disrespect these customs, they are in fact disrespecting her. Consequently, Shameema has not yet taken her husband's surname, as he has yet to pay *lobola* (dowry). But this has less to do with the actual payment of the dowry, than it does with disrespecting her mother.

Shameema shares that she has experienced many instances when she felt at odds with her Muslim identity. Surprisingly, these instances have little to do with the community, as I expected, given the animosity she had just described. When she married her husband at age fifteen, she explains, things did not turn out the way she had planned or hoped. Her husband did things that made her doubt her faith in God. He was married when she met him, but divorced his first wife before he married Shameema. But soon after their marriage, he re-married his first wife, who moved into the same premises as Shameema. This living arrangement created tremendous friction between the two women, and Shameema, as the younger wife, was subjected to abusive treatment from the older wife. She felt unsupported by her husband, and felt ready to give up on everything, including Islām. She felt confused, especially since there was little private time between her and her husband. To her relief, her husband and his first wife divorced again. She thought she finally had what she wanted – her husband to herself and a peaceful home. But this was short-lived. Without informing her, her husband married again – this time to a woman he had been counseling. This news got to her via the community. She felt shattered and betrayed. And although this wife has now moved to Kenya, Shameema recognises that she is in a polygamous marriage, and that she has little control over her husband's actions. When I ask her how this has affected her relationship with Islām, she responds that

through reading and talking to other women, she is learning that her husband might not be the best example for her to look at when it comes to Islām, and that she should not judge Islām based on her husband's actions.

In response to what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women, Shameema believes it is so that women can have freedom within themselves; so that they are able to face hardships; to become self-reliant and self-empowered; so that they are able to understand and practise Islām with understanding so that they do not oppress themselves. It becomes clear from her response to this particular question, and in her explanation of why she converted to Islām, that Shameema attaches notions of emancipation to the pursuit and acquisition of Islamic knowledge. She considers the *salāh* (prayers) to be her greatest source of learning. She views the implementation and rituals of *salāh* (prayers) as intrinsic to her understanding of *salāh* (prayers). It is fundamentally how she worships God, but it is also a means for her to draw closer to herself. She uses the *salāh* (prayers) as an opportunity to draw away from her circumstances, especially those brought about by her husband. She enjoys reading about Islām and attending lectures. She says that knowing little things touches her differently each time, even if she has heard it before.

What emerges from these depictions is that by immersing herself in the knowledge and rituals of Islām, she is able to escape her circumstances – one of which involves a less than happy marriage – which, to me, is a paradox, when one considers that the very circumstances in which she finds herself have been put into play because of her conversion to Islām. Had she not pursued Islām as a way of life, she might not have encountered a life in which she has had to share her husband. But of course, had she not pursued Islām as a way of life, she might not have known the self-reliance and self-understanding to which she refers. Essentially, then, to Shameema, the compassion and protection which Islamic education and its rituals, such as the *salāh* (prayers), offer, outweighs the hardship she faces in her daily life – whether that pertains to her relationship with her husband, or her relationship with her mother, or to the treatment by

her community. It would seem that the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment through Islamic education counters the difficulty of the physical experience of being a Muslim woman.

Shameema lives in a predominantly Christian and African community, but even in Christian homes, African traditions such as the belief in ancestors play a dominant role. The Muslim community is very small and struggling to emerge in her community. She explains that the community is trying to reach a level where they can speak more freely about Islām. She describes her Muslim community as humble and dependable. Because of the relative newness of her religion, and certainly the smallness of the community, she does not try to avoid any specific obligations or practices. In fact, she wished that the community had more. Her community is making concerted efforts to connect with other township communities. When I asked her why they are not trying to connect with *my* community, she laughed, and replied that they did not know my community. At this stage, I need to explain that other than acts of charity - some more formal and consistent than others – there is very little contact, least of all social, between the more established Islamic communities of predominantly Indian and Coloured groups and the new communities found in impoverished Black township areas. In what I can only ascribe to residual apartheid, it is perhaps more concerning that the racial and racist patterns of apartheid continue to be found in Muslim-based schools in a post-apartheid South Africa.

According to Tayob (2011), Muslim-based schools, or what he calls Islamic schools, appear to be perpetuating previous racial groupings, and they are offering education within a cultural ethos in which cultural identity overshadows issues of race and class. It is Tayob's argument that the post-apartheid Islamic schools were intentionally chosen by Muslim parents in an attempt to withdraw from the society on cultural grounds. This effectively means that, from the perspective of being a student at a Muslim-based school, there will be very limited to no opportunity for engagement with students outside of the dominant cultural grouping. For Shameema, as one of a handful of Muslims in a township area, the possibility of engagement with Muslims outside of this area remains restricted to singular moments where there is little possibility of lasting engagement.

When asked why contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression, Shameema explained that Muslims are obedient to their faith, to which many people cannot relate. Muslim women's dress and conduct make others feel uncomfortable and they draw their own conclusions. It is easier for them to put Muslim women down. She believes, though, that Muslim women can be part of a cosmopolitan society, on condition that they are more comfortable with their identity. It is indeed an incredibly optimistic belief for someone who by no measure ever experienced the compassion and hospitality of a cosmopolitan society. As a Black woman she has only ever lived in the context of a township. It is where she attended school, met her husband, lives as a wife and mother, and in all probability will remain for the rest of her life. And while being Muslim will expose her to a different cultural ethos and to a different dress code, it will not translate into an exposure to a cosmopolitan community. Of course, Shameema's position is not any different to a Coloured Muslim woman living in any of the areas on the Cape Flats, where possible interaction with other types of communities are largely restricted to the work environment only. So the cosmopolitan society to which Shameema alludes is neither indicative of her, and nor is it likely.

4.4.4. Yumna

One of the most interesting aspects which emerged in my interview with Yumna is that she takes little for granted, and she has a certain intensity which plays itself out in every one of her responses to me. Although she had looked at the questionnaire before the actual interview, she had not attempted to answer any of the questions. She preferred to meet with me and give me gut responses. Yumna describes Islām as a personal part of her identity. But because she has spent a lot of time re-assessing herself and her identity, her relationship with the ideology of Islām has changed over the past five years. She explains that she used to feel stifled by it, and that she has tried to impose a part of herself onto it so that she could construct some freedom of expression for herself. The stifling was primarily due to a very conservative home environment, controlled by an exceptionally strict father. She draws a distinction between the Islām she was raised in, and the Islām she is living now. The Islām she was initially introduced to as a child and a young woman did not allow her to be *'naturally human'*. This Islām was rigid, but she accepted it as the

only truth, since that was all she knew. It was only when she reached her thirties that she started to challenge and question it, but did not dissociate herself from Islām. Now she finds that Islām has become an open experience, and that she is expanding her experience in it. She is finding herself in Islām, and this has led to a change in her attitude towards Islām.

According to Yumna, apartheid in South Africa was experienced differently to racial segregation in other parts of the world. When asked to clarify this, she explains that apartheid caused Muslims to turn inward, and to isolate themselves from the rest of the world. They did not see their oppression as being linked to greater global oppression, which in her opinion, is probably why the community has not expanded in terms of its thinking, especially as it pertains to Muslim women. Post-apartheid South Africa did not bring the expected sense of liberation that everyone, including Muslims, had hoped for. Instead it brought immense uncertainty and hesitancy, especially for Muslims, who felt that certain notions of 'rights' as espoused in the South African constitution were at odds with Islām. She explains that she was at university when apartheid ended and she felt shifted out of her comfort zone. She had only ever known one type of community, who were all the same colour, and were either Muslim or Christian. When she was exposed to other cultures, she was forced to re-look her identity. This frightened her, but now she is grateful. In re-looking her identity she has become a stronger Muslim. Post-apartheid South Africa has given her a determination to be more assertive about who she is and who she wants to be.

As to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt or exacting manner, Yumna believes that Muslim women should have the right to do that, if they so wish. If this is how they identify with Islām then that should be their right. Similarly, if Muslim women choose not to identify themselves in an exacting manner, then that too is their right. To her it is all a matter of perspective; it comes down to interpretation. She does not share the view that Muslim women are expected to practise their Islamic identity in an overt way. Rather, she says it is suggested – not as a form of oppression, but as a form of preservation, modesty and protection of vulnerability. Ultimately, women need to

be comfortable with it, if it is going to mean anything to them. It is only a truthful representation of Islām if Muslim women completely understand the principles of Islām; if it completely resonates in them, otherwise it lacks meaning. For her, this truthful representation depends on how she defines her identity. While, in my opinion, Yumna's depiction of Islām is somewhat idealistic, it is, however, also a reflection of her view that Islamic education is immutable and in need of being understood perfectly, as if education does not ever evolve.

In response to what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women, Yumna explains that she always goes back to the source, which is the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). She tries to understand his guidance which was given to him. Whenever she has looked at things from his perspective, it has always been about the emancipation of women. She therefore instinctively questions any oppressive teachings, since this does resonate with the message as brought by the Prophet. Islām through women, she elaborates, is about compassion and mercy, and appreciation of human nature – even within the framework of Islamic laws and boundaries. Women are about understanding, making Islām approachable and usable. Yumna defines her need for seeking Islamic education as being a search for safety and security. She needs to know that there is a power greater than her when she feels limited and powerless. To her this is essentially why Muslim women are gravitating towards Islām. To her, Islām is about the upliftment of women; it is about restoring their power through God. Again, this is an echo of Yumna's earlier stated view of Islām needing to be understood perfectly. Hers is a view that will also be repeated in the stories of Leila, Thanai and mine. It is a view, which makes an important comment on how some Muslim women have been reared, taught and initiated in Islām.

Yumna's first teacher of Islām was her very strict father. As one of the daughters of her father's second wife, she was able to move between two homes – her own and that of her father's first wife's family. She maintains that she gained a lot of her Islamic identity from both her stepmother and her mother. The two women, she explains, were very different, especially since her mother was a convert to Islām. This is an interesting distinction, since

it differentiates between Islām as portrayed from the perspective of a Muslim woman who has always been Muslim, and a perspective from a Muslim woman who became Muslim later in life. It would appear from what Yumna shares, that the two women provided her with two lenses through which to look at Islām, and that both lenses impacted on her Islamic identity.

I detected a similar nuance during my interview with Shameema, who, as I explained, is also a convert to Islām. In her explanations of her relationship with God, and her understanding of Islām, there was a greater sense of her grappling, but at the same time, a sense of certainty in her choice of religion. I am by no means asserting that Muslim women, who have converted to Islām, have a deeper understanding of what it means to be Muslim. What I am saying, based on my interactions with the six women in the cases, is that there is less internalised presupposition in Shameema than in the other women. Shameema, because she has stood on the outside of Islām, is determined to make sense of her *salāh* (prayers), for instance, so that she can understand why Muslims are required to pray five times a day. Because the identities of other women have never been external to Islām, there is a certain degree of unquestioning acceptance, such as is found in Nadia's comment on the difference between her and her mother concerning the *salāh* (prayers), when she says, *'The implementation of a practice is my biggest challenge. I'm always trying to beat the system. I'm looking to find my rhythm. I can't recall my mother having these challenges; she just adhered to the rules.'*

Yumna's experience of Islamic education is closely linked to the type of rearing she received particularly from her father. Her father, she explains, was a good man and a devout Muslim, but also played a big role in her frustration with Islām. His understanding and projection of Islām was very rigid and stifling. The type of upbringing which emanated from this type of Islām caused her to reject parts of herself, because she could not be true to herself. It brought about anger, since many of her beliefs about Islām were no longer working for her. She could not relate to the worldview her father was presenting. It was a worldview which looked at the world and saw everything wrong with it. She felt that she was always judging others who were not like her – a feeling which she

began to resent. She desired to be a part of the world, rather than stand outside of it and be isolated. She was afraid of mixing with people who were not like her. Her stepmother brought love, forgiveness and compassion, which to Yumna is symbolic of God's compassion.

Her mother is probably exactly the person she used to be – submissive, non-questioning. She recognises that while she has shifted in her self-definition and self-understanding, her mother has not, which has often led to her feeling frustrated. She has come to the realisation that her mother does not need to change; her identity construction works for her. It would appear that the type of Islamic education she experienced through her mother and stepmother was countered by the type of education presented and insisted upon by her father. Conceptually, it would appear that while the Islamic education offered, in particular by her stepmother, was that of compassion and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), while the strong sense of self-righteousness inherent in her father's *ta'lim* (instruction), however, spoke of an education devoid of *tarbiyah* (nurturing).

Yumna describes her Muslim community as diverse and interesting. She says that the community is changing all the time, or maybe she is changing. There is a lot of movement, mainly by women. There is a revival of interests, especially amongst the younger generation. The older generation is set in their ways. A few might be more open-minded, but they stick to what they know. She describes her generation as questioning more. She believes that the younger generation might be more directed towards the west, but that they should not be underestimated, nor should it be viewed as problematic. Islām to her is part of the world. Muslims cannot reside in a separately constructed community or reality. As someone who enjoys being a part of her community, she does not try to avoid any specific obligations, roles or practices. She enjoys people and socialising with all kinds of people. This is part of Yumna's personal journey as a Muslim woman. She recognises that she avoided certain things previously, and recognises that what she avoided has kept her back as an individual. She is trying to re-look this and get a new perspective.

As to why contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression, Yumna is of the opinion that it is primarily due to propaganda, which plays a big role in terms of how Islām has been portrayed. Unfortunately, much of this propaganda has been created and fuelled by Muslims themselves and specifically Muslim men. Some Muslim men have abused their power and have used Islām abusively by oppressing women, which has fed into the prevailing propaganda. In certain countries certain men have misinterpreted certain laws for their own gain. Muslim women should educate themselves in instances of oppression. The only way that Muslim women are able to construct the space which will allow them to express their Muslim identities is through knowing and identifying their own selves – they will find like-minded people and therein they will find spaces to identify themselves.

Furthermore, she believes that a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women by being open and tolerant, and by allowing freedom of expression. But it also means that Muslim women and men need to be comfortable with their own identities; then they will not be uncomfortable with a cosmopolitan society. This is an interesting viewpoint, which leads to the question of how a cosmopolitan society would/could create space for tolerance and freedom. Waghid (2011a: 90) argues that tolerance is not about the approval or disapproval of someone else's preferences; it is about creating conditions through which others can live their competing differences without any interference. Islamic education, therefore, would need to inculcate both the right to difference, and the respect thereof. In other words, it would need to promote an attitude which promotes both *shurā* (consultation; deliberation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). While freedom, explains Waghid (2011a: 94) is the possession of the individual, rather than the community, it can only be exercised in the context of relationships with others, and not as expressions of the individual.

4.4.5. Leila

I have often questioned the inclusion of Leila in this research study. She came to me, rather than me deciding to approach her. I am well acquainted with Leila's family, and have known her since she was about twelve years old. She is the eldest of three siblings.

J O U R N E Y I N G   I D E N T I T Y

Her family is one that I would describe as traditional in values and conservative in their understanding and approach to Islām. It was through certain difficulties that Leila was experiencing at her tertiary institution, that her father contacted me. He thought it might be a good idea for his daughter to share with me the challenges she was experiencing as a Muslim girl pursuing a career in hospitality management. Her parents, at this stage, were experiencing difficulty in communicating with her, and felt that they were losing touch with their daughter. Her father was looking for some *'outside perspective'*.

At this stage considering Leila as a case was the furthest thought from my mind. After an informal get together with Leila, I soon realised that much of the emotional conflict she was experiencing could be translated into my own exploration of the identity politics of Muslim women. I also recognised that Leila was deeply pained by what she described as *'losing her connection with Islām.'* I told her about my research and what I hoped to achieve. I explained that by participating she might just be able to cast some light onto her current difficulties of belonging and why she was experiencing so much anxiety about her Muslim identity. She was very open to the idea, and she considered it to be a chance to re-examine her Muslim identity. But prior to the interview I began to question the integrity of including her. I was concerned that her participation might not lead her to the answers that she was seeking. I really wanted to help her to find her sense of self, but I also knew that hers was a story that could bring an odd richness to my research. So, did I include her for the sake of my own research, or did I genuinely believe that by asking certain questions of her, she could begin to find certain answers to her own questions? It is a question which, to a certain extent, remains unanswered. I decided to proceed with the interview, appeasing myself with the thought that ultimately I would find the answer during the actual process of the interview, and that I would make my final decision whether to include her story once I had completed the interview.

Like Nadia, Leila uses variations of the term fragmentation when she describes her relationship with Islām – she refers to it as being broken, that she is disconnected, and that ultimately she feels lost. She explains that she was raised in a home with strong Islamic values, where she and her siblings were expected to fulfil all that was required of

Muslim women. Complementing this home environment was Leila's schooling experience, which had always been at Islamic-based institutions. Yet, says Leila, she has lost her Islām. After the protected Islamic environment of high school she entered an entirely different world at a tertiary institution, where for the first time in her schooling career, she was exposed to a wide spectrum of students in terms of culture, religion and race. But she is quick to point out that while her new environment and experiences certainly added to her sense of disconnection, these were not entirely responsible for where she finds herself at the moment. She is trying to get her Islām back, she repeated at least six times during the interview. But her environment and her circumstances as a student in the hospitality industry are not conducive to her *'returning to the Leila she was at high school'*. When I asked her about the *'Leila at high school'*, she described a young woman happy with Islām, who did all that was required of her, who had no doubts, and where everyone around her shared common values and thoughts about Islām. She was comfortable and there was no need to understand anything else.

From the moment she started her studies in the hospitality industry she was required to work with pork and alcohol – things which are strictly forbidden in Islām. These experiences were exacerbated by her course requirements to work at events at nightclubs or work in bars. She realised that wearing her *hijāb* (head-scarf) was not suitable to her working environment, and so eventually she stopped wearing it. She explains that this was not an over-night or guilt-free decision. She spent most of her first year fighting to wear her *hijāb* (head-scarf) when she was required to serve at restaurants or when she worked at hotels, but as time progressed it became harder and harder, and fighting this battle alone became more and more isolating. None of the other Muslim women in her class wore the *hijāb* (head-scarf) or worried about working with pork or alcohol. She concedes that so much in her chosen industry goes against the principles of Islām, that it is simply just not possible to marry the two.

As someone born two years before the end of apartheid, Leila does not have any first-hand experience of apartheid. She does, however, recall the stories told by her grandparents and parents. Leila maintains that while her generation has it better and

easier, it actually still is the same. She tells me about her experiences of working in restaurants when White people would request a White waiter, or they would ask to see the kitchen, as they did not want a Black person preparing their food. This is overlooked in top restaurants, as it is all about money. Racism and discrimination, she states, are linked to money. So while she has grown up in a post-apartheid society, she has experienced and witnessed many incidents of overt racism. Interestingly, Leila does not view her life in a post-apartheid South Africa as easier than one in a climate of apartheid. She views a multicultural society as highly challenging, and finds it very problematic to navigate her way through the various types of situations to which she is exposed. I ask whether this could be attributed to her cloistered schooling experience, where her education was fundamentally one-dimensional. She agrees that it did not prepare for the world in which she is currently studying, but she also recognises that the hospitality industry is not a normal industry.

To my next question, whether she might have been more comfortable in studying to become a teacher, Leila responds that she does not know. She suspects that she might have experienced similar uncertainties. She continues that there are seven Muslims in her course, but she is the only practising one. When I ask her why she views herself as the only practising one, she points out that her six Muslim peers drink alcohol, which in her opinion makes them non-practising Muslims. Leila has a deeply ingrained all or nothing understanding of Islam – a Muslim follows all the rules; if you break one, it makes you non-Muslim. This stance provides insight into why she is so disappointed in herself in having discarded her *hijāb* (head-scarf). There is a heaviness about her, which I cannot fully grasp. Her Islām shrouds her in such a way that it appears to be burdening and confusing her.

In response as to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt or exacting manner, Leila agrees that they should. She explains that she has always worn *hijāb* (head-scarf) and dressed modestly, as do her two sisters. They have been raised believing that others need to know that you are Muslim, and that you should take pride in displaying your Islamic identity. She quickly realised in her first year of studying that she

was the only Muslim girl in her class who wore *hijāb* (head-scarf), but she was determined to stick to what she knew she had to do. She informed her lecturers that she was not allowed to work with pork or alcohol, but since she was the only Muslim who raised these concerns, it became harder and harder to maintain her standards. Leila entered the industry, knowing full well what would be expected, but she believed that she could change it, that her religious laws would be accommodated. Looking back now, in her third year she realises that she would not have chosen this career. Her choice has led to numerous fights with her parents. She believes that she has compromised herself so much that she does not feel like herself anymore.

While Leila believes that Muslim women are obligated by Islām to display their Islamic identity (such as wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf)), she does not believe that it can be enforced, as it is in Islamic countries. She has always worn the *hijāb* (head-scarf) to protect herself from being seen as a sexual object by men. But she no longer wears it, as she thinks she looks better without it. She wears it when she visits family though, and they compliment her on her modest dress, but she knows that she is being a hypocrite as she is wearing it for their approval, and not because she wants to. Leila maintains that Muslim women's practice of displaying their identity is just half of the truth of Islām; that this is an external display. It is important, she explains, that there is a connection between the external and the internal identity. When there is no connection between the two, then the outer display is meaningless. And because, in her case, she has discarded the external, she is questioning the internal. She is unsure about what happened first – did she feel disconnected before she stopped wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), or did the dispensing of her *hijāb* (head-scarf) lead to detachment of the inner self?

To Leila all Muslims experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere. Muslim women, though, have a harder time. She explains that at high school they often learnt about the treatment of women in other countries and how they were discriminated against if they wore the *hijāb* (head-scarf). She cites the controversy around this in France as an example. She recognises that she does not have these restrictions in Cape Town, and that whatever difficulty women might experience in

terms of wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), is possibly due to their own doing – that they make it difficult for themselves. She uses herself as an example of this, whereas the institution where she is studying has never told her that she is not allowed to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she still chose to discard it.

Within Leila's chosen career she has experienced a number of incidents where she felt at odds with her Muslim identity. At the end of her first year she was interviewed for an internship at a top hotel, a position that would really look good on her CV. When she went for the interview she wore her *hijāb* (head-scarf). The interview went really well, but at the end the interviewer informed her that because of strict uniform regulations at the hotel, she would not be able to wear her *hijāb* (head-scarf) and that she would need to wear a shorter skirt than the one she was wearing to the interview. She did not respond to this information. Soon thereafter she was notified that she had been accepted for the position, but she declined it, as she did not want to compromise her Islamic identity. Leila had the option of another hotel, but it only had a two-star rating, which would not be good for her future prospects, so she approached another top hotel. Her lecturer made it clear to her that if she wished to get the internship she would need to compromise. The lecturer requested a private meeting with her father, who agreed to the compromise that she would wear her *hijāb* (head-scarf) to and from the hotel, but not at the hotel. While she did this initially, she soon stopped wearing it entirely. Leila admits that she was a bit surprised by her father's decision to compromise. Because she no longer wore the *hijāb* (head-scarf) to and from the hotel, she had many fights with her parents. But she could no longer justify wearing it, especially not while she was serving alcohol in the hotel bar. She felt foolish and knew that she was being a hypocrite.

When asked what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women, Leila really did not know how to answer the question. It was something she had never given much thought to before. She did, however, mention that in order to be a Muslim, you needed to know about Islām, and you needed to be educated to deal with life. Leila credits her time at high school as the key influence in the construction of her Islamic identity and the love that she feels for the religion. It would seem, therefore, that

the type of Islamic education she was most exposed to was that of *tarbiyah* (nurturing). She singles out the many *aḥādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) and *sīra* (history) pertaining to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as having had a long-lasting effect on her. She loved learning about his challenges and difficulties, and how he never lost hope. She often refers to the emotions which were, and still are, evoked in her when she hears the recitation of the Qur'an, or when she participates in *dhikr* (remembrance of God). The practice of *dhikr* (remembrance of God) in Islām is considered to be a form of worship, which is described as equal to and the means to prayer:

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

'Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish Regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do.'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-'Ankabut [Chapter: The Spider] 29:45)

The thing that struck me most about Leila is that she displayed a deeply spiritual side, which clearly stood separate to her Islamic identity, if one heeds her refrain of being disconnected from Islām. It is as if the two (her spirituality and her religion) are juxtaposed within her own self-understanding. I find this very interesting within the context of her cloistered rearing and her education at a Muslim-based school. Consequently, I was keen to ask Leila about her exposure to and experience of Islamic education, since, of all the cases, she was the only one who had attended a Muslim-based primary and high school, which meant that she would have been exposed to a particular environment where Islām, its teachings and codes, were foregrounded. In addition, given the profile of the particular school which she attended, she would have only encountered two types of learners, and two types of teachers: Coloured and Indian. My expectations

were to encounter a young Muslim woman, who had a clearly defined sense of Islamic identity, since she would have had nothing against which to counter it. She grew up in a predominantly Muslim community, was reared in a conservative Muslim home, and attended conservative Muslim-based schools. Yet, of all the cases, she displayed the greatest sense of confusion about, and displacement from, her Islamic identity.

Leila resides in a predominantly Muslim community. She describes it as a fairly close-knit community, where there is mutual respect between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is an area where Muslims are freely able to practise their Islām, where the *adhān* (call to prayer) is heard five times a day, and where everyone will attend everyone else's funeral. She does, however, see a split between the older and younger generations. There is a stronger link amongst the older generation, but this is dying out amongst the younger generation. For example, when she was younger all the homes exchanged eats when they broke fast during the month of Ramadan. This practice is dying out. She enjoys being a part of this community. She does not try to avoid any specific obligations, roles or practices as a Muslim woman. Oddly, even in her current state of *'loss'*, Leila enjoys going to prayer meetings, and likes attending the Friday communal prayer *(Jumuah)*. I think Leila performs the outer functions of Islām, she enjoys the rituals which Islām has on offer, but I am not sure to what extent this is more an external expression than one based on an internal understanding.

In response as to why contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression, she explains that it is Muslims themselves who portray themselves in a negative light. According to Leila, it is Muslims, who say negative things about Islām, and it is Muslims who commit negative actions in the name of Islām; Muslims need to take responsibility for what others say about Islām. She holds the view that the opinions and comments by the West can only be changed by Muslims and through their actions.

In terms of whether there is a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse context, Leila

differentiates between the reality of other Muslim women and her own. She believes that it is possible for Muslim women to maintain their Islamic identity and dress within any work or social setting, and that there really is no need for compromise all the time. She is very aware of professional women who are proud of their Islām and who stand up for their beliefs. But, she says, as far as she is concerned, there is no way that her industry can accommodate her Muslim beliefs, and there is no way that she as a Muslim can accommodate the demands placed on her by the industry. She concedes that the hospitality industry is not good for her, and that she needs to get out. Outside of the industry, she believes that anything is possible. The question I have is to what extent has Leila's Islamic-based schooling prepared her for a pluralist society, or was that never the objective of the school?

Leila, probably because of her own sense of disconnection with Islām, does not have much faith in her generation (younger generation) of Muslims. She does not believe that her generation is able to contribute to a cosmopolitan society. She does not believe that they are strong enough to keep their faith and identity in Islām within a cosmopolitan society. She is of the opinion that they have been given too much freedom and choices, and that they have lost sight of what it means to be Muslim. This is an opinion that Leila has previously articulated when she explained that because her Muslim peers at college drank alcohol, they were in fact not Muslim. Implicit in these types of characterisations is a worldview that being Muslim means not having access to freedom and choices, or that in order to be Muslim, one should not or cannot have access to freedom and choices. Clearly, from Leila's perspective, when Muslims have access to freedom and choices, they run the risk of no longer being practising Muslims.

To Leila, a cosmopolitan society has too many choices on offer; the potential of diversity of opinions and actions stands in contrast to her understanding of Islām. A cosmopolitan society, therefore, from her point of view, cannot contribute to the identity of Muslim women; rather it presents a risk to Muslim identity. Her attachment to the physical manifestations and the outer displays of being Muslim diminishes the internal, and to a large extent, in my opinion, has contributed to Leila's disconnection from Islām. To her,

Islām is an embodiment of a very particular look, such as wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), and has assigned to it very specific actions, such as *not* drinking alcohol. She has a clearly articulated grasp of the rules and regulations pertaining to Islām, and it is precisely this tightly held grasp which prevents her from separating the *ta'lim* (instruction) and *ta'dib* (just action) aspects of Islamic education from its *tarbiyah* (nurturing) concept. And it certainly prevents her from seeing any possibility of Muslim women, particularly from her generation, from contributing to a cosmopolitan society. But perhaps in reflecting on her own views and self-imposed restrictions, she says in response to my observation that she has had a fairly strict upbringing, that maybe what she needed was more guidance and preparation in terms of life choices.

4.4.6. Thania

Thania agreed to be a participant before even meeting me. All our correspondence had taken place via email. I had written to *The Inner Circle*, requesting assistance in recommending a likely participant. After exchanging a few emails about the nature and confidentiality of my research, Thania offered her time and interest. She had been sent a copy of the interview schedule, so was fully aware of what I would be asking. I was a bit apprehensive about my interview with her, as I had not met her before. The interview would be our first face-to-face contact, and I was expecting her to answer deeply personal questions. I really did not know what to expect, or how she would respond to any questions that might relate to her sexuality.

Before we began the interview Thania and I spent a little time getting to know each other. She wanted to know more about my research, why I was doing it, and what I hoped to achieve. When I ask Thania what Islām means to her and how she would describe her relationship with Islām, she immediately responded that she loves answering that question. She shared that even before seeing it on my interview schedule it was a question which she has always asked herself. Because of her personal challenges, she was forced to question what she believed – meaning that her initial beliefs about Islām did not allow for a homosexual relationship. In asking herself questions about Islām, and by looking at her relationship with Islām, she has learnt that much of what she has been taught in the past

was based on dogma and traditions, and not Islām. To her, Islām means peace of the mind and body. She defines her relationship with Islām as a harmony between the physical and the emotional.

In response to what role apartheid played in shaping her Islamic identity, Thania explains that although she was not directly affected by apartheid, the impact it has had on her family has indirectly played itself out on how she was raised. She holds the opinion that apartheid, like other forms of oppression, forces people to turn to religion. Her family, she continues, held and continues to hold very tightly onto Islām. This tight hold translated into a firm connection with *imāms* (religious leaders), especially those in their area where her family lived. According to Thania her family viewed the *imāms* (religious leaders) as portals to God. And because this was their view, it had to be hers too. She was taught to go to the *imām* (religious leader) when she experienced difficulties, and that through his prayers and supplications, these difficulties would be eased.

Thania does not believe that her family's hold on Islām or worldview have shifted in a post-apartheid climate. If anything, it has turned them more inward. To her post-apartheid South Africa signaled the beginning of access to alternative voices and spaces. To some, like her family, these new and different spaces and voices led to confusion. To Thania, it represented an opportunity to be true to herself and to connect with other different voices. It also created the space for organisations, such as *The Inner Circle* to emerge. But she knows that all this change and difference presents a problem to orthodox Muslims. When I ask her to elaborate on her experiences in these alternative spaces and voices, she recounts that she has always struggled with her identity. She shares that her earliest memory of this struggle was at puberty when she first realised that she was attracted to girls. She did not understand it and thought that it would go away, except it did not. At age 19 she decided to inform her parents about her sexuality by writing them a letter. She soon feared retribution and ran away from home, but her family tracked her down and forced her to return to the family home. There she experienced intense emotional abuse, and watched her mother fall apart.

Thania completed her diploma and found employment. At 22 years of age she once again decided to 'come out'. She had already decided that she was moving in with her partner. For three months there was absolutely no communication from her family, until the day her mother called to say that her parents were divorcing. Thania found herself being ostracised by her family, but she also found herself turning to Islām for answers. She could not accept that a merciful and compassionate God would punish her because of her sexuality. She was also receiving a lot more support from other Muslims, both men and women, who were homosexual.

As to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt or exacting manner, Thania believes that it depends on the person. She explains that it is not important to her, and that it is just another identity. Her primary identity is being a good person, peaceful and trustworthy. All of these, she continues, feed into her Islamic identity. To her it has nothing to do with what is displayed. Thania argues that there are these expectations of Muslim women, not because of Islām, but because of patriarchal structures and influences. Traditionally men and women in Islām, like in other religions, have always fulfilled distinctly different roles. Men, she says, are expected to take care of women, while women are expected to take care of the home and children. But this, Thania maintains, has nothing to do with Islām, but everything to do with men's authority over women.

In response to whether Muslim women are obligated by Islām to display their Islamic identity, Thania explains that Islām or the Qur'an provides guidelines, not instructions, and this includes guidelines on the *hijāb* (head-scarf), as an example. She believes that Qur'an guides women and men to dress modestly. But every woman has her own idea of what modesty means to her. To her, the Qur'an instructs women to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), but it does not say what that *hijāb* (head-scarf) is. Ultimately, it is Thania's assertion that the Qur'an does not obligate women to display their Islamic identity. Consequently, she is ambivalent as to whether the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts is a truthful representation of Islām. She expounds that she has witnessed fully cloaked women say the worst things. To her there is no relationship between what

women wear and Islām. The *hijāb* (head-scarf), says Thania, refers to a lot more than clothing and how women present themselves; it refers to conduct and morality.

Thania believes that Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, because there is a stigma attached to the *hijāb* (head-scarf). Women who wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) are assessed and treated differently. When I ask Thania whether she can think of any instances when she felt at odds with her Muslim identity, she identifies making peace with her sexuality her greatest challenge. She relates how for a while she turned away from Islām, as she did not believe that there was a place for her sexuality in her religion. Over time and through her own exploration of the Qur'an, she realised that she was extremely blessed and gifted, since she had a calling that would not allow her to leave her Islām. She explains that she looked for ways to reconcile the two – she did not want to let go of either. She asserts that real belief is only possible through questioning. Thania reveals how alternative interpretations of the scripture have led her to reconcile her Islām and her sexuality. She explains that a lot of what she was taught previously is without context – she was raised to believe that homosexuality was a sin. She has since found that the Qur'an allows for her sexuality; it speaks about it. And she recognises that this is a view that does not and will not resonate with the majority of Muslims, or with traditional Islamic values. Her questioning has led her to find other answers. She no longer operates from a place of fear, but out of love for her Creator.

Thania is not sure what Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women – like Leila, she has never given it much thought. She thinks it might be because she never learned to understand the Qur'an. She describes her education as predominantly consisting of the memorisation (*dhakara*) of Qur'anic verses, which as I have already discussed in chapter three, was the primary method of learning the Qur'an and *ahādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) (Afsaruddin, 2005: 150). So it would appear that the type of Islamic education to which Thania was exposed never shifted to a more sophisticated level of learning, namely *diraya* (understanding).

The *madrassah* (Muslim school) she attended was attached to the local *masjid* (mosque). While she attended classes on a daily basis, she could not recall any systematic programme or moments of reflection. She learned about the fundamentals of Islām, such as how to perform *salāh* (prayers), why she needed to fast, and how she needed to conduct herself as a young Muslim girl. She knew about Islām, but she never quite comprehended what it meant to be Muslim. Looking back, she recognises it as a form of socialisation into Islām. But as someone who was grappling with her sexual identity, she soon realised that what she knew about herself did not fit into the types of socialisation on offer. In the absence of a space for her sexual identity, Thania began to rebel against what she saw as an oppressive way of life, in particular against Muslim women. She uses her own family as an example, where the women spend their lives caring for the home and the children. She describes them as being identity-less, of not having any individual purpose in life, that all that mattered was rearing their children and caring for their husbands. She contends they are oppressed without them knowing it. When the children leave home, their lives are empty and they have nothing else to do, so they try to find meaning in other ways, such as attending Islamic classes. She accedes that she has a resistance to Islamic education, because to her it is always the same message of complacency.

In response to which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of her Islamic identity, she recounts that her parents and family raised her with their truths and she, in turn, processed her world through these truths. She believed what she was told; it was all she knew. I find Thania's focus on the notion of truth very interesting, since by implication, she is in fact saying that it might not have been the truth. She is also stating that the way her parents understood and moulded her Islamic identity might not have been based on truth, but rather on their own interpretation of what they perceived to be the truth. But she is also stating that there is more than one truth, and that the different types of truths might not necessarily be in conversation with each other. She assigns this doubting of her parents' and family's truth directly to her own questioning of her sexual identity. She had begun to realise that her attraction to other women was a part of her identity as a Muslim woman, and that this would not go away. That was her truth. The fact that this part of her identity could not find accommodation and participation in

the Islām as depicted by her parents, her family and her *madrassah* (Muslim school) meant that there had to be another truth – a truth which spoke about Muslim women, who were gay. Even after briefly stepping outside of her identity and practices as a Muslim woman, Thania knew that she did not want to leave her Islamic identity. It was this motivation that led to her conscious decision to pursue alternative interpretations of the scripture so that she could reconcile her Islām and her sexuality. Ultimately, she holds that her family and she have different concepts of God. To her family, God lives in the sky. He is egotistical and people must do things for Him. She has learnt that God needs nothing from her. He does not have human qualities. And by saying He gets angry, for example, He is being given human qualities. To Thania, He is most merciful and forgiving and He understands the human condition.

As to how she would describe the Muslim community in which she finds herself, she explains that she works in a Muslim community, where she feels at peace and supported. She has also found a space at a local mosque in Cape Town, which she describes as accommodating alternative voices. This is the same mosque where the first pre-*khutbah* (sermon that precedes the Friday prayer) was delivered by a woman, Amina Wadud, to a predominantly male congregation. At the time, this led to a huge controversy at the mosque, leading the MJC to call for the dismissal of the resident *imām* (religious leader). She has tried to attend other mosques, but has become frustrated with the traditional messages of doom and gloom. She shares her home with her partner, who does not identify with any faith. Her home is a space where other gay Muslim friends feel safe, just like her work environment.

Thania does not try to avoid any specific obligations, roles or practices. Instead, she tries to do everything that she should do. She is comfortable with her identity and does not see a need to avoid certain parts of roles as a Muslim woman. But she also recognises that contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression. To her this is due to a perceived threat both ways between contemporary society and the Muslim world. The Muslim world is afraid that the west will infiltrate

them and tarnish their Islām, as if Muslims are untarnished. She is unsure why contemporary society feels threatened; perhaps it is due to the ignorance about Islām.

In response to how Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities, Thania contends that different women do it differently. Her pain was her sexuality. She needed to construct her own path and space where she could be who she is, and not who she was expected to be. She believes that it is about having the courage to state that one thinks differently, and then to act on those beliefs. There is not a singular Muslim identity; women are not all the same. Because of this difference in identities, Thania holds the view that there is a means or a space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a cosmopolitan context. In fact, she states, that Muslims are supposed to allow and express a cosmopolitan identity, since they do not live in isolation. She believes that part of being Muslim involves notions of tolerance, acceptance and compassion towards others, which gives shape to a cosmopolitan society. Thania's hopeful belief about the possibility of commensurability between Muslim women and a cosmopolitan society is distinctly different from the sense of hopelessness expressed by Leila. I find Thania's hope especially pertinent, since the very descriptors which she attaches to Islām – tolerance, acceptance and compassion – have not been forthcoming to her from her own Muslim community. So, it would seem that while Islām is perceived to be about the values of compassion and mercy, what Thania has experienced, though, has been rejection and unkindness. A pondering thought at this stage is whether compassion is only extended towards those with who we are in agreement, and who conform to the norm. But in reflecting on the Qur'an as a text for all humanity, compassion in Islām cannot only be the domain of the norm and of those in agreement. The very notion of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) is embedded in the existence and practice of the different jurisprudential schools of thought – the *Hanafiyya,* the *Malikiyya,* the *Shafiyya,* and the *Hanbaliyya.*

4.4.7. Nuraan

I have found that in the last ten years, Islām defines who I am – it informs my thinking, my choices, and my actions. It's a definitive relationship, which is embodied in all that I

do. The deeper my understanding of Islām, the more my relationship has evolved into what I believe has given more meaning to my life. It has been a relationship that has shifted repeatedly over time – from one in which I stood on the outside, to one which I have begun to own. It has not always been this way – there was a time when Islām meant little to me – a religion I was born into, followed, but never quite understood. I felt worn down by the rules, the boundaries, the dos and the don'ts. It was easy to feel this way – I could fulfil all the obligations without anyone actually knowing what I was thinking and feeling inside.

I spent the first thirteen years of my life in the area of Claremont, which was declared a Whites-only area in 1969 – a year before my birth. I grew up in a community which consisted of both Muslims and Christians, and who shared a tight sense of community. With the implementation of the Group Areas Act, this once thriving neighbourhood, where friendships were built and families intermarried, was disbanded and dismissed to never before heard-of areas, such as Manenberg, Lavender Hill, Bonteheuwel, Grassy Park, and Atlantis, which was about 50kms away.[16] These newly constructed shanty towns all had one thing in common – they were far away from the city centre and had no basic amenities, such as hospitals and police stations, in proximity. For me, the harshness of this Act was felt most profoundly at school when I realised that friends I had the day before would never be seen again.

My family must have been one of the last to leave the area in 1984, as I distinctly remember watching all the people in my street move out. It was the same year when I started high school. The days of cycling the 1.5kms to school were immediately replaced by countless car journeys with my father. We moved to Athlone on the Cape Flats, where the houses all looked the same and ideas of gardens and recreational spaces were just ideas. Attending the local high school was not an option – my father was adamant about *'attaining a good education'*. While my father continued teaching me to recite the Qur'an –

---

[16] The Group Areas Act saw the establishment of different residential areas for different races. This meant that while Whites moved into areas,w hich were better resourced and in close proximity to basis facilities, such as hospitals and schools, Coloureds and Blacks were forced to move out of areas like Claremont and Constantia, and re-locate on the Cape Flats, where there were deisignated areas for each of the racial groups.

something he had always done - I started attending the nearby *madrassah* (Muslim school). The *madrassah* (Muslim school) was run by the local *imām* (religious leader), whose shouting emasculated any chance of a coherent message. I was petrified of him, and terrified by his brand of Islām, which was so riddled with punishment, anger and hell, that I had little confidence of ever being a good Muslim, worthy of heaven.

I think apartheid certainly made it easier for me to shape my Islamic identity. Apartheid defined everything which was unjust – discrimination, racism, oppression – everything which Islām is not. So Islām as a worldview became that much more attractive and safe for me. Apartheid created silos of communities, which meant little to no interaction with others and which further reinforced the singularity of Islām for me. With the advent of a post-apartheid South Africa, two processes happened simultaneously for me – I left the sanctuary of a Coloureds-only school for the diversity of a multi-cultural university, while at the same time being part of a far greater changing political landscape, where estranged communities were suddenly allowed to engage. I think post-apartheid South Africa opened my eyes to a world of others and other beliefs, as well as disbelief. I enjoyed the freedom to debate in this – I enjoyed the freedom to stand outside of it, probably for the first time in my life – where the voices of others began to impact on who I was and who I became. I definitely left the closeted understanding I had before.

As to whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt and exacting manner, I believe that identity is informed by what we believe and how we define ourselves. There was a time, because of the gaps in my own understanding of Islām, when I consciously chose not to display my Islamic identity in an overt way – I did not enjoy standing out as the other. At *madrassah* (Muslim school) I was taught that good Muslim women wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf). At home I was told that I should wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf). I did not want to, so I did not. My friends did not either, which further confirmed my decision as the right one. So while I wore it to *madrassah* (Muslim school) and to religious events, I could not wait to get rid of it the minute I got home. I spent most of my teenage years in this juggle – wearing a cloth when I needed to, pleasing those I needed to, knowing all the while that I was not who I wanted to be.

J O U R N E Y I N G   I D E N T I T Y

If I felt unsettled in my Islamic identity at high school, then university presented itself as the space and justification for all my further questioning and self-doubt. It was a time of never before experienced freedom and difference, all within a three-month period from completing high school at a one-toned environment to a place where there was only disparity and dissimilarity. The university was an interesting place; it was a space where the various homogeneous backgrounds dissolved into a paradoxical heterogeneous state. For all its openness the university contained three distinct groups – Black, White and Coloured. The various racial clusters were obvious and understood. Apartheid was a year away from its constitutional demise. Nelson Mandela was still in prison. But there was something else going on around me, which I had not immediately realised. Within two months at university all my friends were Muslim. We studied, ate and socialised together. Many of my friends belonged to the University of Cape Town (UCT) Muslim Students' Association (MSA), which is linked to the Muslim Students' Association of South Africa. Established in 1974, the association has branches on many tertiary campuses across South Africa.

While most of the Muslims tended to stick together, there were others who did not. And even among those who stuck together, there were diverse interpretations and practices of Islām at play. While some strictly observed their daily prayers in the designated Muslim prayer facility, others did not. While some fasted during the month of *Ramadan*, others did not. While some drank alcohol, others did not. And while a few Muslim women wore the *hijāb* (head-scarf), most, like me, did not. Sometimes we would have heated discussions about all of this, but mostly we did not. I think, largely, this was because our own understandings of Islām were too limited, too uninformed and too under-developed. My liberal, unorthodox university life could not be further removed from my home, where traditional Islām, and all its trimmings, remained firmly intact. By this time I had already begun to attend a new *madrassah* (Muslim school). My frustration with the ranting of the *imām* (religious leader) at the local *madrassah* (Muslim school) had finally been replaced by a blatant refusal to go. It was my father, the other critical figure in my Islamic identity, who found the new *madrassah* (Muslim school), which upon reflection later in my life, I would identify as the genesis of a new relationship with Islām.

The *mu'allima* (female teacher) at the new *madrassah* (Muslim school) was a middle-aged woman, whose approach to Islām was unlike anything I had experienced before. Her particular worldview of Islām spoke of compassion, rather than anger, of love and mercy, of an acceptance of others, an Islām which gave me hope. But most importantly, her classes were an opportunity for critical engagement, rather than the usual condescending lectures I had come to associate with the teaching of Islām. I learned a very important lesson in this class – that it was and is okay to question and interrogate Islām, and that the greatest learning emerged from the encouragement and respect of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). I also realised that this was what had been missing during my former classes. I never had the sense that it was in order for me to talk about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as if he was just a man. Every lesson had been clouded in a sacrosanct aura of mysticism – something towards which to strive, but never quite reachable. It made little to no sense to me – why, for instance, I was required to recite the Qur'an on a regular basis when I had absolutely no idea what I was saying, or why God needed me to perform five prayers every day of my life. The responses to these questions were as evasive and unreachable as the spirituality I was expected to attain. It bothered me intensely. So, through this new *madrassah* (Muslim school) and through my numerous interactions with this *mu'allima* (Muslim teacher), I began a new journey, where the emphasis of Islām shifted from being something out there, born in the faraway, hot deserts of Arabia, to being about me. It was at once a disconcerting and liberating experience. Ultimately, it was not *what* or the *ta'lim* (instruction) that drew me to Islamic education, rather it was the *how,* the *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing) which allowed me to engage with myself, with God, and therefore with others.

Over time I began to learn a new type of Islām. I need to stress that this was a very gradual process – as gradual as the continuum of the inconsistencies of my faith. Sometimes I was deeply sure of my faith, longing for closeness to God, other times I felt confused and uncertain of what it meant to be Muslim, and who this God was. Eventually my vantage point altered from passive recipient of an ideology to active participant in the identity of my life. It was also the first time that I made the effort to sit down and read the Qur'an, not as the revealed word of God, but as a book, which I had

the right to examine, analyse and question. Up to this point I had been inundated with quoted verses and random *aḥādith* (sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) – all amounting to the same message of assent, submission and surrender. I was nowhere to be found in these actions; I could not surrender to something when I did not know why or what I was supposed to surrender to. It was the learning of an Islām, which I needed, as opposed to an Islām which needed me to do x and y, which became the substance of my Islamic identity.

In response to whether Muslim women are obligated by Islām to display their Islamic identity, such as wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), ultimately I believe that it really is about the individual relationship with God, which might not be and should not necessarily be visible to others. So, I do not hold the view that Muslim women who wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) are more pious or have a better understanding of Islām than women who do not. That being said, I believe that Islām is about engagement, and in trying to engage with Islām and in trying to engage with myself, I need to let go and open myself to a higher being. I need to place myself in His trust. I view the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) as an empowering statement of who I am. But it took a while for me to get to this understanding and realisation.

I was in my late twenties when I consistently began to wear my *hijāb* (head-scarf). It was an item of clothing with which I often grappled, in which I could not find immediate comfort. I spent a number of years wearing it to please some, and removing it to comply with others. It was never about doing it for me. My journey has led me to link the *hijāb* (head-scarf) to the Islamic principles of modesty and a consciousness of a relationship with God, and very importantly, that my consciousness of God is manifested in my relationships with others. And so if I am conscious of God, His love, His compassion and His mercy, then that is exactly what I need to articulate in my engagement with other creations of God. I also believe and accept that Muslim women are expected to practise their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way; there are specific roles for its adherents, and there are on occasion separate roles for Muslim men and Muslim women. Women in Islām inhabit a role and position which are different to that of men. Muslim

women are representative of a particular philosophy of Islām – one which seeks to establish a position of modesty, which allows Muslim women to interact in a society where she is not objectified. Islām emphasises the need to establish your identity – in your name, your conduct and in your dress. My identity as a Muslim usurps all other identities, which as Taylor (1989: 27) explains, not only defines my attachment to a particular spiritual context, but is in fact a statement of my frame of reference.

My Islamic education has taught me that Islām is a social religion, which for me, means engaging with God, engaging with the individual self, and engaging with other social beings, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The social dimension of Islām serves as a further reinforcement of the necessity of the inclusion of others, and that indeed, one is never alone. Wan Daud (2009) states that an individual is meaningless in isolation since taht would mean that he or she is no longer an individual, but in fact everything. Therefore the decision to focus on cases rather than just an auto-ethnography should also be viewed in terms of its comment on Islām and Islamic education, and not just as a research methodology. Perhaps there is no greater illustration than the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) as the archetypal enactment of Islām as a social practice. The *Hajj* (pilgrimage), while essentially a journey of individual exculpation, is amongst the world's greatest social gatherings. As the amassing of 2.5 million Muslims (in 2011), it tests the capacity for social tolerance, acceptance and celebration of diversity like no other ritual in Islām.

As a complex symbol both among Muslims and non-Muslims, I have experienced many instances and incidents where my *hijāb* (head-scarf) and my Islamic identity have created a tension in the public sphere. The otherness of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) makes it difficult for Muslim women to be accepted or understood on face value – all sorts of misinformed stereotypes about the *hijāb* (head-scarf) have unfortunately led to all sorts of misinformed judgements about Muslim women. One consequence is that Muslim women find themselves in a construction of dual identities – one for her Muslim home and private sphere, and one for her role in the public domain. It is not unusual therefore for a Muslim woman to leave her home wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf), and arriving at her office with it hanging around her neck, or left in her handbag. I have encountered numerous instances

where people in my work environment find it hard to connect with me, because of what they perceive as my otherness due to my dress. I find that I have needed to work harder in order to be recognised as being good at my profession. I have had to prove myself in a way that non-Muslim women and non-*hijāb* (head-scarf)-wearing Muslim women have not had to.

I believe that exactly what Islām seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim men, it seeks to achieve through Muslim women, and that is to create a society of sound judgement, justice, and informed thinking. Islām establishes all Muslim men and women as *khalifas* or vicegerents of the message of Islām. We cannot live and relate this message if we do not have knowledge of it. Women, I believe, owe it to themselves to seek the knowledge which has been obligated upon them, so as to know themselves. I believe that education has granted me the freedom and capacity to interrogate my Islām, my God and myself. I continue to educate myself, because I believe that my humanity is a constant evolvement, which requires nurturing if I wish to be a just human being.

In terms of my experience with my Muslim community, I find that at different times I interact within different types of Muslim communities, and that there is a very clear distinction between the community of my childhood and the one I have been experiencing as an adult. My childhood community was one where Muslims lived in close contact with their non-Muslim neighbours – to the point that there were many families who intermarried, regardless of religious differences. Looking back now I suspect that a lot of the closeness was due to an apartheid-induced vacuum, which is hard to find in a post-apartheid society. While I still see closeness, respect and regard amongst different groups of people, I do not see the levels of intermingling I experienced before. Post-apartheid has led to newly designated constructions of identity. We are no longer different because of race; we are different because of religions, cultures and economic standing. And it is my personal experience and evident from my conversations with the six women, that these differences are more prevalent amongst newly constructed communities – where so-called Coloureds, Blacks and Indians are moving into former Whites-only communities, which are, as a rule located in better resourced areas in South Africa. So

while these new 'integrated' communities live side by side, the interaction and transference of cultures is minimal to non-existent.

The exercise of democratic acceptance and integration, in my opinion, has yet to be assimilated into a notion of citizenship within a post-apartheid construction. As South Africans, I think, we have confused the dismantling of the denigration of others with what we hoped would be accepting co-existence. What has happened though is a newly constructed transference of power from that of race to that of class. So, it would seem that instead of the emergence of a social construction of inclusivity, what we are in fact witnessing are pockets of new spaces of otherness created through discourses of culture, ethnicity, language and class. The notion of citizenship, therefore, is not homogeneous; it is constantly being defined and re-defined, depending on the context of individual spatial and social construction. The establishment and verification of citizenship is as multifarious as it is ideological, since it is always based and determined by a presumption of commonality, and not disparity.

In my residential community, for instance, we have adopted a new language – one of consensus and 'getting along'. The number of Muslim families in my area is increasing on an annual basis. I am surrounded by Muslim, Christian, Black and White neighbours, but I do not share the level of community with any of them similar to that which I shared in my childhood neighbourhood or which I shared in the Coloureds-only area in which I lived upon marriage. It is a community in which a number of Muslim families have spent the past ten years trying to get the post-apartheid democratic powers that be to authorise the establishment of an Islamic centre. Ironically, in apartheid South Africa, Muslims were allowed to erect mosques wherever they found themselves – even if they were forced to be there.

Seventeen years later, under a Constitution which guarantees me the right to freely practise my religion my Muslim community have to beg at the doors of democracy for this right to be honoured. It has been a spectacle to behold – no more so than in the absurd wordplay which the community has had to deal with – the application to build a

mosque was replaced with an application to build a *madrassah* (Muslim school), which was replaced with building a cultural centre, which has most recently been approved as an Islamic educational centre. This linguistic exercise provides profound insight into the residual legacy of apartheid structures and thinking, on the one hand, which still sees the domination of one group of people over another, and on the other hand, a new type of discrimination, which is reserved for Muslims. I hold this view because it has taken this community ten years to gain the right to practise its Islām in an area which is home to no less than thirteen churches. The notion of democratic citizenship, therefore, to Muslims in the area, remains an empty rhetoric. As post-apartheid citizens we have yet to learn that notions of freedom and equality are made visible through the inclusion of all assertions of difference, and that it is precisely these assertions that contribute to, and serve as, expressions of democratic citizenship.

In terms of a broader context and in my interactions with other social beings, I often find that my Muslim community is lacking, that there is a shortage of Islamic knowledge and by implication a gap in self-understanding. I think a lot of emphasis is placed on the outer displays of Islamic identity and constructions, with little time being given to the enhancement of the self. I think a lot of time and urgency is placed on attending sermons and lectures, but very little is taught and learnt. And I hold the view that much of this widening fissure between sermonising and teaching can be traced to untaught *'ulemā* (religious scholars). Clouding this fissure is the phenomenal role and influence of culture and tradition in the Western Cape, as I am sure is the case in other Muslim areas of South Africa as well. In the Western Cape the Muslims follow numerous traditional customs, which not only have no basis in Qur'anic exegesis or the *Sunnah* (way of life of the Prophet PBUH), but on occasion, run contrary to the very teachings of Islām. An unintended consequence of these gaps in Islamic knowledge and self-understanding is a lack of understanding of Islām by non-Muslims. In not fully grasping their Islamic identity, some Muslims struggle in their articulation thereof. And if some Muslims themselves lack the capacity to give expression to what it is that they believe, and how they are expected to exercise those beliefs, then not only are they rendered voiceless, but

they open themselves to misrepresentation – both amongst other Muslims and non-Muslims.

It is my contention that contemporary social life, especially one shaped and (mis)informed by a post 9/11 discourse, tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression and with suspicion. But I also think that often when we, as Muslim men and women, look at this construct called 'contemporary social life', we lose sight of the fact that we are in fact a part of that construct. And as such, we are both the co-constructors and co-constructions of this discourse. This means that Muslims need to become conversant with what it is that is meant by Islām. Because as much as 'moderate' Muslims can draw their interpretations from the Qur'an, so too can 'radical' Muslims also find their voice. I do not believe that some Muslims themselves have done enough to live Islām in a clarifying enough way. I think some Muslims have distorted the message of the Qur'an through the proliferation of their egos. And I am especially of the view that because it was predominantly Muslim men who defined the experiences of Islām, it is the male voice which continues to define the depiction and exhibition of Islām today. It is not Islām which propagates honour killings, it is the interpretation by men; it is not Islām which permits the beating of a wife by her husband, it is the interpretation by men; and it is not Islām which forbids women entry to a mosque or access to an education, it is the interpretation by men.

It is my opinion that Muslim women can amend and address the suspicions about themselves by re-accessing the spaces within contemporary social life. I say, 're-accessing', because I believe that these spaces have always been there, and that Muslim women are already re-expressing their identities. They are doing this through teaching and learning, and they are doing this through living and demonstrating an Islām which is being de-patriarchised, and returning to the gender-equal foundations of revealed Islām. Muslim women are realising that in order to express their identity in a cosmopolitan society, they need to become a part of that society, and that as much as Islām is part of the building blocks of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitanism is incorporated in the diverse interpretations and lived experiences of Muslims all over.

4.5.   A Complex Look at a Complex Identity

These then are the seven stories of Muslim women. They are not representative of all Muslim women, and not meant to be. They do, however, provide momentary glimpses into a particular interpretation and practice of Islām, which might hold true for a particular grouping of Muslim women in the Western Cape and elsewhere. Furthermore, they are examples of the blocks of the construction of identity, which defines being Muslim. The data constructed through these cases are deeply personal accounts of lives lived and being lived. Two aspects remain now: one is to relate these individual stories to broader representations and images of Muslim women, and two is to tie these images to a philosophy of Islamic education as it pertains to Muslim women.

Philosophy, elucidates Dewey (2004), is thinking what the known demands of us – what responsive attitude it exacts; it is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Islām as a philosophy projects ideals of being, projects ideas of what is possible – ideals which are couched in justice and parity – but as encapsulated in the lives of its adherents, as shown in the lives of the Muslim women I have just described, in the words of Dewey it cannot be a record of accomplished fact. These women are, in the words of Connelly and Clandinin (1990), story-telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. And just as, philosophically, there cannot be a record of accomplished fact, so too there cannot be one definitive or ultimate story. And so we attach meaning to what we think is meaningful, and we define our identity by what we think is important – in this case Islām – and we respond to life through these attachments, believing that this is what makes us safe, that this will inform us about who we really are.

But the story remains unclear, undefined and to a certain extent, unfulfilled, because we have to story our lives in relation to the stories of others, in order to gain clarity and perspective. And sometimes, when I tell and re-tell the same story, I begin to tell a different story – maybe I think it is what somebody else wants to hear, or maybe the story I tell now will be different from the one I will be telling ten years from now, because we re-story earlier experiences as we reflect on later experiences, and so the stories and their meanings shift and change over time (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). So we are never really

present in the meaningful moments, as meaning is only created in looking back. And we are not able to recognise or know the moment when it happens, because unlike rational order, life and philosophy, as Dewey (2004) explains, is distinct from knowledge. Knowledge, he states, is science, it represents objects which have been settled, ordered, disposed of rationally. To live and to know who I am is not an ordered or settled process, nor can I dispose of matters which are unsettling. My life is shaped and informed by all those facets and people, which at one stage or another mattered to me.

The stories revealed in the cases paint a myriad of intersecting patterns of common understandings and experiences, but as many, if not more, patterns of divergent views, which constitute the cosmopolitan nature within and across Muslim women. While Nadia, Shameema and Thania describe their relationship with Islām as bringing peace, solace and contentment, Yumna, Mariam and I describe it as a journey towards self-knowledge. While Mariam and Nadia claim that they were shielded from apartheid and that it did not have much impact on the shaping of their identities, both, however, are acutely aware of the pronounced differences in a post-apartheid society, where freedom of choice and accessibility have indeed led to new opportunities, but have also opened a very wide door to uncertainty and new forms of identity construction within the Muslim community. Thania, Leila and Shameema, the three youngest participants, testify that apartheid or the residual effects thereof are still present in their lives. Leila goes as far as saying that her life has not been made any easier in a post-apartheid context; in fact it is becoming more and more challenging. Shameema's comment of *'lives unlived'* in reference to her parents is perhaps the most eerily reflective description of an unjust society. It also begins to explain Shameema's refrain of seeking solace, peace and safety in and through Islām. The women, however, all share a common view of post-apartheid South Africa – it has caused certain Muslims to turn inward, making their isolation from a diverse society a self-imposed one, as opposed to the inflicted one of apartheid.

Depending on the interpretation at play, the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) holds very different meanings for all of the women. According to Wadud (2006: 219), it is not possible to discuss Islām and gender without including the *hijāb* (head-scarf): *'While*

overloaded with multiple meanings, it is often the single marker used to determine community approval or disapproval.' Leila, for instance, views the donning of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) as obligatory in Islām. Thania, however, questions the very concept of the *hijāb* (head-scarf), and challenges its assumed association with modesty and piety. The wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is not important to her; it is just symbolic of another identity.

And while all the women express the view that the practices of Muslim women are viewed as oppressive, they also believe that ultimately the responsibility of this view rests with the women themselves. Of significance to me are not only the divergent conceptualisations of Islamic education, but also the gap in understanding of what Islamic education is and hopes to achieve. In fact, it would be true to state that few of the women in the cases have a conceptual understanding of Islamic education. Islamic education is associated with after-school *madrassah* (Muslim school) classes, which were sporadically attended, depending on how well the *madrassah* (Muslim school) was run. The cases reveal an ambivalent attitude not only towards the attendance of *madrassah* (Muslim school), but to what exactly the point of it is. Both Leila and Thania clearly state that they do not know what Islām hopes to achieve through the education of Muslim women. I resisted *madrassah* (Muslim school) for most of my teenage life; I saw it as something I had to do in order to please my parents. Islamic education as a concept was as far removed from my thinking as the desire to attend *madrassah* (Muslim school). What also emerges is other than foundational instruction in Islamic laws and practices, few of the women have sought any further education in their belief system. Reasons for this apathy range from not having the time, not seeing the need, to not wanting to, as in the case of Thania, who states that she has a resistance to Islamic education because *'it is always the same message of complacency'.*

The seven stories reveal seven different and complex formations of identity and different representations of Muslim women. Many of the stories depict a sensitive awareness in the women that there is a distinct disparity between the type of Islām they were taught and exposed to during their childhood, and the Islām encountered as adults. Much of the disparity revolves around what is considered to be *Sharī'ah* (Islamic laws), and practices,

which are in fact defined and immersed in tradition, culture and other people's truths. Nadia, Thania and Yumna are especially vocal on the incongruity between Islām as an ideology, and Islām as lived and understood in their respective communities, especially one entrenched in patriarchy. Through Shameema's story one witnesses the divergence between what Islām purports, and what is interpreted, leading her to declare that her husband *'might not be the best example for her to take when it comes to Islām'*. It is a caustic comment to be made by any spouse, but it is also a critical statement in light of her husband's role as a spiritual leader in the community.

The complexities of the stories described in the cases reveal two distinct binaries: knowledge of Islām, and lived experience of Islām. This disconnection allows for the construction of a space and interaction where what is known about Islām might not necessarily be lived, and what is lived might not necessarily be known. What emerge are multiple images of Islām as experienced at a particular time within a particular context. In analysing the constructions ensconced in the cases, I have identified three images. In isolation from each other these images depict very different faces and versions of Islām, but as a collective they illustrate the formation of identities and the cosmopolitan character of Muslim women, as I will discuss in chapter five.

Chapter

5

Images of Identity

I n leading to my exploration of the identity formation of Muslim women, I have clarified that the intent to understand some Muslim women's education and the rationales of their educational context and practice opens itself to a plurality of interpretations, which in itself would be a reflection of the pluralism of understanding of the practices of Islām both within and outside of cosmopolitanism. I have explained that as a research study in philosophy of education, my discourse is aimed at identifying and analysing a problem, and then looking at or offering different options to address the problem. By implication, therefore, there will always be space for uncertainty and doubt. I have also explained that by using an interpretivist methodology with feminist leanings I am creating space for multiple understandings and interpretations, rather than objectively verifiable truths.

In primarily seeking to explore the (in)commensurablility between the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism, the dissertation is premised on the knowledge and experience that there are certain educational practices which lead to the construction of the identity and practices of Muslim women. As such, I examined how notions of knowledge and education are constructed within Islām and Islamic education, and I paid particular attention to the types of Islamic education and practices which lead to the construction of identity in Muslim women. I extended this examination by looking at how knowledge and education were manifested in the various institutions which shape the lives of Muslims, and more specifically, at the roles and interactions of women in these spaces. I viewed this to be a necessary inclusion, since it revealed how different religious spaces provide different types of Islamic education, as well as that these spaces are shaped

and defined by the people who occupy them. And it became especially pertinent within the context of the case study research, where it became evident that the seven women had been exposed not only to different types of learning institutions, but more importantly, to different types of teaching and learning, which in some instances, were shaped by the very types of institutions they had attended.

As I have already explicated, the decision to use case study research is illustrative of the fact that my story cannot be told in isolation, and that it is only given shape and meaning in context of the voices and experiences of others. So, from one perspective, the case study research is a conscious attempt to address the limitations of a purely auto-ethnographical approach, which is premised on an individual's assumptions and preconceived notions of identity and belonging. From another perspective it is a corroboration of the social element of Islām and its teachings. And while the language of the narrative designates signs and codes to the lived experiences, it deconstructs the constructions of these lived experiences. By constructing the voices of seven very different Muslim women I have given voice to the diverse context from and in which they engage. This is critical not only to the philosophical underpinnings of this dissertation, but most importantly, it is providing articulation to a particular enactment of cosmopolitanism.

5.1. Traversing the Continuum

In this chapter I will codify the data I constructed from the case study research into three images of Muslim women: (1) Domesticity and Patriarchy; (2) Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf); and (3) Public/Private Participation. These three images are representative of particular identities of Muslim women, which in turn, are representative of particular versions of Islām. They present and represent different Islamic worldviews, which are understood in terms of identity construction and identity practice. The three images which I have identified are not separate, isolated entities. While constructed in terms of domesticity, individuality, belonging and participation, they exist and are interspersed across a continuum ranging from less to more compliant and normative constructions of Muslim identity. It is my contention that these three images, while

offering a glimpse of Muslim women in South Africa living their Islām, might also be representative of all Muslim women in the world.

The three images of Domesticity and Patriarchy; Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (headscarf); and Public/Private Participation are just momentary constructions within a particular timeframe. There are many other illustrations and representations on the continuum of Muslim women identity which glide across, interface and shift within and across these constructions. Upon close examination, however, I cannot ignore what I perceive to be an inconsistent juxtaposition between a desired relationship with Islām and what is actually enacted and lived. It is a tension which plays across the continuum. To me, the tension resides in the interaction and discourse of articulating and living my Islamic identity. *'Islām is me',* says Mariam, describing her role in life as being of service to her Creator and to others, and by implication that Islām needs to be of service to others. To Thania, Yumna, Shameema and Nadia, Islam is about solace, comfort, peace and synchronicity between the physical and emotional.

There appears to be a striving towards these ideals by all of the women. Shameema strives towards it by continuing to pursue Islamic education, and by faithfully staying with her husband, even when she is unsure of his commitment to her. Mariam strives towards it by being of benefit to her community, and by bringing peace to others, she brings peace to herself. Yumna strives towards it by immersing herself in her Muslim identity and drawing upon the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in order to witness the compassion and mercy inherent in human nature. Thania strives towards it by replacing her relationship of fear with God with a relationship of love, and through this she has managed to accept herself.

The women, therefore, in their varied formations of identity, enter into an assortment of relationships with Islām, which provides them with a language to to give meaning to who they are across the continuum of being Muslim. All of these types of identity constructions and all of these types of relationships contribute to the multiple and diverse nature and character of being Muslim. What I address in the ensuing chapter is how these

identities can contribute to a cosmopolitan society, how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to these multiple identities, and certainly what the implications of these contributions are to the issues of democratic citizenship, and Islamic education in particular.

What I know through the case study research is that the images of Muslim women vary across a continuum of identity, belonging and participation. I also know that these three elements are shaped and informed by the types of Islamic education the women were exposed to, and continue to experience. In essence, the singularity of a Muslim identity is a misnomer. What emerges is an array of images which, in my opinion, connects with notions of cosmopolitanism, as explicated by Nussbaum (1997), Benhabib (2002, 2006, 2011), Merry and De Ruyter (2009), and Waghid (2011b). This means, and in foregrounding the primary focus of my research, that while I am looking at how the diverse identities of Muslim women can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society, I am also exploring how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women. In continuing, I will show how each of the three images I have identified – (1) Domesticity and Patriarchy; (2) Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf), and (3) Public/Private Participation - connects with notions of cosmopolitanism, and in turn, how the views of cosmopolitanism should take into account the different images, and what impact this would have on a renewed cosmopolitanism.

5.2. Image 1: Domesticity and Patriarchy

In chapter 2 I cited Stowasser's (1994: 7) description of Muslim women: *'The woman fights a holy war for the sake of Islamic values where her conduct, domesticity, and dress are vital for the survival of the Islamic way of life. Religion, morality, and culture stand and fall with her'.* This war, according to Stowasser, is fought through the Muslim woman's dress, her conduct and her domesticity. The concept of domesticity is foregrounded in Stowasser's (1994: 98) analysis of the role of Muslim women, leading her to state that: *'The scripture-based legality of women's seclusion in the house, and even within the house (subsumed under the concept of hijāb) then also signifies the legality of the Muslim woman's exclusion from any institutionalized participation in public affairs.'* I

find it odd, then, when Stowasser (2004: 5) asserts that: '*Women's questions have been indicators of direction and are a parameter of the greater search for Islam's identity and role in the modern world.*' I grapple to understand how Stowasser's analogy of home-based and secluded Muslim women can be the gauge of direction for Islām's identity when it is precisely this dress code to which she refers, which has problematised and curtailed the Muslim woman's access and movement in public affairs. I also grapple to understand how a greater search for Islām's identity and role in the modern world, which in my opinion, is a public debate can be couched in the domesticity of women in what is essentially a private position and positioning.

Regardless of what I perceive to be conceptually paradoxical, what is critical to understand for the purposes of this dissertation in Stowasser's argument is the way Muslim women interact with and within their private sphere, and how this interaction speaks to their identity construction and how that identity connects and constructs notions of Muslim identity. Nadia holds that Muslim women who do not work and who have leisure time are the ones who seek Islamic education. Thania maintains that Muslim women who seek Islamic education do so because they have nothing else to do once they have fulfilled their responsibilities of raising their children. In this understanding domesticity makes it easier for Muslim women to pursue their Islamic education. But to Mariam, this is not the case, indeed the opposite is true. When Muslim women enter domesticity, they stop seeking Islamic education, and they do not use it in their daily lives, because they do not see the link between the education they have acquired and their own spirituality. So it would appear that it is not so much about when, why and how Islamic education is acquired, but what that education embodies and means in the lives of these Muslim women. This brings me back to one of the central assertions made in this dissertation, that the disconnection between knowledge of Islām and the lived experience of Islām allows for the construction of a space and interaction where what is known about Islām might not necessarily be lived, and what is lived might not necessarily be known.

IMAGES OF IDENTITY

As two examples of the disconnection between knowledge of Islām and the lived experiences of Islām, I want to look at the marital experiences of Shameema and Mariam as two instances of a type of domesticity which frames the role and function of the women in that relationship. Shameema remains in her marital home and in her marriage after her husband remarries his first wife without informing her. To exacerbate the situation he houses both wives under the same roof. But she stays, and she continues to stay even when he repeats the pattern with another wife, in the hope that through her staying he will eventually be the husband she would like him to be. She knows and acknowledges that his actions run contrary to her understanding of the teaching of Islām, but she does not act on this knowledge. She neither confronts her husband with her knowledge, nor does she confront herself in terms of remaining in the marriage. In a similar vein, Mariam proceeds into a marriage, knowing that she is not his only wife – a status she is informed about days before the actual marriage. Yet she marries him, in the hope of experiencing marriage and that he would be the type of husband that she was hoping for.

What, though, motivates Shameema to stay, and why does Mariam proceed into a less than authentic relationship? I would like to suggest that one possible answer resides within the centrality of the actual concept, design and construction of marriage in Islām. In terms of an Islamic social framework, as well as network, marriage constitutes a critical facet of belief and action, and in turn, as the basis of society. Essentially, the mainstay of marriage is in its status as the foundational basis of family. According to Ramadan (2001: 37-38), it is in marriage that the initial social nucleus and first normative structure must be built. And, he contends, all Muslim societies are compelled to do all that is required in order to ensure the preservation of marriage, and consequently, family. In terms of identity construction, explains Taylor (1994: 36) *'Love relationships are not just important because of general emphasis in modern culture on the fulfillments of ordinary needs. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity.'*

Another possible understanding of Shameema and Mariam is located in Stowasser's positioning of Muslim women as the guardian of Islamic values, that they are the

nurturers of the social aspects and society of Islām. The organisation of society, states Ramadan (2001: 39-40), is dependent on the level of consciousness of the individuals who make it up. He elaborates that every facet in Muslim worship prioritises the notion and sustainability of community, *'To practice one's religion is to participate in the social order and thus, there cannot be a religious conscience without social ethics and nothing, is more explicit in Islamic teaching.'* Ramadan's views echo Al-Attas's (1977) contention that the ultimate objective of education in Islām is to produce a good man or woman, rather than a good citizen, as a good man or woman will become a good citizen, who serves society and its values. This assertion is based on Al-Attas's argument that the self is only meaningful when it is of benefit to himself and to society, and that it is only through being of benefit to others that one will attain happiness in the hereafter. Both these analyses are reflected in Nasr's (2010: 131) contention that education in Islām never divorces the training of the mind from that of the soul, and that the possession of knowledge is not legitimate without the possession of appropriate moral qualities.

When one looks at the stories of Shameema and Mariam, what emerges is that their respective knowledge of a situation does not lead them to turn against it. Instead, both turn towards it. Shameema believes that if she patiently bears through her husband's actions and conduct, he will eventually not only become who she believes he could be, but that she would also be enough for him. Mariam proceeds with her marriage, believing that through her own accommodation of her husband's situation, he will treat her with the same measure of acceptance that she has shown him. The social role and responsibilities as wife for Shameema and Mariam, therefore, cannot be divorced from or given less prominence than the individual need or desire. If this were the case it would run contrary to Al-Attas's depiction of a 'good person'. The unity of purpose of education in Islām, maintains Hashim (2004), resides in the argument that there is no contradiction between societal and individual aims. Al-Attas (1977) describes this as the external unity of the community, which is revealed in the internal unity of individual, as physical, spiritual and moral being. Yet, in Mariam's situation, her perseverance is not enough to hold the marriage together, and one is left to wonder what the eventual outcome of Shameema's marriage will be.

Analysis of the stories in the cases presents a critical link between what is perceived to be the domesticity of Muslim women, and the way in which Muslim women acquire knowledge, and what they do with it. As I have already stated in the introduction to this chapter, other than foundational instruction in Islamic laws and practices, few of the women in the cases have sought any further education in their belief system and have limited understanding of Qur'anic exegesis, something which is not uncommon among Muslim women more generally. To the average Muslim woman or man, Wadud (2006: 19) contends, Islām is whatever has been inherited, culturally and ethically: *'Since they are Muslim, they do Islam.'* As Barlas (2002: 3) explains, without understanding the liberatory aspects of Qur'anic teachings, or unquestioningly accepting its patriarchal exegesis, Muslim women *'cannot contest the association, falsely constructed by misreading scripture, between sacred and sexual oppression.'* Wadud (2006: 96) highlights a critical distinction, that historically while women participated in the memorisation of the Qur'an and in the transmission of *ahādith* (words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), they did not participate in the establishment of Islam's paradigmatic foundations. And because they are not in a position to counter patriarchal interpretations of scripture, they accept these interpretations as sacred and inadvertently become what Shaikh (2003) describes as proponents of their patriarchal heritage.

Patriarchy, broadly defined, explains Barlas, uses biology to justify social and sexual inequalities; it confounds sexual and biological differences with gender dualisms and inequality. Narrowly speaking, continues Barlas (2002: 12-13), *Patriarchy is a historically specific mode of rule by fathers that, in its religious and traditional forms, assumes a real as well as symbolic continuum between the 'Father/fathers', that is, between a patriachalized view of God as Father/male, and a theory of father-right, extending to the husband's claim to rule over his wife and children.'* It is the *'father-right'* found in Thania's comment that men are expected to take care of women, and women are expected to take care of the home and the children. It is the *'father-right'* in Yumna's description of Muslim men, who abuse Islām in order to abuse women. And it is the *'father-right'* experienced by Nadia when she explains that generally Muslim men do not treat her as their equal professionally.

Interpretations of Islām as a religious patriarchy, expounds Barlas, are as a consequence of numerous conceptual confusions, of which the most prevalent is between reading the Qur'an as revelation and reading the Qur'an as a historical text. She continues that the gap between what is inferred from the Qur'an and what is actually read in the Qur'an begins to explain why a number of practices that are labeled 'Islamic' do not, in fact, originate from the Qur'an's teachings. It is not 'Islamic' for a Muslim man not to inform his wife of his decision to take another wife, as in Shameema's case. Her knowledge of this leads to her statement that her husband *'might not be the best example for her to take when it comes to Islam'*. Hence, Barlas (2002: 14) maintains, *'we need to make another equally crucial distinction that patriarchal readings of Islam do not make: between Islam in theory and Islam in practice, thus also between Islam and already existing patriarchies on the one hand and Islam and Muslim history and practices on the other'*.

It would appear, then, that a primary identity, such as Islām, in the absence of a coherent understanding of Qur'anic exegesis, can have far-reaching and possibly detrimental effects on some Muslim women. Without doubt, Islām places tremendous priority on the preservation of the family as a building block for a just society. But, this does not mean prioritising it at the expense of the individual. And it certainly does not mean that women cannot step outside of their roles as family members (Ramadan, 2001: 56). Muslim women, as the main casualties of patriarchal (mis)readings of religious texts, unintentionally endorse oppressive interpretations when they do not have the knowledge to question or act against it (Barlas, 2002: 3-4). Having knowledge of one's religion, for me, is directly linked to notions of responsibility and choice. Inasmuch as Muslim women have the right to seek knowledge, they have the responsibility to make informed choices about the types of knowledge they pursue, with what they agree, and with what they disagree. Ultimately, it is not about separating the sacred from the secular, or the secular from the sacred, as conceptualised by western feminism. Rather, the challenge for Muslim women and for Islamic feminism lies in the willingness of Muslim women to take control of their own identity construction and enactment. For as long as Muslim women remain on the periphery of their own identity construction and designated social roles, some

Muslim men will continue to assume to be the authoritative voices on Muslim women in Islam (Wadud, 2010).

Ironically, it is precisely the rights of women which the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) address and seek to improve, most specifically focusing on the three areas of marriage, divorce and inheritance (Wadud, 2010; Jeenah, 2006; Badran, 2009), areas that continue to be the main sites of oppression for some Muslim women. Hence, inasmuch as a primary identity such as Islām, in the absence of a coherent understanding of Qur'anic exegesis, can have far-reaching and possibly detrimental effects on some Muslim women, the Qur'an and the Sunnah offer far-reaching changes and improvements to the conditions of these very same women. The Qur'an does not address women only in terms of their roles and functions. It addresses them as individuals, as part of a family, and as members of a community (Wadud, 2002). And so the space of domesticity and private affairs and the space of social responsibility are not mutually exclusive. What I am arguing for is that when Muslim women reconcile their knowledge of Islām with their living enactments and experiences, cognisance should be given to the thought that the claim to a primary identity of Islām does not necessarily mean the construction of a monolithic Islamic identity, and that given the various levels at which the Qur'an addresses women, and given the emphasis which Islām places on the social aspect of individuals, it might be more important to consider an identity which is manifold. A manifold identity will give recognition to the diversity of my roles of wife and mother. More importantly, it will give recognition to my diversity as a Muslim woman, which will facilitate my engagement with a cosmopolitan society, which, in turn, will give shape to my identity.

5.3. Image 2: Identity, Belonging and Hijab

Personal identity, states Taylor (1989: 49), is the identity of the self, and the self is understood as an object to be known. He continues that in order to have a sense of who we are, there have to be notions of how we have become, and of where we are going. This says Taylor, is an inexhaustible condition, since people are always changing and becoming. The question of identity, asserts Jeppie (2001: 82) can be re-articulated as the

question of subjectivity, since both labels are always about issues that can only be productively addressed in the plural. Consequently, and for the purposes of this dissertation, a marker of self-definition, says Jeppie, such as Muslim, should be viewed as one among numerous identities which an individual can or will enunciate depending on the circumstances. He continues that it is not a simple matter of choosing which one of the identities to enunciate within a particular context. Rather, says Jeppie (2001: 82), *'A subject emerges both as an effect of a prior power and the condition of possibility for a substantially conditioned form of agency.'* In agreement with Taylor and Jeppie, Butler (1999: 183) contends that if identity is always already signified and is maintained via a process of signification, which is circulated within various interlocking discourses, then *'the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an 'I' that preexists signification'*.

According to Cooke (2001: 130), *'Images we have of each other are part of the baggage we bring to dialogue. Sometimes we are at the mercy of our image; sometimes we hide behind it; sometimes we act as though neither of us had an image of the other. Sometimes, those ideal times, the image disappears and the contact is unmediated by the myth. Then we act as individuals between whom messages pass easily.'* She asserts that it is the extent to which the image is present in dialogue that impacts on the way in which the identity is articulated. The less apparent and present the image, the more individuated the self, which is projected, will be. Cooke states that the more the image interposes between two people, however, the more community-defined the individual identity will be. A number of the women in the cases have had direct experiences or have observed the trespassing of the type of interjection described by Cooke, and it is an interjection which perhaps has never been as profound as it has been in a post 9/11 world.

Wadud (2006: 226) vividly details the interruption of her image moments after the rippling impact of 9/11: *'As I drove home, I did become frightened. I slipped my scarf off my head and wore it draped over my shoulders. I could not be sure what an angry driver might do to me in the state of heightened panic and loss of control. That was my first erasure – the loss of choice.'* Shameema encounters it when she walks down the street: *'I am called bad names in my community. People make fun of my hijab. People accuse me of adopting other people's religion. There is a lot of ignorance about*

Islām in the township. It is very disturbing. They think all Muslims are terrorists. I am accused of leaving my African traditions and my ancestors.' I found it at my local supermarket, a place I had been frequenting at least thrice a week, in the form of a security guard wanting to search my bag, after not asking to search the bags of three others before me. I was wearing a *hijāb* (head-scarf); the others before me were not.

The image had inserted itself into a community definition of fear and terrorism, leading to what Taylor (1994: 25) describes as the *mis*recognition of others. He expounds that misrecognition or non-recognition can impose harm, and can be a form of oppression since it distorts someone into a reduced state of being. Waghid (2011b: 31) describes this as disrespecting the life-world of others, and maintains that: *'The point about respecting the life-world of others is that it involves experiencing them as they present themselves and not fitting into some kind of preconceived picture of one's own imaginings – that is, what others should be like'.* In agreement, Benhabib (2002: 8) asserts that struggles for recognition are in fact attempts to counteract the status of otherness, insofar as the latter is assumed to entail disrespect and inequality.

In turning to the cases, the question of identity evoked the most diverse responses. I found that in my conversations with these six women, much about the divergent views on identity is intricately intertwined with the physical manifestations thereof. And that while most of them share a fundamental ideological understanding of what Islamic identity means it is the interpretation and lived expression of that understanding which creates the difference. Without a doubt, the most significant theme of commonality and difference encountered across all of the women in the cases is the issue of the *hijāb* (head-scarf). In just seven case viewpoints, it is described as being obligatory and instructed, to being recommended and not required. Mernissi (1995: 95), in her description of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) as a key concept in Muslim civilisation captures it most clearly for me when she states: *'Reducing or assimilating this concept to a scrap of cloth that men have imposed on women to veil them when they go into the street is truly to impoverish this term, not to say to drain it of its meaning…'* Mernissi (1995: 93) ascribes three dimensions to the concept of *hijāb* (head-scarf), two of which are tangible and one abstract, which often blend into one another. The first is the visual dimension, which literally means to hide something from sight. The

second, she continues, is the spatial dimension, which is to separate or establish a border. And the third is the ethical dimension, which means that the *hijāb* (head-scarf) belongs to the realm of the forbidden – that the space concealed by a *hijāb* (head-scarf) is a forbidden space.

To Ramadan (2001: 55-56) the reductionist interpretation of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) hinders a coherent understanding of its meaning. He expounds that at a social level the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is an expression of the spiritual and sacred dimension of being. To him, *'It is about expressing, in our social life, that we are not body, that our worth is not in our forms and that our dignity lies in respect of our being and not in the visibility of our appeals and seductions.'* He maintains that the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is not a *'sign'* of religious adherence. Shaikh explains that the *hijāb* (head-scarf) does not constitute a singular symbolic field. Consequently, on the one hand, there are Muslim women who believe it is a religious obligation, and on the other hand, says Shaikh (2003), there are those who argue that the *hijāb* (head-scarf) *'detracts from patriarchal prioritization of women's physical and sexual attractiveness'.* In agreement, Wadud (2006: 219-220) argues that while the *hijāb* (head-scarf) signals a Muslim woman's affiliation to Islām, it does not offer any assurances of respect or protection. She continues that there is no difference between the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of coercion and the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of choice, as there is no difference between the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of oppression and the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of liberation, and as there is no difference between the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of deception and the *hijāb* (head-scarf) of integrity.

In response to the questions as to why and whether Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt and exacting manner, Nadia held the contradictory view that while it is about personal choice, *'it's probably what should happen'.* She explained that her choice not to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is not an ideological one. To her the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is just too entirely uncomfortable, but upon some reflection, she dismisses this as an excuse. She maintains, however, that she does not understand her Islamic identity to being limited to the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf). As to why there is this expectation of women, she couched her response in terms of a patriarchal community where there are different expectations of men and women, and where women are judged more harshly.

IMAGES OF IDENTITY

It is an interpretation and understanding which is explained more critically and without doubt by Thania, when she states that the donning of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is unimportant to her. What matters, though, is being a good person, being at peace and peaceful. To her, these attributes all feed into her Islamic identity, which has little to do with outer displays. The *hijāb* (head-scarf), therefore, is only significant in that it refers to conduct and morality. It is something within, rather than external. She ascribes the expectation of wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf) entirely with patriarchal structures and influences, and not to Islām. Thania's ideological understanding of Islām and her Islamic identity is primarily premised on the notion of guidelines and recommendations, rather than instructions and commands. She places her capacity to reason and to choose firmly at the centre of her understanding of Islām. To her, the Qur'an guides and proposes, but it does not obligate. Consequently, she is ambivalent as to whether the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts are in fact a truthful representation of Islām. At best, she contends, it is one version of a truth. Both Mariam and Yumna align the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) with the deepening of spirituality. Like Nadia and Thania, it is a view based on the notion of guidance, rather than prescription. So the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) becomes a symbolic signal of a spiritual perception and awareness of Islām, rather than the unconscious display of a peripheral expectation. While Mariam describes the decision by women to display their Islamic identity as an eventual destination, which is linked to finding their spirituality, Yumna describes the *hijāb* (head-scarf) not as a form of oppression, but as a form of preservation, modesty and protection of vulnerability.

The concepts of vulnerability and preservation are both mentioned and hinted at by at least three of the women – Yumna, Shameema and Leila. Shameema describes her wearing the *hijāb* (head-scarf) as a form of protection. But this protection is not against something external to her. It is a protection of a reminder of God. She explains that it reminds her of her relationship with God. She is conscious of Him, and she feels protected. To her it is not just a truthful representation of Islām; it is representative of the modesty that should prevail in all aspects of Muslims' lives. Consequently, she holds that the public display of a woman's Islamic identity is an obligation. She maintains that her conduct is affected by how she is dressed. Similarly, the responses of others to her are

informed by how she presents herself. If she is dressed modestly and in accordance with God's instructions, then she will be treated with respect, but if she is not, then she opens herself to not being treated with the proper respect. Further in our conversation, though, she contradicts this view when she describes how she is denigrated and scoffed at by her people of her community when she wears the *hijāb* (head-scarf). As a Black, Xhosa-speaking woman, she is accused of *'adopting other people's religion',* of abandoning her African traditions and ancestors, and of *'forcing herself on Islām.'* But she blames this mockery on ignorance about Islām, rather than an attack on her 'protection'. When asked how she defines herself, she states that she does not like labeling herself. She explains that she is not an African Muslim, or Muslim African; she is just Muslim-Muslim.

Less succinct than Shameema, Leila is entangled in a more complex relationship with regard to the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf), and subsequently, her identity. Her *hijāb* (head-scarf), in a sense, is her identity. To her it is a religious obligation. Like Shameema, Leila believes that it should be worn as a protection, but unlike Shameema, it should be worn as a protection against the outside, more specifically the gazes of unwarranted attention. It is what Murad (2009) describes as *'The double empowerment entailed by the veil, reinforcing the status of the female body as appurtenance to be constructed by an omnipotent male gaze, and concurrently insisting that the woman eludes the eye, suggests that the Islamicate veil is more of a membrane than a mask. It allows the wearer to remain as she is, and the male regard to appropriate her as it needs'.* It is a garment Leila has worn since before she realised why she was expected to wear it. Yet she now finds herself consciously opting to no longer wear it, because she does not own and realize the connection between the external and internal identity. She describes how she wears the *hijāb* (head-scarf) when she visits family, but then discards it when she is removed from that expectation. Her conflict speaks to the view held by Mariam and Yumna that the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is an end, rather than the beginning. It is a conflict rooted in the following commentary of Ramadan (2001: 53): *'Some parents will even obstinately begin the religious education of their daughters by what ought to be its culmination (a desired and voluntary culmination)'.*

IMAGES OF IDENTITY

The *'presence of an image'*, *'the erasure of choice'*, the *'disrespecting of the life-world of others'* – label it what you will. Ultimately it has the potential to inflict harm to such an extent that Taylor's (1994: 25) *'misrecognition of others'* can in fact become the misrecognition of the self. Leila's circumstances, which force her to abandon her *hijāb* (head-scarf), since it is incommensurate with the construction of her work environment, lead her to a state where she says: *'I don't feel like myself anymore'*. Not only is Cooke's myth mediated, but the myth is in fact self-imposed. Leila buys into the myth and compromises the individuated self for the sake of her work environment. The observation made by Thania, in particular, that there is a stigma attached to Muslim women who veil, since they get assessed differently, presents an interesting scenario of the *'presence of an image'*, the *'misrecognition of others'* and the self-imposed mediated myth, since her observation could be read as a projected comment on her particular relationship with her Islām. Her view that Muslim women are assessed differently could be read that she assesses herself differently. Her sexuality does not conform to normative strands of Islām, which initially forced her to turn away from Islām. Her conscious decision to look for alternative interpretations of the scripture created an avenue for her to reconcile her sexuality with her religion. But, that would also mean irresolution with what normative Islām presents and represents, which traditionally includes the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf). The *hijāb* (head-scarf) to Thania, therefore, could also be viewed as representative of the normative Islām in which she was assessed differently and experienced the stigma to which she refers.

Identity and the image of identity, it would seem, interface to such an extent, that the one can easily be (mis)construed as the other. How, then, can Muslim women as individuals manage what they wish to project, so that the image becomes commensurate with their identity? And so, instead of the image leading to misrecognition and disrespect, have it leading instead to these elements of peace, harmony, solace and comfort? And how can cosmopolitanism project itself so that it becomes commensurate with the recognition and respect of Muslim women? I wish to return to Mernissi's (1995: 95) statement that to reduce the *hijāb* (head-scarf) to a scrap of cloth imposed by men on women is to impoverish and render the concept meaningless. I want to pay close attention to the notion of agency as it applies to the act of reduction here. It is my understanding that

when a Muslim woman dons the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she is doing this as an agent of her identity, and that she is choosing in the words of Jeppie, to enunciate one of her identities within a particular context. As an agent I am assuming a position of understanding and power. But, clearly, this is not necessarily the lived experience of Muslim women, as revealed in the story of Leila and mine. When I chose not to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), I was choosing not to enunciate that specific part of my identity; it was not because of a profound ideological reasoning. Like Nadia, I simply did not like wearing it. I wanted to look like everybody else; I wanted to fit in. I did not want my Islām to be my defining feature. So I wore it, like Leila, to please those to whom it mattered, and removed it, to please myself and when it did not matter.

The question, for me, now becomes: did I reduce its meaning by wearing it to please others? And the answer, for me, is yes, because when I am not the agent or instrument of my own actions, I cannot own it, and it loses its meaning to me. And the result is a gap between the action of wearing of it, and the understanding of wearing it. To me, this gap speaks to the disconnection I raised in the previous section, which exists between the knowledge of Islām and the lived experiences of Islām. It is a gap which Ramadan (2001: 53) alludes to when he asserts that: *'To offer(ing) women the horizon of an inward message of Islam by beginning with the importance of the veil is tantamount to committing the same reductionism as that which consists of immediately applying a range of sanctions on the social plane without having undertaken the necessary reforms.'* What he is asserting to is that the decision to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) should firstly be a *'voluntary culmination'* of an inward message, that it follows an internalisation of Islam, rather than preceding it or being a catalyst of understanding Islām (Ramadan, 2001: 55-56).

Secondly, he maintains that the *'voluntary culmination'* has to emerge from access to a type of religious education for Muslim women, which allows them to *'contribute in abstracting the essence of the message of Islam from accidents of its rustic, traditional or Bedouin reading'*. By abstracting an internalised message of Islām, Muslim women will ensure that their image becomes commensurate with their identity. In this way women, like Thania and Leila, will ensure that the type of image which they project is recognition of the self, and that this self-

recognition is in no way dependent on how they are assessed by others. Essentially, all that matters is my own self-understanding. It is through self-understanding that I can take responsibility for who I am and what I do, and more importantly, how I act and react towards others, so that it leads to elements of peaceful co-existence. It is the type of responsibility which can be learned and measured from the same moral responsibility to which Benhabib (1994) and Merry and De Ruyter (2009) refer, when they argue that cosmopolitan theory, in subjugating culture in favour of a universal identity, is in fact arguing for a single humanity, where the rights of an individual are much more important than the rights of a culture. It is through the pursuit of a universal identity that humanity will be linked, ultimately, through a moral responsibility. So, who I am, what defines me, how I express my identity, how I define my belief system has no definitive bearing. What matters is that as an individual in a pluralist society, I matter, and I am linked to every other person by virtue of a shared morality, which says that we are both human.

The challenge for cosmopolitanism is to recognise and respond to the individualisation of self-understandings that constitute a pluralist society. That it is a composition of parts which make up a whole, but that the whole is only as representative and hospitable as its treatment of its parts. And that if the parts, as individuals or as cultural groupings, are not given equal recognition and understanding then what emerges is a less than authentic cosmopolitanism. As Merry and De Ruyter explain, cosmopolitanism recognises that cultural memberships offer individuals a sense of belonging and personal meaning, but its ultimate concern is the protection of the individual, and not his or her culture. They insist that as a philosophy, cosmopolitanism involves a moral obligation towards all strangers, including cultural others, and not only to those with whom we share associative relations. Consequently, it is the argument of Merry and De Ruyter (2009: 50-51) that cosmopolitans value pluralism on two grounds. Firstly, cosmopolitans recognise that individuals live and flourish in different and varying ways. Secondly, the contexts in which individuals live provide the circumstances for the interaction of many ideas and customs, which ultimately impact on the individual's understandings of life.

5.4. Image 3: Public/Private Participation

In the first image of Domesticity and Patriarchy, I referred to and questioned Stowasser's argument that domestic, *hijāb* (head-scarf)-clad, Muslim women, excluded from the participation in public affairs, can be the parameter of the greater search for Islām's identity, when it is precisely this dress code which has problematised Muslim women's access and movement in public affairs. In the second image of Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf) I highlighted the diverse interpretations the women in the cases had regarding the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf). In the ensuing image and discussion I would like to draw a line from the first, through the second and culminate in the third image, which essentially draws upon the construction of identity, belonging, and the lived experiences of Muslim women across the continuum of public/private. In a sense what I am presenting is a continuum of images, encapsulating particular versions of Islām, within a continuum of public/private landscapes.

Benhabib (1992) explains that access to the public sphere has always been limited by issues of race, class, gender and religion, as well as money and power. But she also states that religion, as a value system, presents one vehicle through which the problems of individualism, egotism and alienation in modern societies can be recovered. She refers to this as the *'integrationist strain'*, which is in contrast to the *'participatory strain'*, which ascribes the dilemmas of modernity more to a loss of a sense of political agency and efficacy than to a loss of belonging and unity. Benhabib (1992: 77-78) elaborates that this loss of political agency is not as a result of the disconnection between the political and the personal, but rather as a result of two possibilities. One is the incongruity between the various spheres which reduces one's possibilities for agency in one sphere on the basis of one's position in another sphere. The second possibility is the fact that belonging in the various spheres effectively becomes exclusive due to the nature of the activities involved, while the mutual exclusivity of the spheres are fortified by the system.

All the women in the cases, by virtue of the fact that they are social beings, could recount how they had either experienced difficulties in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, or felt at odds with their Muslim identity, invariably because

of their restricted access. Shameema is taunted by her community, her *hijāb* (head-scarf) is an object of ridicule, and she is accused of betraying her African traditions and ancestors. Thania believes that Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, because there is a stigma attached to the *hijāb* (head-scarf). Women who wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf), she explains, are assessed and treated differently. Nadia is able to draw a clear distinction between the professional regard she receives from Muslim and non-Muslim men in her working environment. She maintains that Muslim men, notably, do not regard her as their professional equal. I have certainly felt at odds with my Muslim identity and ashamed of other Muslims, when acts of complete inhumanity are committed in the name of Islām. While all of the women in the cases have experienced and continue to experience tension in their participation in the public sphere, I would like to focus on two of the case studies in particular, those of Leila and Thania. Their stories present two very different sets of lived experiences, but they are illustrative of how the public-private continuum shapes and impacts on identity construction, belonging and participation.

Leila's studies in the hospitality industry requires her to work with pork and alcohol, mix and serve alcohol in a bar, attend functions at nightclubs, and dress in a publicly defined manner of acceptability, which problematises the *hijāb* (head-scarf). It becomes clear that her decision to enter the hospitality industry is challenging on two levels. One is at the level of political agency – her religious beliefs dictate that it is forbidden for her to work with pork or alcohol. Two, her access to the public sphere of her working environment is limited by the physical appearance and statement of her *hijāb* (head-scarf). Both levels prevent her from accessing a space where she can exercise what Benhabib refers to as a *'coherent sense of self'*. The outer displays of Islām, which have always been a part of her identity, are incommensurate with the world in which she needs to operate. Wearing a *hijāb* (head-scarf) at a bar is a paradox – it presents Leila with a conflict of moralistic tones, which forces her to choose one over the other. She decides to abandon her *hijāb* (head-scarf), since after three years of being in the industry, she has realised that the public sphere of the hospitality industry cannot accommodate her identity; she has to accommodate it. Her de-situatedness is encapsulated in Benhabib's (1992: 79) comment

that: *'Modern societies are not communities integrated around a single conception of the human good or even a shared understanding of the value of belonging to community itself.'*

But there is an inherent conflict in Leila. And it is a conflict complicated both in terms of how the self has and is constructed, as well as the moral space it inhabits. Benhabib asserts that the situated self cannot be de-linked from the community in which it has been shaped and in which it lives. So when Leila is placed in a community where she cannot exercise her Muslim identity, she is left describing herself as being disconnected from Islām. Taylor (1989: 28), who maintains that there is an essential link between identity and a kind of orientation, explains that the moral space, which Leila has always occupied, has been disturbed by another space. He elaborates as follows: *'To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary'.* There is, however, as Leila reveals, something else which has disturbed her moral space and which has resulted in her lack of political agency. It is revealed in the initial stages of our interview, when she says, *'I was brought up in a home of strong Islamic values, and I attended an Islamic high school, but I've lost it. It has been made worse by the hospitality industry.'* So if her current public space is only partly responsible for her disconnection, what or who constitutes the other half of the responsibility? I attempt to answer this question in the concluding paragraphs of this section.

The challenges contained in the story of Thania present a very different conflict between the public and private identities. It also necessitates a different type of navigation towards belonging and participation across the public-private continuum. As a homosexual, Thania has had to un-learn what she describes as the dogma and traditions in which she was raised in order to accept who she is within a Muslim construction. According to Taylor (1989: 35), we can only be inducted into personhood by being initiated into a language, which is constructed by those who raise us. The language or dogma to which Thania refers is what Nasr (2010: 72) describes as the norm: *'Islam bases itself on the norm and not on departure from the norm without denying that some departures also exist, for example, in the case of homosexuality, which has always existed in certain sectors of Islamic society as it has existed in other*

societies.' Because of this view of normative Islām, Thania temporarily turns away from Islām, essentially because she had been taught that there is no space for her sexuality in Islām. But the conflict persists in much the same way as that experienced by Leila because, to repeat Benhabib, the situated self cannot be disconnected from the community in which it has been shaped. In addition, Taylor (1994: 33) states: *'the contribution of significant others, even when it is provided at the beginning of our lives, continues indefinitely'.* But, unlike the experience of Leila, it is her private, rather than her public space, which problematises her sense of self, belonging and participation. Thania does not experience Leila's displacement in her working environment. Rather, it becomes the surrogate sanctity of her private sphere, both in terms of physical space and in constructing an alternative to normative Islām.

While Leila abandons her *hijāb* (head-scarf) in order to succumb to the particularities of the public space of modern society, Thania discards what she describes as an Islām which does not accept her in terms of her sexual identity. This leads her to look for another type of Islām, through alternative interpretations of the scripture, through which she is able to reconcile her sexuality with her Muslim identity. Thania presents an interesting reflection on the tension between what is considered as normative, and what is considered as alternative. Like identity construction, the two concepts of alternative and normative are continually in flux, since it is constantly being re-interpreted in terms of the lens through which it is being gauged. What I consider to be normative Islām could be the alternative Islām of someone else, and certainly the very notion of an alternative Islām might very well present such a degree of otherness to some Muslims, that it might not considered to be Islām at all. And so the dichotomy of normative and alternative might very well be two sides of the same coin which, depending on the interpreter, are alternatively normative.

It is here that I wish to return to the continuum, which I mentioned in the introduction of this section. And I wish to return to the question regarding Leila's feeling of disconnection from Islām. In my discussion of the first image of Domesticity and Patriarchy I stated that the disconnection between knowledge of Islām and the lived experience of Islām allows for the construction of a space and interaction where what is

known about Islām might not necessarily be lived, and what is lived might not necessarily be known. The second image of Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf), concluded with Ramadan's (2001: 53) argument that the decision to wear the *hijāb* (head-scarf) should be a *'voluntary culmination'* of an inward message, which can only emerge from access to a type of religious education for Muslim women, which allows them to *'contribute in abstracting the essence of the message of Islam from accidents of its rustic, traditional or Bedouin reading'.*

So, on the one hand, according to Ramadan (2001), it is about the type of religious education to which Muslim women have access, which could begin to provide the missing information to the disconnection Leila feels with her Islamic identity. It also says something about Thania's conscious decision to discard the religious education, in which she was reared, in order to re-define herself through what she describes as *'alternative interpretations of scripture'.* But on the other hand, women in Islām, as explained by Hassim (1991), are primarily defined in relation to their location within the private sphere, as wife and mother, while men are defined primarily in their public roles, as providers and protectors. And this, too, could provide an explanation for Leila's discord in her working environment as a public space – that the type of religious education which she has internalised has not equipped her for her role in a public space. Quite the opposite, the type of religious education received by Thania has not equipped her for her private identity and space as a Muslim homosexual woman.

The Public/Private Participation image resonates across the images of Domesticity and Patriarchy and Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf). Domesticity designates spatial dimensions of private, while patriarchy speaks to that of public, as well of private. When these two continuums intersect, a gap might or might not occur, based on the type of religious education to which the Muslim woman has been exposed. The donning of the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is in response to a public space – the Muslim woman wears it when she leaves the privacy of her home. It is worn as a symbol of consciousness and submission to God, and it is worn to shield her from the public gazes of public men, yet it draws as much attention as it is meant to deflect, which hampers her capacity to actively participate

in a cosmopolitan society. Leila cannot wear her *hijāb* (head-scarf) to her working environment. Nadia does not enjoy the attention which it draws to her. Shameema is accused of adopting other people's religion.

The question which emerges is whether participation is what is required for reconciliation with a cosmopolitan society? Is accord and agreement required for commensurability between the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism? Benhabib says no. She maintains that participation does not solve the problems of modern identity and estrangement. According to Benhabib (1992: 81), *'For on the participationist model, the public sentiment which is encouraged is not reconciliation and harmony, but rather political agency and efficacy, namely the sense that we have a say in the economic, political and civic arrangement which define our lives together, and what one does makes a difference.'* So, to Benhabib, it is a sense and form of engagement with that which surrounds and shapes our lives, rather than mere participation. History reveals that the women of the first Muslim community attended mosque and took part in religious events. More importantly, they are described not as docile followers, but as active interlocutors, and scholars, of matters of faith and daily rituals (Ahmed, 1992: 72).

In addition, the sexually segregated spaces that are assumed to be the defining feature of Islam, as found at most of the *masājid* (mosques) and *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) in the Western Cape and elsewhere in South Africa, as well as in most of the Muslim world today, were not a feature of medieval Muslim society. Women are described as freely studying with men and other women – both in the *halaqas* (study circles) and the *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) (Afsaruddin, 2005: 164). By all accounts the women of the first Muslim community, who lived at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and during the time when the Qur'an was revealed, owned and exercised a form of political agency that saw them as active participants in their community – both in the domains of public and private. Indeed, what Islamic feminism is striving towards is a reinstituting of equal access for women to the public sphere, such as the workplace, the right for Muslim women to participate in congregational worship in the mosque, and complementary roles

and responsibilities in the family, with a specific challenge to men to honour their duties, which extend beyond the scope of mere patriarchal constructions.

In essence, the foundational argument of Islamic feminism is that the patriarchal representation of the family does not agree with the Qur'anic principles of human equality and gender justice. And that the public and private spheres, rather than existing on opposite ends of a continuum, shift within and across a complementary relationship (Badran, 2009: 2-4). And that perhaps a patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an does not necessarily mean that it is a gender-biased interpretation. Indeed, the notion of patriarchy and the notion of gender equality are two separate issues. A patriarchal interpretation might favour the perspective of the male, but it might also favour the perspective of the female, inasmuch as it might favour the rights of the family over that of the individual. A male-biased interpretation might foreground the rights of the male over that of the family inasmuch as a female-biased interpretation might place more emphasis on the importance of women's issues that of males. Consequently, the Islamic feminism claim that the patriarchal representation of the family does not agree with the Qur'anic principles of human equality and gender justice is a contestable and debatable one. There are Qur'anic verses that are in support of both patriarchy and gender justice, which can only be clearly understood when the Qu'ran is examined in its completion, rather than looking at specific verses in isolation.

How, then, is it possible to create and sustain this complementary relationship between public and private? To Benhabib (1992: 78-79), mere participation is not enough to solve the problems of modern identity and estrangement. Instead, she argues that what is required is not reconciliation, but political agency in the form of engagement. Active participation and belonging, states Waghid (2010: 20), *'are both conceptually connected to some form of engagement in relation to someone else – I participate with others in a conversation, so I engage with them; and I belong to a group where members are in conversation, so I engage with them by being attached to the conversation.'* Meaning, therefore, can only be produced when there is another, in the same way that cultures, says Benhabib (2002), are formed through dialogues with other cultures.

According to Taylor (1989), authenticity to the self is defined through articulation. He asserts that in order to understand the close connection between identity and recognition, close attention has to be given to the dialogical character of the human condition. He expounds that it is through the acquisition of human languages of expression and through exchanges with others that we become full human agents, who are able to understand and define ourself and our idntity. The dialogical character of the human condition is critical: *'We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us'* (1989: 32 33). To this end, argues Taylor, the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity provides recognition with a new importance: my own identity critically depends on my dialogical relationship with others.

5.5. Linking the Images to the Ideals of Cosmopolitanism

On the basis that the women in the cases, in their varied formations of identity, enter into an assortment of relationships with Islām, I constructed the three primary images of (1) Domesticity and Patriarchy; (2) Identity, Belonging and *Hijāb* (head-scarf); and (3) Public/Private Participation. I contended that these three images are representative of particular identities of Muslim women, which in turn, are representative of particular versions of Islām. And while constructed in terms of domesticity, individuality, belonging and participation, they exist and are interspersed across a continuum ranging from less to more compliant and normative constructions of Muslim identity. It is my contention that these three images, while offering a glimpse of how Muslim women in South Africa live their Islām, might also be representative of other Muslim women in the world.

Next I would like to show how the continuum of images of Muslim women link to cosmopolitan ideals and how the latter has been changed by the 'new' imagery of Muslim women. In doing so I will return to the primary focus of my research in (1) examining how the diverse identities of Muslim women can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society; and (2) exploring how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women.

I M A G E S   O F   I D E N T I T Y

Commencing with my first contention that the notion of a singular Muslim identity is a misnomer, I have found that other than foundational instruction in Islamic laws and practices, few of the women in the cases have a conceptual understanding of Islamic education, and most have a limited understanding of Qur'anic exegesis. The latter is associated with after-school *madrassah* (Muslim school) classes, which are sporadically attended, depending on how well the *madrassah* (Muslim school) was run. Stemming from, or leading to, sporadic attendance is an ambivalent attitude towards the actual purpose of pursuing Islamic education. This is very unlike the women of the first Muslim community, who are described as active participants in both spheres of public and private. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of political agency among Muslim women today, which Islamic feminism is striving to redress. And so in essence, what Islamic feminism is premised upon is that the patriarchal representation of the family does not agree with the Qur'anic principles of human equality and gender justice, and that the spheres of public and private exist in a complementary relationship, rather than at opposite ends of a continuum. It is not enough, however, for Muslim women to simply participate in order to reconcile with a cosmopolitan society. Benhabib (1992: 77-78) explains that what is required is not reconciliation, but political agency in the form of engagement.

Directly linked to the acquisition and use of Islamic education, I was able to distinguish between two distinct sets of binaries. One is a disparity between the type of Islām the Muslim women in the cases were taught and exposed to during their childhood, and the Islām they are encountering as adults. Much of the disparity rotates around what is considered to be Islamic laws *(shariah)*, and practices, which are in fact defined and immersed in tradition, culture and other people's truths. And the second is a disparity between knowledge of Islām, and lived experience of Islām. This disconnectedness allows for the construction of a space and interaction where what is known about Islām might not necessarily be lived, and what is lived might not necessarily be known. To counteract this disconnectedness, Muslim women need to have access to a type of religious education which allows them to abstract an internalised message of Islām, so that their image becomes commensurate with their identity.

Significantly, I found that inasmuch as a primary identity such as Islām, in the absence of a coherent understanding of Qur'anic exegesis, can have far-reaching and possibly detrimental effects on some Muslim women, the Qur'an and the Sunnah offer far-reaching changes and improvements to the conditions of these very same women. One of these detrimental effects is seen in Muslim women, who as the main casualties of patriarchal (mis)readings of religious texts unintentionally endorse oppressive interpretations because they do not have the knowledge to question or act against them. And so when Muslim women, as found in the cases, do not educate themselves about Islām they deprive themselves of the capacity to discern between that which is Qur'anic exegesis, and that which is not.

Much about the divergent views on identity is intricately intertwined with the physical manifestations thereof. And while most of the women share a fundamental ideological understanding of what Islamic identity means, it is the interpretation and lived expression of that understanding which creates the difference. In addressing the multifaceted identity of Muslim women, as well as the fact that these women, as social beings, live in a cosmopolitan society, I have argued for a manifold, rather than a monolithic Islamic identity. As a constructor of a manifold identity, Muslim women, I believe, will be better positioned in their multi-faceted roles, better equipped to engage in relationships with others, and more secure in accessing the public sphere, so that they do not feel at odds with their Muslim identity. I have also asserted that the challenge for Muslim women and for Islamic feminism lies in the willingness of Muslim women to take control of their own identity construction and enactment, and in their capacity to enter into dialogical relationships not only with those who they perceive to be as other to themselves, but also with those Muslim women who might not conform to notions of similarity.

As an extension of Taylor's argument, I would like to stress that not only does my own identity critically depend on my dialogical relationships with others, but it is especially through my dialogical relationship with those who are unknown and unfamiliar to me that I can begin to define a sense of self. And as Benhabib draws our attention to, it is not so much *what* the content of public discourse is, but it is *how* the discourse happens. She

argues that the most important constraint in liberalism is neutrality, which insists that no reason within a discourse can be a good reason without it making two claims. One claim is that the power holder's conception of good is superior to that of her fellow citizen. The second claim is that irrespective of her conception of good, she is in fact inherently superior to her fellow citizens. In addition, says Benhabib (1992: 98), the liberal theorist already claims to know the deepest disagreements – whether it is a moral, religious or aesthetic one – before the conversation has even begun.

How, then, can we enter and engage in a dialogue of reciprocity without the corruptions highlighted by Benhabib? All of the women in the cases, by virtue of the fact that they are social beings, could recount when they either experienced difficulties in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere, or felt at odds with their Muslim identity, invariably because of their restricted access. Ramadan (2001: 96) contends that in the light of the pluralistic essence of religions and cultures, *'Each religion, civilization and culture has the right to have its values considered in the light of the general frame which gives these meaning'*. Benhabib (2002: 130) maintains that we have to learn to live with the otherness of others, even when we have reached the limits of our tolerance. To Ramadan, however, tolerance, as an issue of a human interpretation of the relations between individuals, is an odd attitude ensuing from a position of strength at the level of the rapport between human beings. It is my opinion that while tolerance denotes notions of forbearance, patience and leniency, it demonstrates itself very differently in practice. The exercise of tolerance, for me, implies a construction of power, which essentially requires one person 'to put up with another'. It discounts expectations of acceptance and it introduces a relationship of power, which automatically renders one of the parties as 'the other'. There is no mutual respect in this type of construction, and there is certainly no room for a dialogue of reciprocity. So if mere tolerance does not provide conditions conducive to reciprocal dialogue and interaction, then how else can it be achieved?

The answer, says Benhabib (1992: 98-99), is found in how we construct our identity and our agency. Benhabib draws a distinction between participants in dialogue as citizens, and democratic citizens. As citizens, she explains, we enter the public discourse with pre-

conceived notions, principles and opinions. As democratic citizens, however, we enter as participants in a debate. When we enter as participants we create a space for what Benhabib (2002) refers to as intercultural dialogue - a space for what we have in common and what we do not. To Taylor, the understanding that identities are shaped in open dialogue, as opposed to a pre-defined social script, has both centralised and problematised the politics of equal recognition. A healthy democratic society, continues Taylor (1994: 25-26), requires equal recognition, and the denial of it can be a form of oppression.

Muslims, like all other minority groups in apartheid South Africa were not accorded the right of equal recognition. In light of this construct, what I have presented as the 'inward-looking' tendency of Muslims, both during and after apartheid, and the reluctance to integrate after apartheid, should in effect be viewed as a response to a lack of recognition. Muslim identities, as those of other marginalised groups, were not shaped in open dialogue. Instead, it was pre-scripted in a pre-defined ideology of 'less-than', which gave Muslims no other choice but to only dialogue with their own kind. In the absence of democratic principles, there was limited room for participation, and debate was deliberately misconstrued as political defiance. It is the type of script which has been passed from one marginalised generation to the other, and it becomes embedded in the living discourse of its recipients. The dismantling of apartheid, therefore, is not synonymous with the dismantling of a socio-political script, which explains Nadia's, Mariam's and Thania's observation that Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa have become more withdrawn and isolated. What is required, though, is a renewed construction of agency, which is concomitant with an uncontaminated identity. And this is only possible through open dialogue not only with the others outside the Muslim community of others, but especially with the others within the Muslim community.

For Nussbaum (1997), cosmopolitanism is an ethical view about where our primary loyalty should be as human beings. But, to repeat Cooke (2001: 130), regardless of all elements of difference amongst the identities of Muslim women, there is a thread of commonality which signals belonging, which is their shared faith. And it is precisely this shared faith which intrinsically makes a political statement. The arguments of Nussbaum

(1997), Benhabib (1994, 2002) and Merry and De Ruyter (2009) create the impression that the two positions are in fact mutually exclusive, that conceptions of politics are incommensurate with the ethics of cosmopolitanism. As Gutmann and Thompson (2004: 66) state: *'Religious controversy has traditionally been regarded as the paradigm of moral conflict that does not belong on the political agenda'.* Central to Benhabib's (2011: 12) understanding, is her assertion that, *'cosmopolitanism need not posit a human being as a legal subject who is not a member of a specific polity. Cosmopolitanism rights cannot be realized without contextualization and articulation through self-governing entities'.* Based on this understanding, Benhabib contends that individuals are rights-bearing not only in virtue of their citizenship within states, but in the first place in virtue of their humanity. Consequently, states Benhabib, *'cosmopolitanism involves the recognition that human beings are moral persons equally entitled to legal protection in virtue of rights that accrue to them not as nationals, or members of an ethnic group, but as human beings as such'* (2011: 9).

To Merry and de Ruyter (2009: 52), cosmopolitanism recognises that cultural memberships offer individuals a sense of belonging and personal meaning, but its ultimate concern is the protection of the individual, and not his or her culture. But this pre-supposes that a culture can be separated from an individual, or indeed, that a culture is characteristically distinctive. But, as Benhabib (2002) clarifies, cultures are not singular or pure, but instead, are formed through dialogues with other cultures, which influence and sometimes radicalize each other. This leads her to describe cosmopolitanism as an open way of thinking about different cultures. Appiah (2006b) is of the opinion that because, cosmopolitanism is dependent on concrete cultural affiliations, only rooted or partial cosmopolitanism is possible.

In their explanation of whether there are individuals or groups with whom cosmopolitanism is incommensurate, Merry and De Ruyter (2009) make two assertions. Firstly, that cosmopolitanism is not tantamount to secularism, and hence that it would be incorrect to assume that religious beliefs and cosmopolitanism are in discord. Secondly, they differentiate between what they term *'religious people in general'* or *'spiritual believers,'* and *'deeply religious'* or *'literalists',* which includes fundamentalist and orthodox individuals. *The*

'deeply religious', on the one hand, are defined as individuals who are strongly committed to a belief in a transcendent Being or Ultimate Reality, and who draw a clear division between those who are right and therefore on the inside, and those who are wrong and are therefore on the outside. On the other hand, the *'religious people in general'* or *'spiritual believers'* are also motivated by their beliefs, but rather than focusing on what is right and wrong, emphasis is placed on what is good. According to Merry and De Ruyter, the pragmatic approach of the latter group follows from a different moral obligation to that of the former. So while the *'religious people in general'* or *'spiritual believers' 'not only exemplify cosmopolitan traits, they are often motivated by religious convictions as they aspire to realize cosmopolitan ideals.'* The same, however, cannot be said about the *'deeply religious'* or *'literalists',* since they do not generally demonstrate an empathic openness to learn or to respect others, and act on questionable motives, which leads Merry and De Ruyter (2009: 57-58) deducing: *'Therefore we can draw only one conclusion, namely that in this respect literalist believers fall short of being cosmopolitan'.*

Merry and De Ruyter raise two critical points. Firstly, cosmopolitanism is not tantamount or equal to secularism, and is therefore commensurate with religious beliefs. Secondly, cosmopolitanism is incommensurate with the beliefs of *'deeply religious'* individuals. They dispel the inherent contradiction by classifying individuals into two groups of *'deeply religious'* and *'religious people in general'.* Merry and De Ruyter are at pains to explain the differences between these two groups, but it remains, however, a subjective distinction, since inasmuch as *'deeply religious'* individuals position themselves as being *'right'* and *'on the inside'*, *'religious people in general'* often also view themselves as being *'right'* and *'on the inside'* – and here I am merely using Merry and De Ruyter's generalisations.

So, the next question is whether Muslim women are *'deeply religious'* or *'religious people in general'*? If I return to the women in the cases as particular constructions and representations of Muslim women in Islām, then the depictions of their relationships with Islām are about solace, comfort, peace, and synchronicity between the physical and emotional. None of them mention being *'right'* and *'on the inside'.* In fact, except for Leila,

all of them acknowledge the need for greater integration between Muslim women and their multicultural society:

'I don't think we are supposed to have these separate groups of people. I believe it is possible. The Qur'an talks about mercy and compassion and these are qualities that we are supposed to encapsulate.' (Thania)

'We are a part of that contemporary social life, and as such we need to own the views of oppression. I don't think that Muslims themselves have done enough to live Islām in a clarifying enough manner. I think we have distorted the message of the Qur'an through the proliferation of our egos.' (Nuraan)

'We are already doing this. Is my Muslim identity strong enough to cope in a multicultural society? We were never meant to live in a silo. We need to be stronger in our Muslim identity. We have not probed our identity deep enough which is why we feel threatened and feel that everyone views us with enmity. We need to be easier with who we are.' (Mariam)

'By being open and tolerant. By allowing freedom of expression. If we are comfortable with our own identities, we will not be uncomfortable with a cosmopolitan society.' (Yumna)

By using Merry and De Ruyter's theory, then, these women are classified as *'religious people in general',* which makes them commensurate with a cosmopolitan society. By extension, therefore, and still using Merry and De Ruyter's theory, Muslim women as *'religious people in general'* are commensurate with cosmopolitanism.

Of course, the theory remains a theory. There is no real way of projecting whether an individual – *'deeply religious'* or *'religious in general'* – is in fact commensurate with notions of cosmopolitanism. Life and the living of a story are as theoretical as it is neat and predictable. For me, the morality and moral obligation which Merry and De Ruyter continually refer to in their presentation of cosmopolitanism, begins to take on an undertone of condescension, when the same morality which is obligated towards all strangers is used to categorise the same strangers into those who qualify as cosmopolitans and those who fall short of being cosmopolitan. Who then, is *'right'* and *'on the inside'* now?

I M A G E S   O F   I D E N T I T Y

It is my contention that the categorising of individuals or groups of people into moulds of cosmopolitanism and non-cosmopolitanism is by its very categorisation in conflict with notions of cosmopolitanism. This construction of otherness is at odds with what Nussbaum (1997) describes as our primary loyalty which is essentially and exclusively to the notion of a single moral community. I hold the view that the notion of a single moral community is constructed and lived through the practice of reciprocity. To me, the notion of reciprocity offers the opportunity for a meeting place of common grounds. Reciprocity facilitates an understanding of mutual and equal courtesy, which excludes any expectations of being '*on the inside',* or the fear of being *'on the outside',* since there is only one side of communal obligation to a single humanity.

In this chapter, then, I have shown that the women in the cases, in their varied formations of identity, enter into an assortment of relationships with Islām. From these varied constructions of relationships and identity, I constructed the three primary images underscored by identity, belonging and participation. I argued that these three images are representative of particular identities of Muslim women, which in turn, are representative of particular versions of Islām. And while constructed in terms of domesticity, individuality, belonging and participation, they exist and are interspersed across a continuum ranging from less to more compliant and normative constructions of Muslim identity. In concluding this chapter I presented that inasmuch as some Muslim women in the Western Cape live and interact in a cosmopolitan society, cosmopolitanism exists within the identity and lived experiences of Muslim women. Evidence of this is to be found not only in how the Muslim women in the case construct their identities, and how they live their relationship with Islām, but it is also found in how they navigate between what is constituted as normative/compliant Islām and constative/less compliant Islām. What the navigation reveals is a multiplicity of identities across a broad-based set of experiences, which leads me to contend that Muslim women constitute a cosmopolitan construction.

Chapter

6

Cosmopolitanism, Democratic Citizenship and Islamic Education

In the final section of the previous chapter I showed how the continuum of images of Muslim women links to cosmopolitan ideals and how the latter has been changed by the 'new' imagery of Muslim women. In addressing two critical components of my research question, I will now show how Muslim women can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society, and how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in, the lived experiences of Muslim women. I will also show how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism guides what it means to be a democratic citizen. And leading from this I will explain how a democratic citizenship will shape Islamic education, more specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing). I will conclude by examining a reformed approach to Islamic education and its connection to democratic citizenship education. Most importantly, as a research study in philosophy of education, I will spend some time in reflecting on what the implications are for teaching and learning and how a renewed Islamic education will unfold.

6.1. Linking the Images to the Ideals of Cosmopolitanism

What, then, are the contributions which Muslim women can make to a cosmopolitan society, which will allow them to find accommodation and expression in such a society? Based on the data constructed from the case study research, I have identified three possible areas through which Muslim women could contribute to, and find accommodation in, a cosmopolitan society. The first area is through the proliferation and

prolongation of a manifold identity, rather than the foregrounding of a primary identity, such as Islām. This will allow Muslim women to present the full diversity of their identity; that they have not been shaped by one influence, and that who they are and represent is moulded by their language, their culture and their engagement with others. Secondly, Muslim women have the right to seek knowledge, but they have the responsibility to make informed choices about the types of knowledge they pursue. Through *shurā* (consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), they will be able to countenance the gap between knowledge of Islām, and lived experience of Islām. They will realise that the relationship between knowledge and action should be symbiotically complementary, and that when the two are not mutually contingent, then questions need to be asked as to why that is the case.

It is my contention that if Muslim women take ownership of their own Islamic education, they will capacitate themselves in taking responsibility for their own identity construction and enactment. Extending from the latter, the third area concerns the abstracting of an internalised message of Islām, so that Muslim women are in a position to ensure that their image becomes commensurate with their identity. This will ensure that the type of image which they project is recognition of the self, and that this self-recognition is in no way dependent on how they are assessed by others. Through realising the latter, Muslim women will feel more secure about entering into dialogical relationships not only with those who they perceive to be as other to themselves, but also with those Muslim women who might not conform to their notions of similarity.

If these are the possible contributions that Muslim women can make to a cosmopolitan society, which will ultimately allow them to find accommodation and expression in a pluralist society, then how can a cosmopolitan society contribute to, and be involved in, the lived experiences of Muslim women? In addressing this question, and in reconciling with the three proposed areas of contribution from Muslim women, I would like to present how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women, and in doing so, propose how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism might guide what it means to be a democratic citizen.

COSMOPOLITANISM, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

In reconciling with a manifold Muslim identity, the challenge for cosmopolitanism is to recognise and respond to the individualisation of self-understandings that constitute a pluralist society. That it is a composition of parts which make up a whole, but that the whole is only as representative and hospitable as the treatment of its parts. And that if the parts, as individuals or as cultural groupings, are not given equal recognition and understanding then what emerges is *mis*recognition of the individual. Perhaps a renewed cosmopolitanism will relinquish notions of separating the individual from her culture, and so rather than constructing a dichotomy of culture as opposed to the individual, what is needed is a continuum of individualisation, where the individual decides the extent of her cultural affiliation and how she wishes to express it. In so doing, a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism will acknowledge that the construction of identity is always incomplete, which, by implication, means that a culture, and all its associations, is always evolving. In recognising and accepting that each is an individual by virtue of his or her culture, this type of cosmopolitanism will create deeper moments of engagement and meaning, and greater levels of co-existence.

In the second and third areas of the Muslim women's possible contribution to a cosmopolitan society, I proposed that if Muslim women take responsibility for their own identity construction, they will realise that their self-recognition is dependent only on themselves. And in discarding notions of being dependent on the assessment of others, they will be more capacitated when entering into dialogical relationships with those Muslims who are not like them, and with all others who constitute a pluralist society. Mere participation is not enough for cosmopolitanism to reconcile with Muslim women. Instead, what is required if meaning is to be produced, argues Benhabib (1992: 80-81), is political agency in the form of engagement. Benhabib (2002: 130) maintains that we have to learn to live with the otherness of others, even when we have reached the limits of our tolerance. Perhaps the latter comment should read '*especially* when we reach the limits of our tolerance', since this is when what is needed is Benhabib's (2011) 'cosmopolitanism without illusions'. To her a cosmopolitan without illusions is attainable through democratic iterations, which ultimately aims at democratic justice: *'Rights of expression and*

association that are exercised in democratic iterations undergird the communicative exercise of freedom itself, and, therefore, they are basic human rights as well' (2011: 15).

To Ramadan (2001: 99), however, tolerance, as an issue of a human interpretation of the relations between individuals, is an odd attitude ensuing from a position of strength at the level of the rapport between human beings. It is my opinion that while tolerance denotes notions of forbearance, patience and leniency, it demonstrates itself very differently in practice. The exercise of tolerance, for me, implies a construction of power, which essentially requires one person 'to put up with another.' It discounts expectations of acceptance and it introduces a relationship of power, which automatically renders one of the parties as 'the other'. There is no mutual respect in this type of construction, and there is certainly no room for a dialogue of reciprocity. In my opinion, therefore, mere tolerance does not provide conditions conducive to reciprocal dialogue and engagement.

A 'renewed' cosmopolitanism, in extending its understanding of a continuum of individualisation, should replace its notion of the tolerance of others with a premise of equal acceptance. If meaning can only be produced when there is another, then a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism should in fact attach more value to the other. To me, this type of construction holds greater meaning, because when I assign more meaning to the person with whom I engage, I am acknowledging that who I am is because of the other and that without the other, I hold no meaning.

Inasmuch, though, that one cannot talk about a singular identity for Muslim women, there is an inherent singular thread of commonality, regardless of geographic, linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity, which signals belonging, and that is their shared faith (Cooke, 2001: 130). It is my contention that the continuum of images, that I have presented and discussed are manifestations of the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity amongst women. It is also my view that the *hijāb* (head-scarf), as evocative of the most diverse responses amongst the women in the cases, is an unlikely symbol of the cosmopolitan character of Muslim identity. When a Muslim woman, expounds Cooke, wears the *hijāb* (head-scarf), in a society where it is the norm, she becomes as invisible as those around

her. But when that same woman wears the *hijāb* (head-scarf) in a community where it is not the norm, she is more visible than those around her. Paradoxically, the *hijāb* (head-scarf) is at once invisible as it is visible. So the issue is not simply how to link the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim women with the ideals of cosmopolitanism, but rather how to connect cosmopolitanism as an ethical view to the *hijāb* (head-scarf)-clad Muslim woman, as a political agitator.

The existence of an 'other', such as a *hijāb* (head-scarf)-clad Muslim woman, implies two groups in which one group is in the know and on the inside, while the other is different, and therefore on the outside. The positioning of these two groups, however, is by their very nature, completely relative and transient. Relative because, depending on my context, most specifically in terms of my positioning as either in the majority or minority, I could or could not be on the inside, which make every moment of positioning one of transience. So, at any given time I shift between an identity of either being an 'other' or not. Who, however, constructs the otherness? Is the construction of otherness always something done to me by someone else or by me to someone else? I am of the view that in many instances, and probably unconsciously, we are our own constructors of otherness. In other words, sometimes the notion of otherness is constructed by me, for myself. Sometimes I wish to exclude myself from those around me so that my positioning is different to yours, and therefore my being on the outside is self-induced. I could do this, because I have a pre-script of how things ought to be. Or I could do this to protect myself against making myself known, which allows me to continue to keep others out of my space. And I do this by refusing to engage with others.

It is a position found in Leila's response to the question of how Muslim women could contribute to a cosmopolitan society. She says: *'I don't think that my generation is able to contribute. They are not strong enough, they do not know enough about Islam. They are not strong enough to keep their Islamic faith and identity in a cosmopolitan society.'* I am not sure how Leila could know with certainty that her generation is not strong enough to cope in her cosmopolitan society. I can only surmise that she is speaking from her own space of self-doubt and insecurity. This perceived incapacity of Muslim women to participate in a cosmopolitan

society is echoed, perhaps more ominously, by Thania, when she says: *'There is a two-way perceived threat between contemporary society and the Muslim world. The Muslim world is afraid that the west will infiltrate us and tarnish our Islām (as if we are untarnished). I'm not sure why contemporary society is threatened'.* So, on the one hand, Muslim women are not capable of contributing to a cosmopolitan society because they are not strong enough to maintain their Islamic identity. And on the other hand, Muslim women do not want to contribute to a cosmopolitan society, since they fear that their Islām will be tarnished. What Thania's comment hints at is that if Muslim women open themselves to a cosmopolitan society, there is a chance and a concern that they could lose their Islamic identity. So, while the two reasons provided by Leila and Thania might at first glance appear to be different, they in fact stem from the same fear of the loss of identity and cultural purity.

In examining what an engagement between a cosmopolitan society and a *hijāb* (head-scarf)-clad Muslim woman should look like, I would like to provide a final contribution to a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism. What is needed, firstly, is a meeting space for a dialogue of reciprocity to occur, and secondly, for this dialogue to ensure that I would not necessarily have to lose my identity, my religion, my language, or my culture. If cosmopolitanism is to attain its boundary-less universal identity, then it needs to re-assess its own construction of labels, such as 'strangers' and 'others'. It needs to construct a language, which originates from recognition and acknowledgement, rather than from peculiarity, and it needs to respect the rights of others simply and only because of our shared morality – in other words, Benhabib's (2011: 15) 'cosmopolitanism without illusions'. I have to be seen and recognised as an individual. My Islamic identity, in whichever shape of form, should not be the determining factor of how I am perceived or treated. To engage with the other means to engage with the otherness of the other, so that the otherness diminishes into someone new and to-be-known, rather than someone different and unknown.

The boundaries and barriers which we impose on ourselves and on others need to become vague and porous enough so that I am able to shift into the position of the other. A 'renewed' cosmopolitanism, therefore, would need me to empathetically place myself in a space of the other, so that I can momentarily engage from the perspective of the other.

In engaging from the perspective of the other, I briefly become the other, which essentially leads to erasure of the construct of the 'other'. When there is no other, the boundaries, which we ourselves construct, cease to exit. All that is present in the engagement is the content of who and what we bring. And all that is required of me to engage from the perspective of the other is a confidence and authenticity of the self which does not need to usurp itself.

6.2. Guiding towards a Democratic Citizenship

I commenced this chapter by linking three possible areas through which Muslim women could contribute to, and find accommodation in a cosmopolitan society: (1) The proliferation of a manifold identity; (2) The right of Muslim women to make informed choices about the types of knowledge they pursue; and (3) Self-recognition as a means for establishing dialogical relationships with others. In reconciling these three areas, and in exploring how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women, I looked at notions of a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism. Consequently, I proposed that a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism could: (1) Embrace a continuum of individualisation where the individual decides the extent of her cultural affiliation; (2) Replace its notion of the tolerance of others with a premise of equal acceptance; (3) Attach more value to the other, as an acknowledgement that I hold meaning only when I engage with the other; and (4) Momentarily engage from the perspective of the other. Next I will explore how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism guides what it means to be a democratic citizen.

If cosmopolitanism is encapsulated in the notion of a single moral community to which all humanity belongs (Nussbaum, 1997), then it should both inform, and be informed by democratic citizenship education. Benhabib (2002: 134) maintains that in order for individuals to become democratic citizens, they need to be exposed to at least three inter-related elements: collective identity, privileges of membership, and social rights and benefits. Collective identity is only possible if people are taught about each other's cultural, linguistic and religious commonalities and differences – what Waghid (2010: 198) describes as the establishing of civil spaces where democratic citizens are taught how to

share commonalities, and how to respect differences. Waghid continues that not only should people be taught about their right to enter deliberation, but that if they are to become active participants in an educative process, which is informed by democratic citizenship, then that right should be recognised by all others. Waghid (2010: 198) holds that the process of educating people about their civil, political and social rights would teach them about the rights to protection of life, liberty, freedom of conscience, and the rights of self-determination. Ultimately, argues Waghid (2010: 198-199): *'A democratic citizenship education would also educate people to deliberate in such a way as to offer an account of one's reasons and in turn listen to the reasons of others, and to recognize and respect people's, political and social rights'.*

While collective identity is only achieved if people are taught to share commonalities and to respect differences, a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism, in guiding what it means to be a democratic citizen, will assert that a collective identity is only sustainable when the same individual, who wants to be recognised as belonging to the collective, has the right to step outside of the collective so as to access another construct of his or her manifold identity. It is my view that not all individuals or cultural groups want to be a part of the collective – whether this is temporary or not. So inasmuch as democratic citizens should be taught about each other's cultural and religious commonalities and differences, and inasmuch as they should be taught about their right to enter deliberation, they should learn that not everyone wants to participate in the community of commonality. And so, some Muslim women, by virtue of their location on the continuum of more compliant to less compliant Islām, might opt not to participate in the collective. The challenge for democratic citizenship education is not found in whether democratic citizens respect or disrespect each other; the challenge for democratic citizenship education is teaching democratic citizens to respect those citizens who choose not to participate. In guiding what it means to be a democratic citizen, then, a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism will not subjugate the continuum of individualisation in favour of a collective identity.

Part of sharing commonalities, respecting differences and entering into deliberation with others, is the recognition that having these options is a privilege, and that as a privilege,

these options should be protected. A 'renewed' cosmopolitanism, in guiding democratic citizenship, would need to extend the privileges of membership to include a premise of equal acceptance of everyone. To this end, membership cannot be based on the mere tolerance of others. Membership has to be based on the premise that we are all equal, which means that no single individual or cultural grouping can lay claim to any position of strength or power, which would require that another individual or cultural group should be tolerated. When all notions that one person 'has to put with another' are discarded, then it becomes easier to facilitate the discourse on social rights and benefits. A 'renewed' cosmopolitanism, in attaching more value to the other, and in acknowledging that I only hold meaning because of the other, can guide democratic citizenship in not only teaching people about freedom of conscience and the rights of self-determination, but also in teaching people to place the needs of others before their own. When a democratic citizen is taught that collective identity is not dependent on the subjugation of his or her individuality, that as democratic citizens we are all equal, and that your needs are more important than mine, and he or she is taught to show compassion by temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other, then the 'renewed' democratic citizenship which emerges leads not only to the proliferation of a just and democratic society, but to the advancement of all people.

6.3. Democratic Citizenship and Islamic Education

Democracy, states Young (2000: 5), *'is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree; societies can vary in both the extent and the intensity of their commitment to democratic practice'.* To Young, democratic practice as a means of promoting justice is about the degree to which those who are affected are included in the discussions and the decision-making processes – what she describes as to widen democratic inclusion (2000: 17-18). She states that, social justice is comprised of two ideals, which are self-development and self-determination. Self-development entails meeting people's needs, such as shelter, food and healthcare, depending on their need, so that they reach equal levels of capability as others. And self-determination is the ability to determine one's actions and the condition of one's action. She therefore defines social justice as the institutional condition for promoting self-development and self-determination of a society's members (Young, 2000: 31-33).

COSMOPOLITANISM, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

In Islām the concept of social justice is intimately tied to the purpose of knowledge, which essentially is to fulfil the dual role of vicegerent and servant, and by servant here is meant serving both God and the rest of humanity. Inasmuch as Young (2000: 34-35) accedes that our democracies contain structural inequalities, such as wealth and knowledge, which are unjust and inhibit self-development, Islām acknowledges that it is not possible to make everyone happy, but rather to create conditions in which there would be a maximum amount of stability and equilibrium in human life (Nasr, 2010: 68).

In the previous section I explained that according to Benhabib (2002: 134), democratic citizenship education at the very least, comprises of three inter-related elements: collective identity, privileges of membership, and social rights and benefits. To Waghid (2010: 22), democratic citizenship education aims to cultivate public pedagogical spaces, such as schools, universities and religious sites, where people can be educated about shared commonalities and the respecting of cultural differences. In exploring how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism might guide what it means to be a democratic citizen, I recommended that democratic citizens should be taught: (1) About each other's cultural and religious commonalities, differences, their right to enter into deliberation, and that they should learn that not everyone wants to participate in the community of commonality; (2) That privileges of membership are premised on equal acceptance of everybody; (3) To attach more value to the other, than themselves; and (4) To show compassion by temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other. The focus of my dissertation is to explore the (in)commensurablility between the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism, and what the implications are for democratic citizenship education. In examining these implications, I will now show how Islamic education, specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), can be shaped by democratic citizenship.

It is Waghid's (2011a: 1) assertion that the concepts - *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing) - associated with Islamic education do not have a single meaning, but that *'meanings are shaped depending on the minimalist and maximalist conditions that constitute them'*. So, on a minimal level, the concept of *ta'lim* (instruction) embodies the practices of

teaching and learning. On a maximalist level, in taking its cue from democratic citizenship education, which teaches people about recognising each other's commonalities and respecting differences, *ta'līm* (instruction) could extend to include the principles of *shurā*, which embodies notions of consultation and deliberation, and *ikhtilāf*, which refers to disagreement and difference of opinion.

A central argument for my support of *shurā* (consultation) is the understanding that the Qur'an was neither revealed to a homogeneous community, nor was it meant to address only Muslims. And central to my support of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) is the understanding that inasmuch as Muslims have diverse constructions of Islamic identity, there exist diverse views on the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an itself. These include whether the Qur'an should be accepted in its literal context, whether the Qur'an should be read as a historical document, and whether the Qur'an should only be understood as a whole, or in terms of various verses. The same diversity of opinions is evident in the application of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), as manifested in the existence of four *madthāhib* (schools of thought)*,* which, as I have already explained, are in *ijmā* (consensus of opinion) regarding the *fard'ayn* (compulsory) knowledge, but in *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) regarding the *fard kifayah* (obligatory) knowledge.

Understandings and applications of *shurā (*consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) are as important to constructions of democracy as it is to a society of post-apartheid South Africa. Muslims are not just different from country to country, or from community to community; they are different within their own communities, as demonstrated in the cases. So, this in itself is the existence of pluralism within Islām, which needs to be discussed and deliberated. Discussion and deliberation does not equate to notions of acceptance and agreement. Rather, it speaks to notions of inclusivity and the recognition of difference. If the Qur'an is understood to be a text for all humanity, then living in isolation can never be an option for Muslims or Islām. For me, this is a critical point, as it holds deep implications for the positioning of the Qur'an itself. If it has been revealed for all humanity, then not only does the Qur'an speak to all humanity, but it also means that all humanity can speak to the Qur'an. Nasr (2010: 18) explains that although Islām

remains a transhistorical reality, it has also had a long period of historical development, which links every generation of Muslims through time to the Origin. There cannot, therefore, be one single interpretation, since each and every reader of the Qur'an brings his or her own diversity to it. This means that I am able to both draw and bring my own message to the Qur'an. And that means that I am allowed to bring my own sense of identity, my own sense of being, and it does not mean that in order to access the Qur'an, I have to be a 'good' Muslim. In fact, being Muslim or not has nothing to do with it.

From a maximalist point of view, therefore, what democratic citizenship education can teach Islamic education is that Muslims can be taught that they do not belong to a homogeneous community. And it can teach that through the principles of *shurā (*consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), Muslims can learn that commonality and difference exist to teach people how to treat one another justly. If Muslims are taught about compassion and justice, then as democratic citizens they should be taught to extend equal acceptance to Muslims, who are unlike them, and more importantly, to those who are not Muslim, and who are unlike them.

Ta'dib (just action), in encompassing the social dimension of human behaviour, presents itself when in agreement with others, and most especially, it has to be presented when in *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). And if Muslims are taught about social justice, they will learn that knowledge without care is meaningless and without benefit. This means that *tarbiyah* (nurturing), as the ethical spirit of Islamic education, has to accompany *ta'lim* (instruction) and *ta'dib* (just action), if Muslims are to serve the message of the Qur'an, and if they are to be of benefit to humanity. Care and guardianship are the basis of deep learning. But it is not just about how we extend the notions of *ta'lim* (instruction) and *ta'dib* (just action). And it is certainly not about something which is external to us. It is about how Muslims treat each other and others, and whether they extend the aspect of *tarbiyah* (nurturing) to their relationships with others. More importantly, it is about how I treat and nurture myself.

COSMOPOLITANISM, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP
AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Perhaps, for me, it is within the notion of *ta'dib* (just action) that I have experienced the greatest shift in my understanding of Islām, and in my relationship with others. Prior to the writing of this dissertation, I harboured little patience with, and even less understanding of, Muslims who are homosexuals. Through my conversations with Thania, who certainly presented the greatest otherness as a Muslim woman to me, I have found a space where I can understand who she is. And I have shifted in my position of blatant disapproval to one of compassion. Thania is most deserving of my *ta'dib* (just action) and respect, because I came to her with a pre-defined, normative Islamic script, which said that homosexuality is wrong. I might never fully comprehend Thania's position or life story, but what I do know is that her story has changed me. Through *tarbiyah* (nurturing) I was able to attach more value to her standpoint than my own, I was able to show her compassion. And through temporarily engaging with her from her perspective, I could ensure that my engagement with her was a just one.

And so from a maximalist point of view, if Muslims are taught that commonality and difference exist to teach all people how to treat one another justly, then democratic citizenship education can also teach Muslims that through temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other, the whole point of enagagement and reflection is not to find consensus, but to simply contemplate new ways of deliberation, which offer all people the maximum level of recognition and acceptance. As as embodiment of social justice, Muslims learn how to fulfil the purpose of knowledge in Islām, which is to serve God by serving humanity.

Ultimately, then, how does democratic citizenship education reconcile with Islamic education? The reconciliation is found in that inasmuch as Islamic education advocates the notions *shurā (*consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), so, too, democratic citizenship education is based on the elements of acceptance and the recognition of differences. The irresolution, however, is that democratic citizenship education and Islamic education are shaped by different rationales. While Islamic education is informed by a particular notion of *'adl* (justice), democratic citizenship education is informed by a particular notion of responsibility as a citizen. So, now the tension exists in how to relate a notion of justice to

a notion of responsibility. Derrida (1994), of course, contends that justice comes in the form of responsibility to the other as difference – that every individual has a responsibility to live with the other and to treat the otherness of the other justly. And that in order to live responsibly, we have to live with others and be mindful of how treat each other. And so democratic citizenship education and Islamic education might be disconnected on one level – in terms of the rationales which inform them – but, they are connected in relation to how individuals are expected to treat each other, and that is with responsible justice.

6.4. Islamic Education: A Pedagagy of Reform

In responding to how Muslim women can find accommodation and expression in a cosmopolitan society, I recommended that this could be done through the proliferation of a manifold identity; the right of Muslim women to make informed choices about the types of knowledge they pursue; and self-recognition as a means for establishing dialogical relationships with others. In showing how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to, and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women, I proposed that a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism could embrace a continuum of individualisation where the individual decides the extent of her cultural affiliation; replace its notion of the tolerance of others with a premise of equal acceptance; attach more value to the other, than the individual, as an acknowledgement that I hold meaning only when I engage with the other; and momentarily engage from the perspective of the other.

I followed this by exploring how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism could guide what it means to be a democratic citizen, where I argued that when the latter is taught that collective identity is not dependent on the subjugation of his or her individuality, that we are all equal, and that the other's needs are more important than mine, and he or she is taught to show compassion by temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other, then the 'renewed' democratic citizenship which emerges leads not only to the proliferation of a just and democratic society, but to the advancement of all people. And in leading to my exploration of a reformed approach to Islamic education and its connection to democratic citizenship education, I showed how Islamic education, specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), can be shaped by democratic

citizenship. Here I showed that if Muslims are taught that commonality and difference exist to teach all people how to treat one another justly, then democratic citizenship education can also teach Muslims that through temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other, the whole point of engagement and reflection is not to find consensus, but to simply contemplate new ways of deliberation, which offer all people the maximum level of recognition and acceptance.

One view held by scholars of Islām, explains Sahin (2006: 190-191), is that Islām is irreconcilable with the main assumptions of democratic government, which, therefore, renders Islām and democracy as incompatible. Another view argues that not only are Islām and democracy compatible, but that their association within the Islamic world is inevitable. The fact that democracy has been suppressed in most parts of the Muslim world does not negate the Islamic principles of *shurā (*consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). The problems encountered in the Muslim world are not due to a deficiency within Islamic education. Rather, the problems are to be found in the passivity of the *'ulemā,* high levels of illiteracy, especially amongst Muslim women, and certainly in the dire need for a reformed Islamic education. To Ramadan (2004:96), *'The expression of an absolute opposition between Islām and democracy cannot hold from the moment we bring to the fore the bases which distinguish them apart and the principles which unite them together.'* According to the first branch of Islamic liberalism, states Sahin (2006: 194), there are two reasons which make a democratic political system possible in a Muslim society. One is that such a system is in accordance with the spirit of Islām, which is tolerant of diversity. Two is that Islām has few or no specific prescriptions regarding the political institutional arrangements of an Islamic society. According to the second branch, which is mainly based on the pillars of *shurā* (consultation), *'adl* (justice), *hurriya* (liberty) and *'ijtihād* (rational interpretation), liberal democratic arrangements are justified through specific references in Islām, such as:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

'Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.'

(Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah [Chapter: The Cow] 2:256)

In considering a reformed approach to Islamic education and its connection to democratic citizenship education, and in responding to the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity (in light of the experiences shared by the women in the cases), *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) and Muslim-based schools, as the hubs of Islamic education, owe it to the message of the Qur'an to shift from places of mere rhetoric to spaces of public deliberation. The case study research revealed different and complex formations of identity and different representations of Muslim women. Linked to these multiple images were distinctly different interpretations, opinions, lived experiences and deliberations, which, as a collective, are illustrative of the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity. And so, Islamic education, in its teaching and learning, cannot be one-dimensional or one-directional. In premising itself on the foundation of *shurā* (consultation) it will establish both the space and the discourse to manage diversity. The notion of *shurā* (consultation) acknowledges that there cannot be only one view; that teaching and learning are conditioned by discussion and deliberation. According to Sahin (2006: 200), *'Although the sacred texts are immutable, their interpretation is always subject to change because understanding is influenced by the time and place in which believers live'.*

One of the greatest challenges faced by Islām and Muslims today is embedded in the critical analysis of the Qur'an as a sacred text. Inherent in its sanctity is the origin of the Qur'an itself. Muslims, unlike their other monotheistic siblings, do not consider the Qur'an as an inspired book; rather, it contains the actual words of God. Stated in another

way, the Qur'an is the divine disclosure of God, revealed so that humanity might know Him. Islām, according to Al-Attas (2005: 13), ascribes to itself the truth of being a truly revealed religion, *'perfected from the very beginning, requiring no historical explanation and evaluation in terms of the place it occupied and the role it played within a process of development'.* This type of attribute, together with the belief that the Qur'an is in terms of both content and form the word of God, carry tremendous implications for the reading, interpretation and understanding thereof. As a text for and to women, the Qur'an addresses issues of dress code, inheritance, marriage, divorce, sexuality, purity, modesty, abuse, honour killings, polygyny, education, leadership, social expectations and interactions As a legal text, it outlawed infanticide, stressed the woman's right to a contract marriage, granted her rights to inherit, control over her dower and property, and the protection of the widow and orphans – which of course, speaks to gender equality.. As a religious text, containing more passages pertaining to the role and treatment of women than any other subject matter, the Qur'an, in fact, demands a reading and understanding by Muslim women, of Muslim women, and for Muslim women.

The fact that Muslim women have overwhelmingly not participated in foundational constructions of Islām, and have consequently unquestioningly accepted patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an as the Qur'an itself, is not a position endorsed or stated by Islām. It is, however, a position protected by certain Muslim men, and accepted by certain Muslim women. And, to me, it has led to an intrinsic form of misrecognition of the self, and of Muslim women. Identity, as I have already mentioned, is constructed through dialogue with others. The Qur'an, as a revealed text, and as a communiqué between God and myself can only hold meaning when I engage and interrogate it. If I am going to live by the tenets of the Qur'an, I have to position myself as an active participant, rather than a passive recipient. It is an injunction embedded in the very first Qur'anic revelation of *'Iqra!'* (Read!).

Therefore, as a second exploration of a reformed approach, if Islamic education is to have any pedagogical value, then Muslims have to return to its foundational instruction of *Iqra!* (Read!). To me, this would encompass a different type of religious instruction than I have

predominantly encountered. It needs to be different to Thania's experience of Islamic education being a *'message of complacency.'* It needs to be different so that, as Mariam singles out, Muslim women *'see a connection between education and spirituality.'* It needs to be different so that, according to Yumna, *'Muslim women should educate themselves in instances of oppression'.* The type of Islamic education needed is one that capacitates and motivates Muslim women to be both extractors from and contributors to Islām. Attachment to faith cannot be devoid of meaning and recognition. Muslims need to interrogate all notions attached to Islām, and they need to mediate with the text itself. Most importantly, the interpretation and understanding of the Qur'an needs to be done from and within a gender inclusive perspective. As a Muslim woman living in a society far removed from the context and environment in which Islām first flourished, I have to be able to read and understand the Qur'an, as revealed more than 1400 years ago.

Thirdly, in recognising the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity, and in considering its connection to democratic citizenship education, Islamic education needs to re-visit its premise of exclusivity. By exclusivity I am specifically referring to normative Islam. It is precisely the conception of a normative, which speaks to a particular standard of understanding and conduct, which the narratives of the seven Muslim women so clearly debunked. What emerged were seven different constructions of identity and seven different enactments of Islām.

If the challenge for cosmopolitanism is to recognize and respond to the individualisation of self-understandings that constitute a pluralist society, then Islamic education needs to ask itself whether the concept of a normative Islām is a plausible one. Notions of normativity evoke images of rigidity, a clear differentiation between what is right and wrong, or what is good and bad. But who and what decide the correctness of an individual's behavior? Is it wrong for Leila to discard her *hijāb* (head-scarf) because she knows that her internal confusion is not commensurate with what her external image ought to represent? Is it bad for Thania to seek an alternative message within the Qur'an so that she can be both Muslim and a homosexual? Is it improper behaviour for Shameema to remain in a marriage which might or might not lead to her happiness? It is

not the business of this dissertation to provide answers to any of these questions. The subjective knowledge produced by this dissertation speaks to the multiple lived experiences of Muslim women, and not whether these experiences should be condoned or condemned.

If there is one aspect clearly highlighted by the seven cases, and if there is one element which these women have in common, it is that they live their lives across a continuum of identities, experiences and narratives. So what should a re-imagined Islamic education do in order to shift from a basis of prescription to description? It needs to step out of the construction of normative Islām on two levels, so that alternative stories can resonate within its teachings. It is the only way that Islām could talk about real compassion and justice for all. I am not calling for an abandonment of all notions of normativity, since this would be tantamount to calling for an abandonment of any Islamic law with which the individual disagrees. I am, however, calling for a space between the dichotomy normative-alternative in which individuals feel free to bring their own understandings or misunderstandings to the fore. On one level, sticking to the normative script merely reinforces what we already know, so that when we are confronted with otherness, not only do we respond with a language of disregard and disapproval, but we do not even realise that in our own disapproval we betray our own lack of *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing). And on another level, Islamic education needs to interrogate the very notion of normative Islām as a constant against which to measure all otherness. Notions of normativity are entirely interpretative, and what is considered as normative by one Muslim might be considered as alternative by another. In replacing the dichotomy of normative-alternative with a construction of alternatively normative, Islamic education will instill two critical elements. Firstly, it will extend the exercise of *shurā* (consultation), while simultaneously inviting the practice of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it says that the identity of being Muslim is drawn from an internalized understanding of Islam, rather than an external set of ideals.

Lastly, a reformed Islamic education is the medium through which to present and nurture an inclusive Islām, one which speaks to and about an Islām in which difference both

exists and is encouraged. Islamic education needs to acknowledge that inasmuch as the Qur'an is a divine and religious text, it is also a book of guidance, and a trajectory with which Muslims need to have an ongoing relationship. This acknowledgement would explain why the Qur'an has given voices to a continuum of moderate, conservative and liberal to radical, fundamentalist and extremist Muslims. And this acknowledgement would imply an acceptance of difference, which would present an opportunity for Islām to start demonstrating its mercy, peace and justice, which is precisely what Islām seeks to achieve through education.

The conceptual and actionable link between Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education lies in its treatment of others, and by what informs that treatment. My critic might question whether this is of long-term benefit to the Muslim community. My response is that I am not arguing for an acceptance of all kinds of differences, which are in fact censured by the Islamic faith. What I am asserting is that differences of interpretation exist – as Thania and Leila exist – which cannot be wished away. By implementing the democratic notion of responsible citizenship, Islamic education finds a platform for the implementation of its principles of *shurā (*consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), and democratic citizenship education gains in terms of finding a cultivation of democratic engagement within the principles of Islam.

To me, cosmopolitanism is lived and witnessed through the extension of friendship to those I do not know. It is about looking for what we have in common, and what we can build on, rather than allowing a pre-existing premise of otherness to distort my (mis)perception of you. And more importantly, it is about still respecting and extending courtesy, even, and especially when it is found that we in fact have nothing in common. When Islamic education truly reflects the message of the Qur'an, then it is in essence acknowledging the cosmopolitan nature inherent within the teachings of Islām. It is about the construction of relationships in which teaching and learning, dialogue and co-existence are facilitated through the virtues of *ta'lim* (instruction), and especially through *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), since it is only through our own respecting of

and caring for the rights of others, that we can truly comprehend the value of having a right.

As to whether Islamic education is a pedagogical instrument of democracy, the first premise that needs to be clarified is the construction of democracy itself. The selective attribution of democratic principles should not be conflated with the ideal of democracy. And so, if the selected democratic principles are at odds with my democratic right to practise my Islamic identity through the wearing of my *hijāb* (head-scarf), for instance, then no, *shurā* (consultation) is not an instrument of democracy. But if democracy is presented and implemented as an inclusive model of the recognition of every individual, based on a just and peaceful co-existence, then indeed, *shurā* (consultation) is an elevation of democracy. In exercising *shurā* (consultation), individuals enter into an arena of deliberation and reflection, in which the ultimate goal is to find intersections of commonality, so that a situation of equal justice could prevail. I have the right to exercise what I consider to be important to me, and I have the right to expect that a society based on cosmopolitan and democratic principles would look at my rights not in terms of their own social and political constructions, but in terms of what has given shape to me. And that right includes the respect of my physical representation as a *hijāb*-clad (head-scarf) Muslim woman, and it extends into any other representation of otherness or difference, which is yet to be constructed.

The foundational premise of Islamic education should fundamentally be one of *tarbiyah* (nurturing). This encompasses notions of compassion, empathy, care and justice. Students at *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) and Muslim-based schools should be exposed to a teaching and learning environment where *how* rather than *what* is foregrounded. This would necessitate that the teacher puts aside all pre-conceived or pre-scripted ideas of what and who students of Islamic education should be or look like. It would require the space for a public deliberation where multiple identities are displayed and made visible through multiple viewpoints. When teachers exercise empathy, care and justice, the student responds like Nadia – with self-assuredness. When students are self-assured and confident, they nurture and cultivate, rather than discard learning.

So, in responding to how Muslim women can and should find accommodation within a cosmopolitan society, it is through living the elements of Islamic education. If Muslim women learn and understand *(ta'lim)* Islām, they should be able to live and practise it. If they internalise the message of what Islamic education ought to be, they should be able to regard themselves and those around them (the others) with respect and etiquette *(ta'dib)*. And if they wish to live by the creed of Islām, which is peace and justice, they will know that to be Muslim, is to nurture not only themselves, not only their Muslim brethren, but all of humanity. The contribution of Muslim women to cosmopolitanism is in fact the lived experiences of their Islām.

6.5. Implications for Teaching and Learning

In the previous section, I highlighted four areas of possible connections between a reformed approach to Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education. The first area of a reform for Islamic education is a shift from mere rhetoric to spaces of public deliberation. Secondly, in returning to its foundational instruction of *Iqra!* (Read!), Islamic education needs to promote an understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an, which is from a gender inclusive perspective. As a third area of connection, Islamic education needs to replace its dichotomy of normative-alternative with a construction of alternatively normative, as a means of advocating *shura* (consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). And lastly, that the visible link between Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education is the treatment of others, so that what is achieved is peaceful co-existence.

As a research study in philosophy of education, I will now spend some time in reflecting on what the implications are for teaching and learning and how a renewed Islamic education will unfold at *madrassahs* (Muslim schools), as institutions attended by students in addition to secular schools, and Muslim-based schools, which attempts to combine Islamic and secular education at one institution, which in many instances, means that the child does not necessarily have to also attend *madrassah* (Muslim school).

In particular since 9/11, Muslims and Muslim-based educational institutions have come under the spotlight of political agendas, and have generally been cast in a mould of suspicion and skepticism. Although questions of Islamic education have concerned scholars even before the horrific events of 9/11, it was only thereafter, says Pohl (2009: 19-20), that Muslim schools have become the subject of a progressively more impassioned debate, which has led to the term *'madrassah'* (Muslim school) entering the public vernacular, and often in a quite undifferentiated fashion, which describes the *'madrassah'* as a 'danger' or 'threat'. The motivation for these types of descriptors, explains Pohl (2009: 20), has most frequently arisen from the religious nature of the curriculum and instructional techniques, such as rote learning and memorisation, which are considered inadequate for preparing students for life in the modern world and for becoming productive members of their countries' workforces. Accusations leveled at Muslim schools, says Pohl, include indoctrination instead of teaching, inculcating in their students a near-total rejection of western cultures, its values and lifestyle, and promoting hostility and even violent behaviour towards non-Muslims. As a countenance to the latter, states Pohl (2009: 21), various policy recommendations and development programmes have emerged that aim at educational reform in the Muslim world.

Based on the assumption that the central status of religion in Muslim schools directly contributes to the surge in religiously motivated violence, the target of educational reforms appears to be secular learning and a more transparent distinction between religious and secular knowledge – which, in my opinion, is a grave misassumption, for which there are two fundamental reasons. Firstly, for Muslims, as I have detailed in chapter 3, there is no distinction between secular and religious or sacred knowledge (Al-Attas, 1977; Dangor, 2005; Halstead, 2004; Nasr, 2010; Rosenthal, 2007; Wan Daud, 2009a). Secondly, and leading from the first point, Muslims cannot enact their identity without reference to their religion, which yet again dismisses any possibility of dislocating *'ilm al-'aqliyah* (acquired knowledge) from *'ilm al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge).

A renewed Islamic education, therefore, has far more to contend with than just the teaching and learning of its Muslim adherents. It has to instil a foundation of teaching and

learning that replaces modern day suspicion with trust and confidence. And, perhaps more importantly, Islamic education, in addressing and preparing its adherents to live in a cosmopolitan society, has to start acknowledging and deliberating the nuances prevalent in Muslims' attachment to Islām. In exploring what the implications for teaching and learning are, I will now show what could possibly be encountered at a re-imagined Islamic educational institution.

In the previous section I mentioned that in considering a reformed approach to Islamic education, its connection to democratic citizenship education, and in responding to the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity, *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) and Muslim-based schools as the hubs of Islamic education owe it to the message of the Qur'an to shift from places of mere rhetoric to spaces of public deliberation. If this is done, two things will happen. The first is that recognition will be given to the construction of a manifold Muslim identity, as well as its associated nuances. The second is that a space of public deliberation will lead to a space of managing diversity. And in order to sustain such a space, the teaching would have to be strongly focused on cultivating the individual in terms of his or her own manifold identity and in terms of respecting the difference in others – in other words, a space of *tarbiyah* (nurturing). Through *tarbiyah* (nurturing) the teacher will be best placed to evoke a learning which is reflective, and which creates an environment for understanding and consideration rather than superficial memorisation, which other than displaying the student's capacity to remember and recite, does little for deep learning. By entering into a relationship of *tarbiyah* (nurturing), the teacher, through engaging with the student, stands to gain as much as the student, as each individual student will bring his or her own insight into the learning process. In effect, what this renewed Islamic education calls for is a return to the notion of *halaqas* (study circles), as a space which encourages debate and disagreement *(ikhtilāf)*, and promotes a type of education for the dialogue and engagement of commonalities and differences.

Previously I stated that one of the greatest challenges faced by Islām and Muslims today is embedded in the critical analysis of the Qur'an as a sacred text. Linked to this is the fact that Muslim women have overwhelmingly not participated in the foundational

constructions of Islām, and have consequently unquestioningly accepted patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an as the Qur'an itself. As a second reformed approach, and in terms of Islamic education having pedagogical value, I proposed a restoration of the foundational instruction of *Iqra!* (Read!) This will equip Muslims to extract knowledge from Islām, while also contributing to knowledge about Islām. What this means in terms of teaching and learning is the establishment of clarity regarding the reading of the Qur'an as text. Most of the paradigmatic foundations of Islām have been constructed in a patriarchal mould, which have deliberately led to interpretations of Muslim women as being 'less than' and somehow dispensable. A feminist reading would insist that Islām, and the Qur'an as its guide, is essentially a religion of liberation of women, which has deliberately been overlooked and distorted by patriarchal, and perhaps chauvinistic, exegesis. Within a re-imagined Islamic education, however, it would not be about a patriarchal-feminist dichotomy. While each individual might bring gender-specific experiences to the reading and understanding of the Qur'an, it should not translate into a gender-asymmetry interpretation.

What would matter, though, is a morally conscious reading. A morally conscious reading would mean that I approach the Qur'an firstly, as a moral human being, which, in turn, would connect me to all other moral human beings (see Benhabib, 2011). A morally conscious reading would also mean that I approach the Qur'an not only in terms of my Muslim identity, but in terms of being an active participant in a society based on democratic principles and justice. The dimension of Islamic education most required would be encompassed in *ta'dib* (just action), where the individual acquires the codes for sound social and moral conduct – such as respect, compassion and justice – within, and for the greater good of society. The premise of an approach of this nature would immediately replace notions of egotism with notions of altruism.

As one of the fundamental objectives of Islamic education, this type of approach would tie in with the concept of *tazkiyah* (purification). *Tazkiyah* (purification), which is essentially about the pursuit of purity of the self for the sake of character development, also pertains to other concepts of *tazkiyatul lisān* (purification of speech), *tazkiyatul-akhlāq*

(purification of manners and conduct), and ultimately *tazkiyatul īmān* (purification of faith). The centrality of *tazkiyah* (purification) in the relationship between Muslims and God is encapsulated in the pedagogical values of *tarbiyah* (fostering or nurturing), *ta'lim* (instruction; teaching and learning) and *ta'dib* (just action). If the teacher teaches with *tazkiyatul lisān* (purification of speech), and emulates her own teaching and learning through *tazkiyatul-akhlāq* (purification of manners and conduct), then what is achieved is *tarbiyah (*nurturing) of the student.

As a third point of reform for Islamic education, I contended that in recognising the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity, and in considering its connection to democratic citizenship education, Islamic education needs to re-visit its premise of exclusivity, so that it replaces its dichotomy of normative-alternative with a construction of alternatively normative. Conceptions of a normative Islām can have serious implications for individual lives. Because of normative Islām, Thania's family chooses to ostracise her instead of accepting her as a homosexual woman. Because of normative Islām, Leila loses faith in herself and feels disconnected from Islām when she realises that her all or nothing understanding of Islām is compromised.

So, how will an alternatively normative or non-normative construction of Islamic education show itself? Firstly, it will show itself by foregrounding its teaching and learning on the basis of justice and compassion for all individuals. Secondly, it will acknowledge that being Muslim is based on an internalized understanding of Islām, and not the external paraphernalia which constitutes an Islamic identity. When students are taught about justice and compassion by being treated justly and compassionately, then the shadows of what things ought to look like ceases to be the defining feature of identity. And when they are taught to take account of Islām, they will be better placed to recognize who they are. And ultimately, they will learn that what matters is a teaching and learning environment where just treatment replaces judgement. To attain such an environment, a re-imagined Islamic institution will not only place the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) alongside the teachings of the Qur'an, but it will also demonstrate

the teachings of the Prophet within its own institutional pedagogical planning and structures.

If the Qur'an is understood to be the divine word of God, then the Prophet is the corporeal manifestation of God's divinity. This would mean a teaching and learning of his character as much as of his actions; and it would mean an emulation of his grace and humility as much as of his courage. Most significantly, what would need to be included is: *'the Prophet clearly acknowledges the validity of adhering to principles of justice and defending the oppressed, regardless of whether those principles come from inside Islam or outside it'* (Ramadan, 2007: 21). Ramadan explains that from the first revelation, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not conceive the content of his message as the expression of pure otherness, or in opposition to what the Arabs or the other societies of his time were producing. To this end, Islam's value system is neither closed nor in conflict with other value systems, but according to Ramadan (2007: 22), relies on a set of universal principles that are commensurate with the values of other beliefs and religious traditions. The message and example of the Prophet, therefore, can be viewed as a corroboration of the universal principles of justice, dignity and peace, and it is evident no more than in the character and actions of the Prophet himself.

As God's most perfect creation, but still just a man and a messenger, I would want to learn about the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) susceptibilities, since it is only through our struggles as human beings that we learn the true understanding of empathy and how to nurture our innate vulnerability. I think Muslims often lose sight of the fact that the Prophet's prophetic mission was preceded by the recognition of his moral qualities, which as Ramadan (2007: 22) explains, confirmed a posterioi the need for such qualities. When Islamic education teaches about the inclusivity of Islām, both the teacher and the student will be exposed to the inclusive nature of Islamic education, which maintains that the actions of imparting and receiving *(ta'lim)* knowledge cannot be divorced from the social conduct *(ta'dib)* of individuals, which cannot be disconnected from the developmental process of individual rearing and nurturing *(tarbiyah).*

The fourth area of reform within Islamic education centred on my assertion, that the visible link between Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education is the treatment of others, so that what is achieved is peaceful co-existence. How, then, would a re-imagined Islamic education teach Muslims, firstly, to establish this link, and secondly, to sustain it? To me, cosmopolitanism is lived and witnessed through the extension of friendship to those I do not know. It is about looking for what we have in common, and what we can build on, rather than allowing a pre-existing premise of otherness to distort my (mis)perception of you. And more importantly, it is about still respecting and extending courtesy even, and especially when it is found that we in fact have nothing in common. When Islamic education truly reflects the message of the Qur'an, then it is in essence acknowledging the cosmopolitan nature inherent in the teachings of Islām. It is about the construction of relationships in which teaching and learning, dialogue and co-existence are facilitated through the virtues of *ta'lim* (instruction), and especially through *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), since it is only through our own respecting and caring of the rights of others that we can truly comprehend the value of having a right.

When Islamic education teaches Muslims to be proponents of the rights of others, it links to my recommendation of a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism in which the individual should attach more value to the other, so that the former recognises that without the other, she or he holds no meaning. And so how does the teacher teach the student to value the other more than her or himself? The answer is found in the purpose of seeking knowledge in Islām, which is to inculcate goodness in man as man and individual self (Al-Attas, 1977: 12). Al-Attas's understanding of a good man is defined by his conceptualisation of the man living within his self; that the self is a living space, meaningful only when and if it is of benefit to himself and to society. Muslims can only enact their religion when they personally invest in their respective communities (Ramadan, 2001: 33). And education, like religion, says Halstead (2004: 523), can never be a purely individual affair; individual development cannot occur in isolation from its social environment, because education, in that it serves many individuals, is a means for making society what it is.

In concluding what the implications are for teaching and learning, and in paying particular attention to the elements of Islamic education, *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), and how these are linked to cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education, a renewed Islamic education needs to be cognisant of the continual emergence of newly constructed Muslim communities and identities. And it needs to be especially sensitive to the idea that these new and different communities are in search of new articulations of Islām – as are being found in the communities of all the women in the cases. Islamic education, in its teaching and learning at *madrassahs* (Muslim schools) and Muslim-based schools, cannot afford to be skeptical about these diverse communities. It is precisely the cosmopolitan composition of these communities which constitutes modern day Islām. It is precisely the cosmopolitan composition of these communities, which creates the context for democratic citizenship in action. And it is precisely the cosmopolitan composition of Muslims, which shapes and informs the pedagogical contribution of Islamic education.

6.6. Summary

In summary, I have sought to explore the (in)commensurablility between the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism, and what this holds for democratic citizenship education. As the primary focus of this dissertation I included in my research an examination of knowledge and education in Islām, with a specific emphasis on how certain educational practices lead to the construction of the identity and practices of Muslim women. My research focus was premised on the assertion that in order to understand the role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, one needs to understand Islām and Islamic education. Muslim women, as social and political agents of Islām, by virtue of their specific practices, shape a particular experience of their world, and the world of them. But before one can get an understanding of Islām and Islamic education, and how women enact this education, attention needs to be focused on what Muslim women themselves understand by their Islamic identity and education – and hence, my decision to include the cases of seven Muslim women.

COSMOPOLITANISM, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

From the outset I introduced philosophy of education as a research approach. I explained that by using an interpretivist methodology, I created spaces for multiple understandings and interpretations, rather than objectively verifiable truths. And in relation to the interpretivist methodology, I clarified that when this dissertation talks about the need to understand what Islamic education seeks to achieve within and through some Muslim women and what some Muslim women seek to achieve through Islamic education, the type of knowledge produced here is that based on perception, interpretation, lived experiences and stimuli of practices, that are both contextual and inter-cultural. I proceeded by examining various viewpoints on feminism as an introduction to the essential differences between what can be understood to be secular feminism and Islamic feminism. In concluding this section I focused on the contextual base of this research study by examining the emergence of Islamic feminism from within an apartheid society to a post-apartheid South Africa.

In exploring what Muslim women understand by their Islamic education and their Islamic identity, I examined the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, as well as the islamisation of knowledge. And working from the premise that different religious spaces provide different types of Islamic education, and that these spaces are shaped and defined by the people who occupy them, I looked at various Islamic educational institutions. I focused particularly on the role and participation of women within these spaces, and how they played out in society. In exploring the concepts of knowledge and education in Islām, I provided a conceptual understanding of how Muslim women's identities unfold in relation to their education and practices. And what unfolded is a diverse and intricate identity construction, as found in the case study research, which speaks to the cosmopolitan nature within Muslim identity, and which connects to the cosmopolitan composition of society.

The cases revealed critical data and significant implications for how the women, in their varied formations of identity, enter into an assortment of relationships with Islām. From these varied constructions of relationships and identity, I constructed three primary images underscored by identity, belonging and participation. I argued that these three

images were representative of particular identities of Muslim women, which in turn, were representative of particular versions of Islām. After showing how the continuum of images of Muslim women link to cosmopolitan ideals, I explored how the latter has been changed by the 'new' imagery of Muslim women, leading me to look at notions of a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism which, in turn, led to my examination of how a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism guides what it means to be a democratic citizen. And finally, in responding cohesively to my research question - *Exploring the (in)commensurability between lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism: implications for democratic citizenship education* – I showed that Islamic education, specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), can be shaped by democratic citizenship, and what the implications would be for teaching and learning a renewed Islamic education.

Throughout this dissertation I have cited and expounded on the centrality of Muslim women not only in Islām, but also in their position and perception within a cosmopolitan society. And throughout I have tried to sustain my location in the primary narrative as an extension of the Muslim woman's position. I have clarified this role in terms of the impossibility of a singular story or life, and I have elucidated on this most significantly in my narration of the cases. Much has been said about the distinction between what Islām says in terms of Muslim women, and what Islām does in terms of Muslim women. I have repeatedly, in the latter half of this dissertation, agitated that what Muslims know might not necessarily be what they do, most notably highlighted in my examination of Islamic education. Here I have paid specific attention to Qur'anic exegesis, as opposed to Qur'anic exegesis through a patriarchal lens. Directly linked to this, I focused on notions of feminism as opposed to Islamic feminism, which as I explained, are not mutually exclusive. The seven cases, as the core of this dissertation, brought to life the inherent complexities and idiosyncracies of Muslim women, not only within a diverse cosmopolitan community, but also within a Muslim community of diverse Islamic understanding and culture. I have discussed at length the extent to which the Muslim woman's particular and exacting practices make her either less or more visible, depending on her socio-political context. In this regard I highlighted not only the various

interpretations of the wearing of the *hijāb* (head-scarf), but also its paradoxical function of making the Muslim woman visible through making her invisible.

6.7. Conclusion

By re-visiting the concepts of *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), I have presented an argument for the presentation and nurturing of an inclusive Islām, one which speaks to and about an Islām, one in which difference both exists and is encouraged, and one in which the connection between Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education is enacted in its engagement with others. I argued that if Muslims construct and exist in a variety of identities, and if they bring these very same diverse identities to their interpretation of the Qur'an, then *shurā* (consultation) and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) are not only inevitable, but are precisely how Islām should be shaped within a cosmopolitan and democratic context. Arising from this, I have argued for a differentiation between the Qur'an as divine revelation, and the Qur'an as secular enactment. This element is premised on my contention that Muslims cannot lay claim to a seamless or singular interpretation of the Qur'an. While Islām, as encapsulated in the Qur'an, is presented as the perfect *dīn (*way of life), Muslims, as the adherents of its message, and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can never reach the wholeness and perfection of being, as they do not exist in a divine state. And if I am never whole, and if I never reach my complete identity, since it is continually being shaped by others, then how I can expect complete reflection from others? Muslims might become attached to the notion of the perfect *dīn (*way of life), but they cannot live it; they can only endeavour. It is about the gap, which I discussed earlier in chapter 5 – the disconnection between knowledge of Islām and the lived experiences of Islām, so that what is lived might not necessarily be known, and what is known is not necessarily lived.

Directly linked to this, I found that the intent to understand Muslim women's education and the philosophies of their educational context and practice, opens itself to a plurality of interpretations, which in itself would be a reflection of the pluralism of understanding of the practices of Islām both within and outside of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, in talking to these pluralities, and those of all others, has to start looking at pluralities in a

different way, and this would necessitate a way which is premised on an inclusivity of pluralities, rather than an otherness of others.

Finally, I made the following conclusions: Muslim women can contribute to, and find accommodation in a cosmopolitan society through: (1) The proliferation of a manifold identity; (2) The right to make informed choices about the types of knowledge they pursue; and (3) Self-recognition as a means for establishing dialogical relationships with others. In reconciling these three areas, and in exploring how a cosmopolitan society can contribute to and be involved in the lived experiences of Muslim women, I proposed that a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism could: (1) Embrace a continuum of individualisation where the individual decides the extent of her cultural affiliation; (2) Replace its notion of the tolerance of others with a premise of equal acceptance; (3) Attach more value to the other, than the individual, as an acknowledgement that I hold meaning only when I engage with the other; and (4) Momentarily engage from the perspective of the other. Linked to both the former and the latter, the implications for a democratic citizenship education are that when a democratic citizen is taught that collective identity is not dependent on the subjugation of his or her individuality, that as democratic citizens we are all equal, and that your needs are more important than mine, and he or she is taught to show compassion by temporarily engaging from the perspective of the other, then the 'renewed' democratic citizenship, which emerges leads not only to the proliferation of a just and democratic society, but to the advancement of all people.

Furthermore, I identified four areas of possible connections between a reformed approach to Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education, which should allow a cosmopolitan, democratic citizen, attending a re-imagined Islamic educational institution to expect: (1) A shift from mere rhetoric to spaces of public deliberation; (2) An understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an, which is from a gender inclusive perspective; (3) A replacement of its dichotomy of normative-alternative with a construction of alternatively normative, as a means of advocating *shurā* (consultation), and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), and an internalized understanding of Islam; and (4) Lastly, that the visible link between Islamic education, cosmopolitanism and

democratic citizenship education is the treatment of others, in which the ultimate goal is peaceful co-existence.

In conclusion, islamisation might very well hold the necessary means through which to reform Islamic education and to counter what Al-Faruqi (1988) refers to as the malaise of the *ummah* (community). But the islamisation required, neither is what Al-Faruqi proposes, nor is it adequate to sustain a visible link with cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education. A re-imagined Islamic education does not require an islamisation of modern knowledge in order to eradicate the distinction between rational and irrational knowledge, as is Al-Faruqi's (1988) argument. In order to nurture an individual who has regard for all others, and recognises that he or she needs to be an actively contributing member to any society, a re-imagined Islamic education needs to place more emphasis on *how* we engage with others, than on *what* that engagement contains. And so, islamisation, if it is to ensure a cosmopolitan and democratic citizen, ought to replace its quest to modernise knowledge with a quest to sanctify human engagement. When human engagement is sanctified then the barriers between rational and irrational knowledge are of no consequence.

Finally, what matters is not whether the lived experiences of Muslim women are commensurable with cosmopolitanism, and whether the two are corresponding spaces for one another. What matters is the extent to which the two are able to both justly replicate and repudiate what a society based on democratic principles ought to look like. If philosophy of education is intended to inform and shape the merits of a pluralistic society, then what ought to be taught and learnt is the contribution to, and respecting of, a society which cherishes and encourages diversity of social expression and where deliberation is ongoing. But if philosophy of education is also intended to give cognisance to the otherness of others, and to the otherness within me, which might not be fully understood by me, let alone by others, then what ought to be taught and learnt is that I do not need to succumb to others' expectations of me. That, most importantly, it is my responsibility to keep my identity intact, and that ultimately who I am and who I become should be my primary responsibility.

Replication of a just society, which celebrates diversity of social expression, is not dependent on the dissolution of the self. My recognition and acknowledgement of the other should not translate into a diluted version of who I am, or who I strive to be. This means that my identity and practices as a Muslim woman are a contribution to, and an expression of, social diversity. But my identity is also an assertion of my difference, which needs to be different in order to contribute to and express the diverse nature of a pluralistic society. The two spaces, therefore, of the lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism are at once reflections and deflections of one another. Both are needed, and both should be cherished, since, to me, cosmopolitanism and democracy can never be at the expense of my sense of belonging to a particular group.

6.8. Contribution of this Research Study

In the opening chapter of this dissertation I explained that my motivation for pursuing this research study has, to a large extent, been about making sense of who I am, so that I, and others like me, who are in the minority, are better equipped to live and express our identity in a pluralistic society. It has also been about the realisation and recognition that there exists as much difference and diversity among Muslim women as there does in a pluralistic society. Having your identity shaped within the guise and doctrines of any religion does not necessarily allow you to learn to make sense of how and what informs the shaping. And it seldom encourages you to step outside of yourself and openly interrogate whether any of it actually makes sense. This research study is my attempt to make sense of my Islām, to know myself better so that I might know others better, and ultimately, so that others might know me better.

As a philosophy of education study, which ought to inform the fundamental principles of pluralistic society, I have identified a particular problem associated with Muslim women, which has serious implications for identity, belonging, participation and democratic citizenship. In addressing this problem, I have written and constructed this dissertation as an 'other' - other in terms of my religion, other in terms of my discourse, other in terms of my colour as a product of an apartheid society, other in terms of my physical image, as a *hijāb-clad* (head-scarf) Muslim woman, and other in terms of others. The decision to

employ an auto-ethnographical approach is atypical to philosophical studies. But it was a critical decision, since I was not seeking to develop an argument in the context of what others have articulated or written. Instead, I sought to look at my own life, and in relation to the lives of six other women, our narratives became the lived experiences of Islām which, in turn, informed our perspective and understanding of not only Muslim women, but of Islām as depicted through Muslim women.

The critical contribution of this research study lies in:

- The reason for and purpose why Muslim women pursue Islamic education;

- The exploration of the cosmopolitan nature of the construction of Muslim identity;

- How a 'renewed' cosmopolitanism can guide what it means to be a democratic citizen;

- How democratic citizenship can shape a 'renewed' Islamic education, specifically *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing); and

- How a renewed Islamic education can lead to an expansion of cosmopolitanism and democratic citizenship education.

And finally, while this research study has been an exploration of Muslim women's identity and lived experiences in a post-apartheid South Africa, I believe that the images which have emerged are representative of Muslim women in the world. As such, the implications and potential value of this study are neither limited to the experiences of Muslim women in South Africa, nor to only Muslim women, but are vested in a need for a deeper understanding of the implications for democratic citizenship.

6.9. Recommendations for Islamic Education

The events of 9/11 were a hugely tragic enactment of humanity's capacity for absolute horror. The subsequent military invasions in the Middle East, under the guise of 'preventing' terrorism, were further illustrations of humanity's instinctive response to meet violence with violence. That both sets of atrocities have certainly laid bare the underbelly of a 'civilised' society cannot be denied. Ironically, it has forced Muslims, like me, to seriously look at what Islām does, and what others do to Islām under the banner of being Muslim. And if the events of 9/11 were not enough to force scholars of Islām to begin to critically interrogate Islām and Islamic educational institutions, then the Arab Spring, if nothing else, should serve as a wake-up call, that not just the world, but Muslims in particular, need to be exposed to a more coherent and tangible understanding of Islām and its practices.

In looking at future research and debates in Islamic education, I would like to challenge scholars to explore the following:

- In order to gain an understanding of Islām, its associated meanings, its practices as enacted by Muslim men and women, and its sites of learning and worship, theoretical discussions about Islām have to centre on what informs all of the afore-mentioned. This would mean shifting the discussions from how the religion of Islām is practised and experienced to *what* has informed these practices.

- Conceptual and pragmatic research needs to be conducted on how Islamic education, through the elements of *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), can better inform and serve newly constructed Muslim communities and identities, as are currently being witnessed in the Middle East.

- Islamic education needs to serve as a vehicle through which to evoke (and provoke) much needed critical debate on the treatment of Muslim women under the guise of patriarchal Qur'anic exegesis.

- An epistemological examination is required in order to explore and separate customs that pre-date Islām from the message of the Qur'an.

- By critically analysing the elements of *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), Islamic education should explore how Muslim women, rather than being at odds with a cosmopolitan society, can serve as extensions of a renewed cosmopolitanism. Thus far, Islamic education has been as silent in its response to cosmopolitanism as it has been to the cosmopolitan nature of Muslim identity construction.

- Lastly, as a consequence of the widespread suspicion attached to Islām, its adherents and its practices, Muslim women, and in particular those who wear the *hijab* (head-scarf), are facing the brunt of the 'war on terror'. They are in need of a uniformly and formulated response to this religious and gender-based confrontation. Islamic education, through its connection to the ideals of cosmopolitanism and a democtric citizenship education, has a responsibility to provide the pragmatic framework for a coherent response to what in my opinion is an undemocratic stance against the wearing of the *hijab* (head-scarf).

Islām has an audience of not only Muslims; thanks to the events of 9/11 and more recently the Arab Spring, it now has the ultimate audience of the world. Its response and engagement with this new audience has to be located in a cosmopolitan context, and it has to be shaped by the ideal of justice for all. Islamic education, through the elements of *ta'lim* (instruction), *ta'dib* (just action) and *tarbiyah* (nurturing), has the potential to explicate and portray Islām in its own terms - as a diverse, yet simple and singular expression of humanity.

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

Allah (SWT) knows best.

REFERENCES

References

ABUSHOUK, AI 2008: World history from an Islamic perspective: the experience of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (In Manning, P ed. 2008: Global practice in world history. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 39-52.

ABDULLAH, AS 1982: Educational theory: a Qur'anic outlook. Makkah, Saudi Arabia: Umm al-Qura University Press.

ABRAMS, M 1988. The deconstructive angel. (In Lodge, S ed. 1988: Modern criticism and theory. London: Longman, 264–276.

AFSARUDDIN, A 2005: Muslim views on education: parameters, purview, and possibilities. *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies,* 44(143):143-178.

AFSARUDDIN, A 2007: Celebrating pluralism and dialogue: Qur'anic perspectives. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 42(3):389-406.

AHMED, L 1992: Women and gender in Islam: historical roots of a modern debate. New Haven: Yale University Press.

AKHTAR, SW: The Islamic concept of knowledge. *Al-Tawhid: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture,* XII(3). http://www.al-islam.org. Accessed 24th April 2010.

AL-ATTAS, F. 2008: Interview on Islam and education. *Islamic Perspective Journal,* 1(2):7-16.

AL-ATTAS, M N 1977: The concept of education in Islam. (Keynote address delivered at the *First World Conference in Muslim Education.* Makkatul Mu'azzamah.)

REFERENCES

AL-ATTAS, M N 2005: Islam and secularism. *Journal of Islamic Philosophy,* 1:11-43.

AL-FARUQI, IR 1982: Islamization of knowledge: the general principles and the workplan. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

AL-FARUQI, IR 1988: Islamization of knowledge: problems, principles and prospective. *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge.* http://www.epistemology.net. Accessed 4 January 2010.

AL-FARUQI, L: Islamic traditions and the feminist movement: confrontation or cooperation? http://www.jannah.org/sisters/feminism.html. Accessed 31st March 2011.

ALI, AY 1993: The holy Qur'an: translation and commentary. Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre.

APPIAH, KA 2006a: The politics of identity. *Daedalus,* 135(4):15–22.

APPIAH, KA 2006b. Cosmopolitanism: ethics in a world of strangers. London: Penguin.

BADRAN, M 2001: Understanding Islam, feminism and Islamic feminism. *Journal of Women's History,* 13(1):47-52.

BADRAN, M 2009: Feminism in Islam: secular and religious convergences. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

BANGSTAD, S 2007: Global flows, local appropriations: facets of secularisation and re-Islamization among contemporary Cape Muslims. Leiden: Amsterdam University Press.

BARLAS, A 2002: Believing women in Islam: unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an. Austin: University of Texas Press.

R E F E R E N C E S

BENHABIB, S 1992: Situating the self: gender, community and postmodernism in contemporary ethics. UK: Polity Press.

BENHABIB, S. 1994: From identity politics to social feminism: a plea for the nineties. *Philosophy of Education.* Harvard University Press.

BENHABIB, S. (ed.) 1996: Democracy and difference: contesting the boundaries of the political. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

BENHABIB, S. 2002: The claims of culture: equality and diversity in the global era. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

BENHABIB, S 2006: Hospitality, sovereignty and democratic iterations. (In Post, R ed. 2006: Seyla Benhabib: Another cosmopolitanism: democratic iterations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 147-181.

BENHABIB, S 2011: Dignity in adversity: human rights in troubled times. UK: Polity Press.

BIESTA, G 2001: How can philosophy of education be critical? How critical can philosophy of education be? (In Lenzen, D & White, J eds. Methods in Philosophy of Education. London: Routledge, 125-143.

BURGESS, R (ed.) 1984: The research process in educational settings: ten case studies. UK: The Falmer Press.

BUTLER, J 1999: Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity. New York & London: Routledge.

CAJEE, ZA 2003: Islamic history and civilisation in South Africa - the impact of colonialism, apartheid,and democracy (1652 – 2004). (Edited paper presented at the

REFERENCES

symposium on Islamic civilisation in eastern Africa, Islamic University of Uganda, 15–17 December 2003.)

CAPE FLATS WEBSITE. http://www.capeflats.co.za. Accessed 4th September 2010.

CONLE, C 2000: Narrative inquiry: research tool and medium for professional development. *European Journal of Teacher Education,* 23(1):49-63.

CONNELLEY, FM & Clandinin, DJ 1990: Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher,* 19(5):2-14.

COOKE, M 2001: Women claim Islam: creating Islamic feminism through literature. London: Routledge.

DA COSTA, Y 1992: Assimilatory processes among the Cape Muslims in South Africa during the 19th century. *South African Journal of Sociology,* 23(1):5-11.

DANGOR, S 2005: Islamization of disciplines: towards an indigenous educational system. *Educational philosophy and theory,* 37(4):519-531.

DANTO, AC 1962: Narrative sentences. *History and Theory,* 2(2):146-179.

DERRIDA, J 1988: Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences' (In Lodge, S ed. 1988: Modern criticism and theory. London: Longman, 107–123.

DERRIDA, J 1994: Specters of Marx: the stae of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

DEWEY, J 2004: Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education. New York: Macmillan.

R E F E R E N C E S

EISENHARDT, KM 1989: Building theories from case study research. *Stanford University Academy of Management Review*, 14(4):532-550.

ELLIS, C 2004: The ethnographic 1: a methodological novel about ethnography. UK: AltaMira Press.

ERASMUS, Z 2001: Re-imagining Coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa. (In Erasmus, Z ed. 2001: Coloured by history, shaped by place: new perspectives on Coloured identities in Cape Town. Cape Town: Kwela Publishers, 13-28.

ESPOSITIO, JL 1988: Islam: the straight path. New York: Oxford University Press.

ESPOSITO, JL & DeLong-Bas, N 2001: Women in Muslim family law. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

FAKHRY, M 1997: Islamic philosophy, theology, and mysticism: a short introduction. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

FATAAR, A 2005: Discourse, differentiation, and agency: Muslim community schools in postapartheid Cape Town. *Comparative Education Review,* 49(1):23-44.

FAY, B 1996: Contemporary philosophy of social science: a multicultural approach. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

GADOL, JK 1976: The social relations of the sexes: methodological implications of women's history. *Signs*, 1(4):809-823. University of Chicago Press.

GEORGE, AL & BENNETT, A 2005: Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

R E F E R E N C E S

GUNTHER, U & NIEHAUS, I 2002: Islam, politics and gender during the struggle in South Africa. (In Chidester, D, Tayob, A & Weisse, W, eds. 2002: Religion, politics, and identity in a changing South Africa. Germany: Waxmann Publishing, 103-124.

GUTMANN, A 1995: Challenges of multiculturalism in democratic education. http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/95 **.** Accessed 2nd February 2011.

GUTMANN, A 2003: Identity in democracy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

GUTMANN, A & Thompson, D 2004: Why deliberative democracy? Princeton: Princeton University Press.

HADDAD, Y Y & ESPOSITO, JL 1998, eds: Islam, gender, and social change. New York: Oxford University Press.

HALSTEAD, JM 2004: An Islamic concept of education. *Comparative Education,* 40(4):517-529. UK: University of Plymouth.

HARDING, S 1987: Introduction: is there a feminist method? (In Harding, S ed. 1987: Feminism and Methodology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1-14.

HARDING, S 1998: Is science multi-cultural? Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

HARON, M 2003: Undercounting or overcounting South Africa's Muslims: the era of democracy (Censuses 1996 & 2001). *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23(1):100–110.

HARON, M 2004: The South African Muslims making (air) waves during the period of transformation. (In Chidester, D, Tayob, A & Weisse, W eds. 2004: Religion, Politics, and Identity in a Changing South Africa. Germany: Waxmann Publishing, 125-160.

REFERENCES

HASHIM, R 2004: Islamization of the curriculum: the Islamic philosophy of education. http://www.islamonline.net/english/Contemporary/2004/12/article02.shtml.   Accessed 30th September 2009.

HASSIM, S 1991: Gender, social location and feminist politics in South Africa. *Transformation,* 15:65-81.

HEYTING, F 2001: Methodological traditions in philosophy of education. (In Lenzen, D & White, J eds. 2001: Methods in philosophy of education. London: Routledge, 1-12.

JEENAH, N 2006: The national liberation struggle and Islamic feminisms in South Africa. *Women's Studies International Forum,* 29:27– 41.

JEPPIE, MS. 2001: Reclassifications: Coloured, Malay, Muslim. (In Erasmus, Z, ed. 2001: Coloured by history, shaped by place: new perspectives on Coloured identities in Cape Town. Cape Town: Kwela Publishers. 80-96.

KEATON, TD 2006: Muslim girls and the other France: race, identity politics and social exclusion. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

KRISTEVA, J 1980: Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art. New York: Columbia University Press.

LUBBE, GJ 1989: The Muslim Judicial Council – a descriptive and analytical investigation. Unpublished D.Litt. and Phil. Thesis. University of South Africa.

LUNDE, P 2002: Islam. London: Kindersley.

MAKDISI,, G 1981: Rise of colleges: institutions of learning in Islam and the west. Edinburgh University Press.

REFERENCES

MANJRA, S 1999: Post-apartheid South Africa and Muslim political involvement. (Unpublished paper presented at the OIC/CTD conference on Muslims and Political Development in Southern Africa, Johannesburg, 24 April 1999.)

MERNISSI, F 1987: Beyond the veil: male – female dynamics in modern Muslim society. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

MERNISSI, F 1995: Women and Islam: an historical and theological enquiry. UK: Blackwell Publishers.

MERRY, MS & DE RUYTER, DJ 2009: Cosmopolitanism and the deeply religious. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 30(1):49 – 60. The Netherlands: University of Amsterdam.

MURAD, AH 2009: The chador of God on Earth: the metaphysics of the Muslim veil'. http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk. Accessed 11 December 2010.

MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL (MJC), http://www.mjc..org.za. Accessed 13th January 2010.

NASR, SH 2010: Islam in the modern world: challenged by the west, threatened by fundamentalism, keeping faith with tradition. USA: HarperOne.

NUSSBAUM, MC 1997: Kant and stoic cosmopolitanism. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 5(1):1-25.

NUSSBAUM, MC 2002: Education for citizenship. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 5(1):1–25.

OKIN, SM 1999: Is multiculturalism bad for women? New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

REFERENCES

OMAR, AR 2002: Muslims and religious pluralism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs,* 22(1):219-224.

OMAR, AR 2005: Democracy and multiple identities in post-apartheid South Africa. http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/documents/ARISA/2004**.** Accessed 10 October 2010.

POHL, F 2009: Islamic education and the public sphere: today's Pesantren in Indonesia. Berlin: Waxmann Verlag.

RAHMAN, F 1970a: Knowledge and the self. http://www.netcom.uk. Accessed 14 July 2010.

RAHMAN, F 1970b: Position of woman in Islam. (A lecture at the Elsies River Centre, Cape Town, South Africa.) http://www.sufi.co.za. Accessed 14 July 2010.

RAMADAN, T 2001: Islam, the West and the challenges of modernity. UK: The Islamic Foundation.

RAMADAN, T 2007: The messenger: the meanings of the life of Muhammad. US: Oxford University Press.

RILEY, D 1987: Does a sex have a history? 'Women and Feminism. *New Formations,* (1):35-45.

ROSENTHAL, F 2007: Knowledge triumphant: the concept of knowledge in medieval Islam. The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden.

SAHIN, B 2006: Is Islam an obstacle to democratization in the Muslim world? The debate of the compatibility of Islam and democracy revisited. *Bilig,* 37:189–206. Ahmet Yesevi University Board of Trustees.

REFERENCES

SHAIKH, Shamima 1997: Women & Islam – the gender struggle in South Africa: the ideological struggle. MYM Islamic Tarbiyyah Programme, 19–23 Dec, As-Salaam, South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal.

SHAIKH, Sa'diyyah 2003: Transforming feminisms: Islam, women and gender justice. (In Safi, O. ed, 2003: Progressive Muslims: on justice, gender and pluralism. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 147-162.

SMEYERS, P & WAGHID, Y 2010: Cosmopolitanism in relation to the self and the other: from Michael Foucault to Stanley Cavell. *Educational Theory,* 60:4. Board of Trustees, University of Illinois.

STOWASSER, B 1994: Women in the Qur'an, traditions and interpretations. New York: Oxford University Press.

TALBANI, A 1996: Pedagogy, power, and discourse: transformation of Islamic education. *Comparative Education Review*, 40(1):66-82.

TAYLOR, C 1989: Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity. UK: Cambridge University Press.

TAYLOR, C 1994: Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

TAYOB, A 2011: Islamization for South African Muslim independent schools. (In Tayob, A, Niehaus, I & Weisse, W, eds. 2011 *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa, Religionen im Dialog*. Berlin: Waxmann, 39-54.

TIBAWI, AL 1962: Origin and character of Al-Madrasah. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 25(2):225-238. University of London.

REFERENCES

TURNER, BS 2001: Cosmopolitan virtue: on religion in a global age. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 4(2)131 – 152.

VAHED, G 2006: Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa. A model of integration?' http://www.onislam.net/english/politics/africa/431271.html. Accessed 14th July 2011.

VAHED, G & JEPPIE, MS 2005: Multiple communities: Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa 2004 – 2005. (In Daniel, J, Southall, R, & Lutchman, J, eds. 2005: State of the nation. South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council, 252-286.

WADUD, A 2002: A'ishah's legacy. *New Internationalist Magazine*, 345 (1).

WADUD, A 2006: Inside the gender jihad: women's reform in Islam. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

WADUD, A 2010: Feminism in Islam. *Faces.* http://www.muslimsdebate.com/faces/sn.php. Accessed 20thApril 2011.

WAGHID, Y 2003: Democratic education: policy and praxis. University of Stellenbosch Publishers.

WAGHID, Y 2005: Action as an educational virtue: toward an understanding of democratic citizenship education. *Educational Theory,* 55 (3):323–342.

WAGHID, Y 2009: Education and Madrassahs in South Africa: on the possibility of preventing extremism. *British Journal of Religious Education,* 31(2):117-128.

WAGHID, Y 2010: Education, democracy and citizenship revisited: pedagogical encounters. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

WAGHID, Y 2011a: Conceptions of Islamic education: pedagogical framings. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

REFERENCES

WAGHID, Y 2011b: Critical Islamic pedagogy: possibilities for cultivating democratic citizenship and cosmopolitanism in Muslim schools. (In Tayob, A, Niehaus, I & Weisse, W, eds. 2011: Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa, Religionen im Dialog. Berlin: Waxmann, 27-38.

WAN DAUD, WM 2009a: Dewesternization and Islamization: their epistemic framework and final purpose. (Paper presented at the International Conference on Islamic University Education, 27-30 September 2009, Kazan) Russia: Kazan.

WAN DAUD, MW 2009b: Al-Attas' concept of ta'dib as true and comprehensive education in Islam'. http://www.seekersguidance.org.za. Accessed 19th September 2010.

YIN, R 1984: Case study research: design and methods. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

YIN, R 2006: Case study methods. (In Green, JL, Camilli, G, Elmore, P eds. 2006: Handbook of contemporary methods in education research. American Educational Research Association, 111- 123.

YOUNG, IM 1997: Intersection voices: dilemmas of gender, political philosophy, and policy. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

YOUNG, IM 1999: Justice, inclusion and deliberative democracy. (In Macedo, S, 1999: Deliberative politics. Essays on democracy and disagreement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 151– 58.

YOUNG, IM 2000: Inclusion and democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Glossary of Arabic Terms

adab (**pl.** *ādāb*):   right action; good manners or good conduct.

adhān: Islamic call to prayer

'adl: divine justice

ahl al-adab: literature

ākhirah: life in the hereafter

akhlāq: character or morals of a person.

'alim: an educated person in Islam; scholar)

al-masjid an-Nabawi: the Prophet's mosque in Medina

al-masjid al-Haram: the holy mosque in Mecca

al-nafs al-ammara: lower self

al-tasawwuf: Islamic metaphysics

'amal: practice

aqīdah: Islamic belief system

āyāh (pl. āyāt):   sign of God or verse of the Qur'an.

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

dhakara: to remember

dīn: In Islam it refers to way of life

dār al-Islām: abode of Islam

dār al-sulh: abode of peace

dār al-harb: abode of conflict or war

da'wah: religious outreach

dunya: life on earth

dhikr: remembrance of God

fard'ayn: individual obligation

fard kifayah: collective obligation

fatwā (pl. fatāwā) religious decree

fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence

fuqahā' (pl. of faqīh) jurisconsults; experts in Islamic law

halaqa: study circle or religious circle

Hanafiyya: school of thought, named after imām Abu Hanifa

Hanbaliyya: school of thought, named after imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

hadīth (pl. ahādith):	saying or act of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
Hajj	pilgrimage to Mecca, which Muslims are required at least once in their lifetime
haqq:	truth
harām:	forbidden
hārus:	permissible
hikmah:	wisdom
hijāb:	head-scarf
hurriya:	liberty; freedom
ijāza:	certificate
ijmā:	consensus of opinion
'ijtihād:	in Islamic law it refers to independent analysis
'ikhlās:	sincerity
ikhtilāf:	disagreement
istihsān:	Islamic judicial preference
'ilm:	knowledge, learning or intellect
'ilm al'aqliyah:	acquired knowledge

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

'ilm alnaqliyah: revealed knowledge

imām: religious leader

īmān: faith or belief.

Iqra: read

isnad: chain of authorities or transmission chain of each *hadīth*

jami: congregational mosque

jumu'ah: Friday congregational prayer

Ka'aba: cuboid-shaped building in Mecca, most sacred site in Islam; Muslims face in the direction of the *Ka'aba* during prayers

kalām   philosophical theology

khalifa: vicegerents

khutbah: speech or sermon connected to Friday and *'Eid* prayers

kuttab: Muslim secondary school

madhahab (pl. madhahib): Islamic school of thought

madrassah (pl.madrassahs): as used in this dissertation, it refers to an institution, which provides Islamic education. However, in medieval Islam, it referred specifically to a Muslim college or institution of higher education.

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

majlis: place of sitting; gathering

makhruh: reprehensible

maktab (pl. makātib): Muslim primary school

Malikiyya: school of thought, named after imām Mālik ibn Anas

masjid (pl. masājid): mosque

mu'allim: male teacher or instructor

mu'allima: female teacher or instructor

niqāb: veil, which covers the face

nur: light

qiyās: Islamic principles of analogy

qadi: Islamic judge

Qur'an: divine text of Islam

Ramadan: ninth month of Islamic calendar; Islamic month of fasting

sahaba: the companions of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

salāh: prayers

Shafiyya: school of thought, named after imām Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

Sharī'ah: Islamic law

Sheikh: as used in this dissertation, it refers to spiritual mentor

shurā: consultation

sīra: history of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

sunnah: practices and way of life of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Sufism: mystical dimension of Islam

Sunni: one who follows the traditions of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and accepts the four caliphs as his rightful successors

Surah: chapter in the *Qur'an*

tafsīr: interpretation of the *Qur'an*

ta'dīb: as used in this dissertation, it is an element of Islamic education, which refers to just action or human behaviour

ta'līm: as used in this dissertation, it is an element of Islamic education, which refers to instruction or teaching and learning

tarbiyah: as used in this dissertation, it is an element of Islamic education, which refers to nurturing or rearing

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

tawhīd: Islamic concept of monotheism; oneness of God

tazkiyah: purification

tazkiyatul-akhlāq: purification of manners and conduct

tazkiyatul īmān: purification of faith

tazkiyatul lisān :   purification of speech

thawb: garment resembling a robe

'ulemā: scholars or people of knowledge.

ummah: community

wājib: obligatory

wujud: existence or presence

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

Ethics Clearance Form

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Exploring the (in)commensurability between lived experiences of Muslim women and cosmopolitanism: implications for democratic citizenship education

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Nuraan Davids, BA (HONS) HDE MPhil (UCT)**, from the **Dept. of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University. The research data collected from interviews with you will contribute to a PhD dissertation.** You were selected as a possible participant in this study because **you are a Muslim woman and are representative of a culturally diverse Western Cape community.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research study is to examine and analyse the identity and role of Muslim women in a cosmopolitan society, and whether there is a possibility of a dialogical relationship for the sake of democratic citizenship.

PROCEDURES

E T H I C S   C L E A R A N C E   F O R M

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

To carefully read the research study proposal to familiarize yourself with the objective of the study

To read the interview schedule

To avail yourself to the researcher for a period of time in which one interview could be conducted

To read the draft copy of the interview data, as captured by the researcher, and to raise any discrepancies or incorrect data

The interview will be conducted at the most suitable venue for the participant

The researcher will email or hand-deliver hard copies of draft interview data to participants for feedback

The duration of the interview will not exceed two hours

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher does not foresee any inconveniences, risks, psychological or physical. At most, participants might experience some discomfort in answering a few of the questions, but only inasmuch as it expects the participant to self-reflect and critically analyse her beliefs and community.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The research study will give participants the opportunity to critically engage with issues of identity, belonging and cosmopolitanism. The study has the potential to benefit participants through processes of engagement and self-analysis.

Although the basis of this research study is the identity and role of Muslim women interpreted in a cosmopolitan society, and whether there is a possibility of a dialogical relationship for the sake of democratic citizenship, the implications are not limited to Muslim women.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participant will not receive any payment for her participation in this research study.

ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of **anonymity in the capturing of interview data and dissertation, where this has been requested.** The participant will be given the choice of remaining anonymous or revealing her identity.

All data will be stored electronically. The interview will not be audio- or videotaped. Completed questionnaire schedules will be shared with the participant before the inclusion thereof in the research study in order to verify information and authenticity. The participant will also be granted access to the entire research study before final submission. All information gleaned during the interview process will be safeguarded by the researcher, and the anonymity of the participant will be employed during the writing process of the research study. No other person will have access to the interview data. The only person to have access to the research study will be the supervisor of the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Since participation in this study is completely voluntary, as a selected participant you reserve the right to decline the invitation to participate in this research.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the Prof. **Researcher:**
Nuraan Davids

Email: fundi@q3.co.za

021 531 8891

084 5518891

Supervisor: Yusef Waghid

Email: yw@sun.ac.za

E T H I C S   C L E A R A N C E   F O R M

021 808 2258

082 5543926

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to _____ **(the participant)** by **Nuraan Davids** in **English of which the participant is in command. The participant** was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to **her** satisfaction.

I, _____ *hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.* I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

E T H I C S   C L E A R A N C E   F O R M

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____. **She** was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in **English** and no translator was used.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Transcript: Nadia

SECTION A: ISLAM & IDENTITY

What does Islam mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with and within Islam?

It's a practice; a way of life. It's a moral standard by which to live. I haven't had identity difficulties where I've asked myself what it means. I turn to Islam during difficulty, but I'm neglectful during good times. It gives me solace and a sense of identity. I'm trying to improve as I'm getting older. I think I have a very strong relationship with Islam. A lot of it has been based on the fact that I grew up in a staunch family, but in a modern context – with a father who was practically non-practising, but a very staunch mother. I have a staunch extended family where women were encouraged to get an education, more so than men, which made it harder to rebel. My mother was one of 10 kids, she was an assertive women, who wanted to become a doctor, but because of financial constraints, had to work instead.

What role do you think apartheid played in shaping your Islamic identity?

None. I grew up in Maitland, which was Coloured areas, but predominantly non-Muslim. I prayed at school, it wasn't a problem.

How do you think this identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa?

TRANSCRIPT: NADIA

I think it's more difficult raising kids in a multicultural community. Its harder – kids want to follow trends, which you would not espouse for a Muslim child. My identity hasn't shifted – I don't think so.

Do you believe that Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner?

I think it's about personal choice. Islamically, it's probably what should happen. I find the scarf entirely uncomfortable, but maybe that's an excuse. If it's a sense of identity – people know that I'm Muslim. Similarly there are many Muslim people who indulge in unIslamic activities. I am a practising Muslim. Muslim women should not wear exposing clothes. At some point I would like to wear a scarf.

Why do you think Muslim women are expected to practice their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way?

We live in a patriarchal society – where our community expects different things from men and women. Women are judged more harshly. I also have that expectation that women should act decently and modestly – that's linked to your identity as a Muslim woman. Post-apartheid women have greater difficulty.

Do you believe that Muslim women are obligated by Islam to display her Islamic identity (such as wearing the hijab)? How do you feel about this?

TRANSCRIPT: NADIA

It depends on which interpretation you take. One view says it is fard, another view says that it depends on a set of circumstances. I don't understand Islamic identity to be limited to hijab. My identity is not shaped by hijab.

Is the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts a truthful representation of Islam?

No. You get various interpretations. Some might say that your voice is also part of hijab- this a form of extremism.

Do you think Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere?

Ironically, the people I least get work from are Muslim males. I often have to travel outside of Cape Town, which involves working with White males. My Islam is respected, and I am treated as an equal. But the Muslim males do not regard me as their equals professionally. I do not experience any difficulty in the public sphere.

Can you think of any instances when you felt at odds with your Muslim identity?

Maybe during my early teens. I performed Umrah when I was 13. I found this spiritually enlightening, which took care of all my later questioning. After university I left home. I was freed to do anything, I just did not find an unislamic lifestyle attractive. Others might have thought that I was partying, but I had no need to prove myself or cared what others thought. I recognise that I did not have a conventional upbringing. – I had nothing to

rebel against. Currently, my husband plays the dominant role at home, since he works from home. I am not the primary caregiver.

SECTION B: ISLAM & EDUCATION

What do you think Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women? For which purpose does Islam educate Muslim women?

Islam expects Muslim women to be educated in the same way that it does for men. The religion makes no distinction; society does. Society needs to realise that the more they educate women, the better they'll all be.

What do you think Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education?

I think they are seeking solace in Islam; seeking self-improvement; women with more leisure time. I would like to go, but I don't have the time; I don't do groups well; I'm too impatient. The last time I went to madrassah I was 21.

Which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of your Islamic identity?

When I attended madrassah, I was taught by Yusuf da Costa – he had a very enlightened approach. He was very proud of the girls, especially when they sought education. The madrassah gave us a self-assuredness. I really enjoyed his classes. I haven't considered attending any other classes since. I have become more observant since marriage, because I have a husband who leads by example; he leaves me to figure out things for myself. I go

through phases. The implementation of a practice is my biggest challenge. I'm always trying to beat the system. I'm looking to find my rhythm. I can't recall my mother having these challenges; she just adhered to the rules. No matter what happened. Her faith has been unshaken – even with her son's death.

SECTION C: ISLAM, SOCIETY & BELONGING

How would you describe the Muslim community in which you find yourself?

Fragmented; self-centred. We need to be more of a community. We wear blinkers; fight over nonsense. We have little understanding of Islam.

Are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which you, as a Muslim woman, deliberately try to avoid?

I don't think I have ever actually gotten involved in a Muslim community until now. I don't feel obligated to do anything, like greeting people when they come back from hajj; I don't do rounds. I'll take my mother, but I don't see the need to get involved.

Why do you think contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression?

Ignorance; belief that their way of life is right – a western construct. Muslim women oppress themselves; they continually need approval from men before making any decisions, such as the women of the PMA.

TRANSCRIPT: NADIA

How do Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities?

Do they? The more educated do by doing PhD's like this. A couple of women have written books. Most Muslim women are uneducated.

Is there a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context?

It's a generational thing – the older generation is less tolerant. The younger generation is either more tolerant or they have become more fundamentalist. Depends on education.

How do you think a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women?

If Muslim women open themselves to different people, then they would experience the value of belonging to and being part of a cosmopolitan society. Cosmopolitan society needs to open itself to understanding Islam and Muslim women.

Transcript: Mariam

SECTION A: ISLAM & IDENTITY

What does Islam mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with and within Islam?

Islam is me; it is in the predetermined meaning of my name – the caller of people. This is the finding principle of my life. I need to be of service to my Creator and my people. Whatever I did was always going to come back to that. There is a continuous urging to get somewhere where I could be of service. I've had it easy. It ahs become easier as my spirituality grew.. The rules have taken on meaning. At 14 I joined the MSA – I started thinking critically; it tapped into my rebellious spirit. At high school I was not allowed to wear my scarf, which I could wear at primary school. This triggered a journey to a political awareness which became part of my religious battle. I rebelled in order to wear the scarf. My parents took me out of the school and I completed matric through correspondence college. This was the beginning of a key journey. My real spirituality deepened after my divorce. I married at age 36, I was single for a long time. I had a strong sense of who I was. For 20 years I was my parents' only daughter. My marriage lasted for eight weeks. I was the second wife. I found out that he was already married when he proposed. At that stage I already had an emotional connection to him. I was prepared to make sacrifices to make the marriage work, but for him it was an ego thing. My expectations were not met. I wanted to know what it was like to be a woman in its fullest extent. I subconsciously went into marriage just to experience it. Seven or eight years later his wife and I have a very respectful relationship.

What role do you think apartheid played in shaping your Islamic identity?

T R A N S C R I P T   M A R I A M

I grew up in Strand. I can't really recall many instances of true racism. O only one memory of my mother being addressed as if she was a two year old by a bank teller. I was socially unaware of political injustices. I didn't grow up in an environment where I was exposed to racism.

How do you think this identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa?

No real difference in my identity – I knew from a young age who I was.

It created a fighting spirit; need for social justice, particularly post 9\/11. We are in a fortunate position as a Muslim minority. We need to protect what we have achieved here. I experienced at challenges at Sanlam and during my in-service training at SABC – I was the first Muslim female at SABC. At Sanlam none of the Muslim women wore scarves. I stood out. Yet I found similarity with Afrikaners – certain questions were asked about my dress code. I could be open about it, because I was comfortable with who I was.

Do you believe that Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner?

No. I don't believe in being prescriptive. It is what it is. At a certain point you'll find yourself spiritually. On a foundational level I believe you should, but you need to spiritually connect – it's a journey. It must mean something. Children are taught to fear Allah. At which point do you teach children to love Allah? It's about deepening your understanding.

Why do you think Muslim women are expected to practice their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way?

Do you believe that Muslim women are obligated by Islam to display her Islamic identity (such as wearing the hijab)? How do you feel about this?

Yes. I don't believe that just because it's instructed that you should do it automatically, without knowing what it means. It's a gradual process. Allah wants conscious Muslims. We have a will. We think that when we question, we are opposing. We need to question our faith. It's a process of interrogation.

Is the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts a truthful representation of Islam?

Women are culturally oppressed. If we do not know who we are, we can't have a link with our Creator. We represent what we think Islam is, but there needs to be greater introspection.

Do you think Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere?

Yes. There's a global phenomenon of trying to please everyone. This stereotype constrains everyone.

T R A N S C R I P T   M A R I A M

Can you think of any instances when you felt at odds with your Muslim identity?

No. I've always like being the odd one out, it's part of my rebellious nature. But I also don't believe that one has to be needlessly rigid about it. I enjoy music. If I go to a concert, I might tie my scarf differently.

SECTION B: ISLAM & EDUCATION

What do you think Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women? For which purpose does Islam educate Muslim women?

We've been created to serve Allah – whether as a teacher, mother. Allah needs us to need Him by serving Him. Not to educate people us slow motion murder. Education needs to link to serving Allah. I've been created with potential and abilities.

What do you think Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education?

At one level I think it's part of democracy But getting educated in one thing – the question is what we do with it. Many women get married and stop using it. They don't see a connection between education and spirituality. Our society hasn't evolved to see the full potential of women. Islam is dynamic, but we haven't found a way to understand or accept what a woman can do with her education. We have also seen that when she takes it too far, she becomes secular.

Which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of your Islamic identity?

T R A N S C R I P T   M A R I A M

My mother stands out for me. She fought hard in order to study the deen – as an Indian woman in the 1960's, this was hard. Her brothers could study in India, but she couldn't. She wrote letters, applying for funds. She was offered scholarships, but they weren't real. She eventually went to India to study, where she met my father. He offered to teach her when he married her. Whatever she learnt, she ploughed back into the community. She stepped out of the defined rules of being a woman. She had a dream and she fought for it. She did not restrict herself as an Indian woman. She was an Indian woman, married to a Malay man, living in an Afrikaner community. She negotiated her life as a working woman. When my father took a second wife, she broke out into the community. She did not tie her faith to a man. She believed in herself as a woman. She contributed to the Ummah.

SECTION C: ISLAM, SOCIETY & BELONGING

How would you describe the Muslim community in which you find yourself?

Community radio has been a big blessing. We have evolved. We are aware of our opportunities fifteen years down the line. We can differ on a rational basis. We are becoming more informed. We need to engage more, so that we don't lose it. We need a more mature leadership and media. The MJC has matured and begun to think more strategically.

Are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which you, as a Muslim woman, deliberately try to avoid?

Because I work within a public environment, I am conscious of others. I've closed my eyes to certain expectations. I go to concerts. I enjoy myself. I live by my own rules.

T R A N S C R I P T   M A R I A M

Why do you think contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression?

Because we let them. We act as such. If you are comfortable, it doesn't matter what others think.

How do Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities?

Is there a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context?

We are already doing this. Is my Muslim identity string enough to cope in a multicultural society? We were never meant to live in a silo. We need to be stronger in our Muslim identity. We have not probed our identity deep enough which is why we feel threatened and feel that everyone views us with enmity. We need to be easier with who we are.

How do you think a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women?

By allowing Muslim women to be who they are and not judging them by different standards.

Transcript: Shameema

SECTION A: ISLAM & IDENTITY

What does Islam mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with and within Islam?

Peace and being submissive to my creator and to follow the lifestyle of the Prophet (PBUH). I find Islam to be a true and straight forward religion, which I have to follow without any doubt and shortcuts in the life that I have chosen. Islam gives me comfort; hope for women to have voices.

What role do you think apartheid played in shaping your Islamic identity?

I know what my parents went through during apartheid – they lived in fear of living their lives; cornered in one small township. They had to carry their passes wherever they went. Their lives were unlived.

How do you think this identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa?

Islamic laws have still not been recognized. We are still struggling assert our identity.

Do you believe that Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner?

T R A N S C R I P T :   S H A M E E M A

Yes – to be recognized as different. I think it brings respect. I have non-Muslim friends, but there's a gap, a difficulty. I feel looked down upon. My choice of Islam is frowned upon.

Why do you think Muslim women are expected to practice their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way?

It's a requirement from Allah. My behaviour is affected by how we dress. I am comfortable in my relationship with Allah and myself. I obey my creator.

Do you believe that Muslim women are obligated by Islam to display her Islamic identity (such as wearing the hijab)? How do you feel about this?

I don't believe that we are instructed, but required in order to worship Allah in all that we do. It is also to ward off undue attention from men. I believe that we will asked about our dress code on the day of judgement. I don't feel oppressed when I wear hijab. I enjoy wearing hijab because I'm doing it for the sake of Allah.

Is the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts a truthful representation of Islam?

I converted to Islam, because I loved salaah even when I could not recite any of the surahs or duahs. I love the stillness and people moving together at the same time. I started going to the madrassa for food, but later I developed an excitement about learning – about other people's religion. I used to rush home from school so that I could rush to the madrassa. My interest in Islam created a lot of trouble for me at home. It was difficult

TRANSCRIPT: SHAMEEMA

to shift between the two worlds of my home religion (Christianity) and Islam. I felt lonely and judged by others. I was very young when I decided to embrace Islam. I was ten years old. My mother was devastated when she found out. She is a senior member of her Catholic church. She has still not accepted my Islam. She is always trying to make me return to Christianity. She tries to take my children to church on Sundays. I always make up a reason why they can't go. I don't want to hurt her feelings. She is my mother. I married my husband in secret. I was fifteen. I was too scared to tell my mother. She still does not know that we are married. She thinks we are just living together. My older sister told my mother that I was pregnant,   that I how she found out. She was so angry. My sisters were also upset – they do not accept my Islam. I do not visit my mother often. I want to find a way to talk to her to get to accept my Islam, but I do not want to disrespect to her.

Do you think Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere?

I have and I still do. I am called bad names in my community. People make fun of my hijab. People accuse me of adopting other people's religion. There is a lot of ignorance about Islam in the township. It is very disturbing. They think all Muslims are terrorists. I am accused of leaving my African traditions and my ancestors. I don't like labeling myself – I'm not African Muslim, or Muslim African. I am just Muslim-Muslim. The attitude of the community is that she has forced herself on Islam.

Can you think of any instances when you felt at odds with your Muslim identity?

I can think of many times. When I married my husband things didn't turn out the way I planned or hoped. My husband did things that I doubted my faith in Allah. I am in a polygamous marriage. I am the second of three wives – this is very difficult. At time I

TRANSCRIPT: SHAMEEMA

don't want to make salaah. I don't feel at peace with myself. I don't feel heard by my husband – I want to give up everything. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. But if things are done properly, then I understand. My husband was already married when I met him. He divorced his first wife before we got married, but they reconciled soon thereafter. He didn't tell me this. This caused great friction and I became depressed. My husband kept many things from me. I did not feel at peace. His first wife moved in with us – she lived in another room. I was so unhappy, and I could not turn to my husband. She treated me badly. She was the older wife and took control in our home. I felt sidelined and unsupported. They divorced again. I was happy about this. I had my husband back and I felt more at peace. But then he took another wife – a woman he had been counseling. This shattered me, since I found out through rumours. He did not tell me. He is still married to her, but she now lives in Kenya.

SECTION B: ISLAM & EDUCATION

What do you think Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women? For which purpose does Islam educate Muslim women?

So that women can have freedom within themselves; so that they are able to face hardships; to become self-reliant and to empower women, So that we are able to speak with understanding; that we do not oppress ourselves.

What do you think Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education?

Which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of your Islamic identity?

T R A N S C R I P T :   S H A M E E M A

Teaching on salaah, and reading . Knowing little things touches me differently even if I've heard something before.

SECTION C: ISLAM, SOCIETY & BELONGING

How would you describe the Muslim community in which you find yourself?

I live in a predominantly Christian and African community. African traditions play a very big role, even amongst Chrsitians. The Muslim community is very small, we are trying to emerge and to reach a level where we can speak more freely about Islam. My Muslim community is humble and dependable.

Are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which you, as a Muslim woman, deliberately try to avoid?

There are, but I can't single out any at the moment. I know that everything has a reason and is based in the Qur'an or sunnah.

Why do you think contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression?

We are too obedient to our faith. Others can't relate to it. Our dress and our conduct make others feel uncomfortable and they draw their own conclusions. It is easier for them to put us down.

T R A N S C R I P T :   S H A M E E M A

How do Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities?

Is there a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context?

Yes, we can be a part of a cosmopolitan society, but we need to be more comfortable with who we are.

How do you think a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women?

By showing respect and by tolerating people who are different.

T R A N S C R I P T :   L E I L A

Transcript: Leila

SECTION A: ISLAM & IDENTITY

What does Islam mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with and within Islam?

My relationship with Islam is broken. I was brought up in a home of strong Islamic values and I attended an Islamic high school, but I've lost it. It has been made worse by the hospitality industry, although I don't blame it. I'm trying to get my Islam back, but it's difficult, because of the environment I find myself in – I have to work with alcohol and pork. In my first year I fought to wear my scarf, but it became too much. I lost my connection with Islam. There are lots of things in the industry that goes against Islam, and sometimes, if you have a curious mind, you just want to experience things. I began to contradict myself.

What role do you think apartheid played in shaping your Islamic identity?

I only know the history – I was born in 1990. I remember my grandparents' stories. I realize that I have it better, but actually I don't. Apartheid still exists. White people would request a White waiter, or they would ask to see the kitchen, as they did not want a Black person preparing their food. This is overlooked in top restaurants, as it's about money. Racism is linked to money.

How do you think this identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa?

TRANSCRIPT: LEILA

It's easier now, but more challenging. We are confronted by different religions, cultures – it's in your face all the time. There are 7 Muslims in my class, but I am the only practicing one. They don't know much about Islam; they drink alcohol amongst peers.

Do you believe that Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner?

Yes. I used to really try in my first year – I've always worn hijab – but I was the only Muslim in my class who did this. I told my lecturers that I couldn't work with pork and alcohol, but this became harder and harder. I entered the industry, thinking that I could change it, that I would be able to stand up for my beliefs, but it was too hard. Whenever I did a course, or went somewhere special, then special provisions had to be made for me by the lecturers. I became tired of trying to change all the time. Looking back I would not have chosen this career. I could have prevented a lot of fights with my parents and many compromises. I don't feel like myself anymore.

Why do you think Muslim women are expected to practice their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way?

So that others can know that you are Muslim; so that you can take pride in your identity and religion.

Do you believe that Muslim women are obligated by Islam to display her Islamic identity (such as wearing the hijab)? How do you feel about this?

TRANSCRIPT: LEILA

Yes, Islam says this. But no one is forced to wear hijab for example – it's not a law in the country. Islam says we have to wear, because it protects women – they are not looked at as sexual objects. I don't wear the hijab anymore; I think I look better without it, although others say I look better when I wear it. I wear it when I go to family, but I feel foolish, because I know I'm being a hypocrite.

Is the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts a truthful representation of Islam?

This is half of it. It's also an internal something. Is there a barrier between the inside and the outside? The internal and the external have to talk to each other; there has to be a connection.

Do you think Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere?

I think all Muslims experience difficulty trying to exercise Islam. At school I learnt that Muslim girls especially experienced all over the world. But in Cape Town we have it relatively easy – I know professional Muslim women also wear hijab. We make it difficult for ourselves.

Can you think of any instances when you felt at odds with your Muslim identity?

At the end of my first year I went for an interview for an internship at a top hotel that would really look good on my CV. When I went for the interview I wore my hijab. The interview went really well, and I was chosen. At the end of the interview I was told that I

would be able to wear hijab and that my skirt would be short. I declined the internship. I had the option of another hotel, but it was a two-star, and would really be meaningless of my CV. So I went to another top hotel. My lecturer told me that I needed to compromise. She asked to see my father. They met privately. My father agreed to the compromise that I would wear hijab to and from the hotel, but at the hotel, but after a while I stopped wearing it entirely. I was a bit shocked by my father's compromise. I had many fights with my parents. I felt uncomfortable about not wearing it. I attended bar courses, while wearing hijab – this just felt wrong. I asked many times to excused from the practical, and just do the theory. I only got this right one.

SECTION B: ISLAM & EDUCATION

What do you think Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women? For which purpose does Islam educate Muslim women?

So that when we go into the world we know who we are. We need to know about Islam, so many Muslims know nothing about Islam. Education is critical, it equips you for life.

What do you think Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education?

Which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of your Islamic identity?

Islamia college – history about the prophet was critical to my love for Islam. I remember simple stories told to us by the sheikh – it has stayed with me.

T R A N S C R I P T :   L E I L A

SECTION C: ISLAM, SOCIETY & BELONGING

How would you describe the Muslim community in which you find yourself?

I live in a predominantly Muslim community – even the non-Muslims respect Islam. The athaan can be heard at any point in the area. But there's a split between the older and younger generations. There is a stronger link amongst the older generation, but this is dying out amongst the younger generation. For example, when I was younger all the homes exchanged eats when we broke fast. This practice is dying out.

Are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which you, as a Muslim woman, deliberately try to avoid?

Not actually. I enjoy going to thikrs. I go to one every Friday – I enjoy that. I also enjoy jumuah. I don't like tarawih prayers performing fajr.

Why do you think contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression?

Because we portray ourselves like that. Other Muslims say negative things about Islam. We make it more difficult, we portray Islam as a burden – like salaah and fasting.

How do Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities?

TRANSCRIPT: LEILA

Is there a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context?

For me, there isn't. I have to leave this industry. It's not possible for me. The hospitality industry is not good for me.

How do you think a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women?

I don't think that my generation is able to contribute. They are not strong enough, they do not know enough about Islam. They are not strong enough to keep their Islamic faith and identity in a cosmopolitan society. I don't believe we have what it takes. We have been given too much freedom and choices. Maybe my parents should have been stricter when I was younger. They want to impose curfews now, but I didn't have one before. I feel like I should have had more guidance in terms of my career choice.

Transcript: Thania

SECTION A: ISLAM & IDENTITY

What does Islam mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with and within Islam?

I love answering this question. Because of my personal challenges, I was forced to question what I believe – so much of it was dogma and traditions, and not Islam. Islam to me means peace of the mind and body. My relationship with Islam is about the physical and the emotional, it needs to be in sync.

What role do you think apartheid played in shaping your Islamic identity?

I was not directly affected by apartheid, but my family's thinking has been shaped by apartheid, so I have indirectly suffered. Apartheid, like other forms of oppression forced people to turn to religion. My family holds very tightly onto Islam. As a result there were practices which were forced onto me. My family, for example, has a tight connection with imams. These leaders are seen as portals to God. I was taught to go to the imam, and he will make duah for me and sort me out. I grew up in a very patriarchal household. I have one sister, but we lived with my grandmother, who had four other children. When the men came home, we had to be ready and waiting with their food.

How do you think this identity has shifted in post-apartheid South Africa?

Post-apartheid has its own problems. There's room for an alternate voices and spaces, which people suddenly have access to, which has led to confusion. In my household it caused my family to hold on even tighter to Islam. But Post-apartheid has also been good – it has allowed organizations, such as *The Inner Circle* to emerge, but it presents problems to orthodox Muslims.

T R A N S C R I P T : T H A N I A

I have struggled with my identity from a very young age. My earliest memory is at puberty when I first realized I was attracted to girls. I did not understand it and I thought it would go away. At 19 I decided to tell my parents. I wrote a letter, because I was afraid. I had a relative, who was suspected of being gay and was beaten up. I feared retribution and ran away from home. I went to Johannesburg. My family hired a private investigator to find me and forced me back home. Legally they could do that. I was locked in my room for about four months and was emotionally abused. My mother is very fragile, and she fell apart. She did not deal with me; she relied on her family to take the lead. They saw me as being cursed. I completed my studies and started working. At age 22 I again 'came out'. This time I sent a lengthy sms to my parents. I had been seeing someone and I was moving in with her. There was no communication from my mother for three months, until she phoned to say that they were getting divorced. She turned to me for support, but then withdrew again. Throughout all of this my father was silent. I think he was torn between my happiness and my mother's fragile state. I visit my father and he visits me, but we do not discuss my sexuality. My mother fluctuates – I am not sure what her current state is. I have been ostracized from my family.

Do you believe that Muslim women should display their Islamic identity in an overt an exacting manner?

It depends on the person; it's not important to me. It's just another identity. My primary identity is being a good person, peaceful and trustworthy. All of these feed into my Islamic identity.

Why do you think Muslim women are expected to practice their Islamic identity and concepts in an exacting way?

Patriarchal influence – it has always been this way. There is a distinct difference between men and women traditionally. Men are expected to take care of women, and women are expected to care of the home and the children.

TRANSCRIPT: THANIA

Do you believe that Muslim women are obligated by Islam to display her Islamic identity (such as wearing the hijab)? How do you feel about this?

I believe that Islam or the Qur'an provides guidelines, such as the hijab. The Qur'an says to dress modestly. Every woman has her own idea of what modesty means to her. To me, the Qur'an is saying wear the hijab, but it's not instructing you what that hijab is.

Is the Muslim woman's practice of Islamic identity and concepts a truthful representation of Islam?

Yes and no. I have seen fully cloaked women, who are the worst gossips and say the cruelest things. Is there a relationship between what women wear and Islam – probably not. Hijab refers to a lot more than your clothing, and how you present yourself.

Do you think Muslim women experience difficulty in exercising their Islamic identity in terms of accessing the public sphere?

Yes – I think there is a stigma about women who cover up or display their Islamic identity in an obvious way. You get assessed differently.

Can you think of any instances when you felt at odds with your Muslim identity?

Making peace with my sexuality – for a period I turned away from Islam. Now I feel extremely blessed and gifted – I had a calling within me that would not allow me to leave my Islam. I looked for ways to reconcile the two – I did not want to let go either. Only through questioning are you able to own belief. Alternative interpretations of the scripture have led me to reconcile my Islam and my sexuality (52:24). A lot of what we are taught is without context. The Qur'an allows for my sexuality; it speaks about it. My sexuality was the main reason I turned away from Islam. I did not understand the

purpose of salaah or fasting. The questioning led me to find other answers. I no longer operate from a place of fear, but out of love for my Creator.

SECTION B: ISLAM & EDUCATION

What do you think Islamic education seeks to achieve through the education of Muslim women? For which purpose does Islam educate Muslim women?

I'm not sure. I wasn't taught to understand what I'm reciting.

What do you think Muslim women hope to achieve through Islamic education?

I think these women have nothing else to do. Women in my family are oppressed and are oblivious to their oppression. They stay home to take care of the kids. When the kids are grown up, they have nothing else to do. I have a resistance to Islamic education – it's always the same message of complacency.

Which educational practices or teachings specifically led to the construction of your Islamic identity?

My family raised me with their truths and I process my world through these truths. I believed what I was told. As I grew older I was asking questions, but I was told not to question. My sexuality forced me to question and found something so much more glorious than my family could ever imagine. We have different concepts of God. To my family God lives in the sky. He is egotistical and we must do things for Him. I have learnt that god needs nothing from me. He doesn't have human qualities. And by saying He gets angry, for example, we are giving Him human qualities.

SECTION C: ISLAM, SOCIETY & BELONGING

How would you describe the Muslim community in which you find yourself?

TRANSCRIPT: THANIA

I work in a Muslim community and I am a part of the Claremont Main Road mosque – both are alternate voices. I am frustrated with what I hear at the traditional mosques. My partner does not identify with any faith. My home is a space where other gay Muslim friends feel safe.

Are there any specific obligations, roles or practices which you, as a Muslim woman, deliberately try to avoid?

No, I try to do everything that I should do.

Why do you think contemporary social life tends to view the practices of Muslim women as forms of oppression?

There is a two-way perceived threat between contemporary society and the Muslim world. The Muslim world is afraid that the west will infiltrate us and tarnish our Islam (as if we are untarnished). I'm not sure why contemporary society is threatened.

How do Muslim women construct spaces which allow them to express their Muslim identities?

Different women do it differently. My pain was my sexuality. I have straight friends who think differently and have their own pains. I think it is about having the courage to state that you think differently.

Is there a means or space within the lived experiences of Muslim women which can accommodate and allow the expression of a diverse and cosmopolitan context?

Yes – we are supposed to. I don't think we are supposed to have these separate groups of people. I believe it is possible. The Qur'an talks about mercy and compassion and these are qualities that we are supposed to encapsulate.

How do you think a cosmopolitan society could contribute to and be involved in the practices of Muslim women?

By getting to know Muslim women and Islam.