

Introduction

Timeliness and the Complexity of Identities; or, Why Muslim Women Can't be Footy Fanatics

I am a Muslim, a young woman and an Australian. But I'm also an Australian Rules Football nut. The weekend starts on Friday afternoon when I rush home from university and dissect the footy guide with my family – who's in, who's out, who's injured or suspended. We each offer our hypotheses on which teams will win and which ones will lose. Then at about 8.30pm we all settle down in front of the T.V for three hours of good, hard, physical, no-holds-barred footy. It's wonderful, and what's better is that there are more games on Saturday and Sunday. For twenty-two fantastic weeks of each year I'm a happy woman ... but as I write these words, the footy season is drawing to a close and I know that shortly I'll be in the throes of footy withdrawal ... and I'm not looking forward to it one little bit.

I have a Muslim friend who is more than a friend; she's the older sister I never had. I've known her since we were eight years old and I think she's amazing. She's studying at university, runs a household, is a wonderful mother to her two year old daughter and has just started a small business. She's the epitome of the 'modern woman' frantically juggling study, work and family commitments.

My mum loves her garden. Personally, I don't see the joy in getting dirt underneath your fingernails and spiders in your shoes ... but Mum really likes it. She loves to poke and potter about, weeding here and pruning there. She's forever swapping cuttings and plants with friends and neighbours and she's on nodding acquaintance with most of our neighbourhood and knows who has the best begonias or the nicest roses (and who is willing to 'trade'). I'm sure we have the best halal-food compost heap in the Southern Hemisphere.

But this is not a thesis about being a Muslim female footy supporter, or being a Muslim and a 'modern woman' trying to 'have it all'. Nor is it a thesis called *Green Thumbs and Crescent Moons: Muslim Gardeners in Australia*. Instead, this is a thesis which talks about Muslim women's experiences of racism in South Australia and this research is nothing if not timely. It comes sandwiched between September 11, the first Bali bombings, the 'war on terror', recent bombings in

the heart of London, and, the second Bali bombings. Each of these events, because the ‘enemy’ has been constructed as Muslim, has resulted in a wave of open hostility and negativity towards all Muslims. This thesis doesn’t argue that such hostility and racism began with September 11. On the contrary it argues that such hostility began centuries ago and that events such as these provide opportunities for public displays of racism. These events allow negative discourses about Muslims to become more pervasive and acceptable.

For instance the following are some recent headlines from major Australian newspapers which were aimed at Muslims or Islam:

- ‘Terrorism spotlight now firmly on Muslims’ (*Canberra Times*, 10 November 2005, p. 19)
- ‘Bomb car found as police make another arrest – TERROR SUSPECT FLEES SYDNEY’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 11 November, p. 1)
- ‘Accept our ways or leave: Costello’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 2005, p. 9)
- ‘The day one man infected a community with hatred’ (*Australian*, 12 November 2005, p. 1)
- ‘Imam shifts blame’ (*Northern Territory News*, 13 November, p. 5)

These public discourses get played out in the lives of ordinary people. Some non-Muslims feel that it is acceptable to shout racist abuse at Muslims, some feel justified in firebombing mosques or spraying graffiti on Muslim community halls, many others are comfortable ‘slanging off’ against Islam and Muslims without fear of public censure or retribution. This thesis recounts the way some young Muslim women in South Australia experience these behaviours and how they respond.

Emailing the Sub-Editor

In a moment of anger and frustration I wrote the following email to one of the sub-editors of the South Australian daily newspaper, the *Advertiser*. I was trying to express my anger and disgust at the way media commentators and journalists had pounced on the opportunity to ‘bash’ Islam and Muslims in discussions of a memoir which allegedly outlined the ‘Muslim tradition’ of ‘honour killing’¹. On reflection, I probably wouldn’t have written such an openly emotional email, I would have taken the time to think about the structure of my sentences and taken more care in constructing a logical and ‘watertight’ argument. I include it here however because it shows the

¹ The story of this memoir is told in the Media Analysis chapter.

deep upwelling of anger and frustration that can overwhelm Muslim women when confronted with yet another negative or hostile media representation. Each of us has a breaking point, a moment where we feel as if we cannot take it anymore, where we just want it all to STOP ... sometimes we lash out in anger, sometimes we cry, sometimes we just withdraw from the world for a while ... but sometimes we write an email.

From: Alia Imtoul

To: Rex Jory

Date: 29/7/2004

Dear Mr Jory,

As someone researching media representations of Muslims in the Australian print media and the ways in which racism affects the lives of young Australian Muslim women, I was deeply disturbed by your piece yesterday (*Advertiser*, 28/7/04) entitled 'If Khouri's book is a lie, untold damage has been done'. I was concerned because you appear to believe that if Khouri's book is a hoax then the racism that Australian Muslims (and others) have experienced as a result of people reading and believing her work, is terrible and appalling. By default then, you appear to be saying that if her book is 'true', then it's okay for non-Muslim Australians to view Muslims as 'unbending, insular, unrepentant religious fanatics, people devoid of humanity, cruel, senseless and repugnant'. I disagree. It is not okay for Muslims to be seen in this light – it's racist and it's wrong.

While only an ignorant person would deny that so-called 'honour' killings do occur and that sometimes these are incorrectly claimed to be condoned or permitted by Islam, equally I would argue that only an ignorant person would believe that all Muslims (or even all Jordanian Muslims) condone honour killings. This is one of the major problems with Khouri's book. If it is a fake then she has deliberately written a book filled with all the worst stereotypes of Muslims and these have been believed by a gullible, ignorant and/or racist public. And if the story is true then she has been perhaps blinded by her rage and grief and written a story that has conflated the terrible behaviour of a few people into the behaviour of ALL Muslims - a conflation which has then been accepted and perpetuated by a gullible, ignorant and/or racist public. Either way, all Muslims have been wrongly and inaccurately portrayed (yet again) as being barbaric, heartless, uncivilised, cruel and degraded.

I am very concerned that you have seen fit to write that after reading her book 'you can't blame people who read her book from saying: "we don't want this type of person living in Australia. We don't want them mixing with our children at school"'. Well, I disagree strongly. You CAN blame people who feel that they own this land and can judge who is deserving of living in this nation without acknowledging that they too are guests on Indigenous land (who are the 'we' you mention?). You CAN blame people who feel that they can judge the moral worth of an individual just by looking at the way they dress, the name they have or the religion they adhere to. You CAN blame people who condemn children for the wrongs of adults (or is it okay to say 'I don't want my child to play with the child of an American because "their people" have just killed and maimed thousands in an unjust war'?). And you CAN blame people who categorise others into 'types'. Remember John Howard saying 'we don't want people like that coming into our country'??? (Children Overboard Fiasco). Finally I believe that you CAN blame people who think that all Muslims in Australia are recent migrants. This is untrue as there are many of us, like myself, who can trace our family histories back to the shameful time when Europeans first invaded this land. And there are many more who have been born in Australia to naturalised Australian parents. Not that this makes a difference in reality - all Muslims are seen as non-English speakers, new migrants, asylum seekers and generally unworthy of being part of this nation.

[...]

Finally, Mr Jory, I would ask that in future when you read books which represent an entire group of people as barbaric, depraved, cruel and mindless, please take the time to question this representation. An entire people can never be generalised as 'good' or 'evil'. Were all Germans Nazis and Jew-haters? Was it okay to lock up Australians of German heritage during the war? Was it okay to prevent their children from attending school with other Australian children? I think you'd agree that the answer is 'no'. Ditto for Muslims.

I have written this letter to you in the hope that it will make a difference to your own, and the *Advertiser's* future representation of, and attitude towards, Muslims. Please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards

Alia Imtoul

And here's the reply:

From: Rex Jory

To: Alia Imtoual

Date: 7/8/2004

You make some interesting points.

Please be assured of one rock-solid issue - I am not racist and I deplore racism.

This book has the capacity to unmine (sic) the slow acceptance in this country of people from different cultures.

Anything that does that must be viewed with suspicion

While this vignette was my own experience, this thesis provides narratives of racism as experienced by a number of young Muslim women in South Australia. The participants in this study tell of their anger, their frustration and their rejection of popular stereotypes of Muslims and Muslim women. This thesis also examines the public discourses that encourage and perpetuate the negative experiences that these women face, as well as presenting their strategies for not letting racism 'get them down'. And as I discovered, I was not alone in writing emails to newspaper editors in moments of anger and frustration.

Thesis Overview

This thesis seeks to investigate how a group of young Muslim women in South Australia negotiate their lives in a society that I argue is inherently hostile to those uninfluenced by a Christian tradition, especially those who actively practise a non-Christian religion such as Islam. This thesis uses a combination of interview material, academic and popular literature, and newspapers, to examine these experiences. The following sections outline the content of the individual chapters that make up this thesis.

Chapter One: Constructing and Negotiating Identities

The first chapter covers a number of areas that relate to the key themes and arguments as presented throughout this thesis. In particular it maps the literature relating to conceptualisations of identity, the lived experiences of Muslim women, as well as intersections of gender and religion, and the experiences of Muslim 'minority' communities in 'the west'. This chapter includes a discussion of the large body of literature about Muslim women living in the context of majority non-Muslim countries and argues that these women are often objectified and frequently 'reduced' to their veiling practices.

Chapter Two: History, Law and Religious Racism

This chapter focuses on the literature that maps the Muslim presence in Australia from the time prior to European occupation. It argues that since the invasion and settlement of the continent by Europeans, Australia in general, and South Australia in particular, has been based on a Christian foundation that has largely been unacknowledged. The implications of this lack of acknowledgement are also explored.

This chapter then moves into a discussion of the literature around the naming of negative experiences based on religious affiliation. It outlines the literature about islamophobia, prejudice and discrimination before making an argument for the use of the term 'religious racism'. This discussion also includes a detailed analysis of current Australian and South Australian legislation and examines whether Muslims are protected from religious racism under either legislative framework.

Chapter Three: Methods and Methodology

In this chapter the research methods and methodology used in the data collection process are discussed. It outlines some of the broad methodological issues that arose during the course of the research such as 'insider' research, friendships with participants, my closeness to the data, and the development and assertion of a female Muslim academic 'voice' in Australia.

The chapter also discusses some issues specifically relating to the research methods chosen for this study such as the participant criteria and the rationale behind them, why snowballing and in-depth interviews were used, and the implications of these various decisions. A discussion of some ethical considerations that arose is also included in this chapter which then goes on to discuss how the interview data was analysed once it was collected. This is followed by a brief biography of each of the women who participated in the study.

Chapter Four: Representing 'Bad' Muslims

This chapter begins by arguing that the news media has a significant role to play in the construction of public attitudes and agendas on a range of issues. In particular, it draws upon research that argues that the print news media plays a powerful part in the perpetuation and reproduction of

racism. It then outlines the literature that links newspapers and other news media to the religious racism experienced by Muslims in contemporary 'western' contexts such as Australia.

The body of the chapter is based around an analysis of two Australian based daily newspapers – the *Australian* and the *Advertiser*. This analysis of two months of each newspaper – June and July, 2003 – identifies key themes, discourses and images that occur in representations of Muslims and Islam with a particular focus on representations of 'bad' Muslims, that is, as terrorists or potential terrorists. Using specific examples, the analysis concludes that the representations in these two widely read and influential newspapers are consistent with those presented in the literature discussed at the start of the chapter.

Chapter Five: Representing Muslim women and Representations of Muslims in the non-News sections

Chapter Five continues the analysis of the two newspapers but focuses instead on the representations of Muslim women during the two month period. This chapter argues that, while women are sometimes presented as violent terrorists, they are more frequently presented as oppressed and subordinated. It also argues that, the few positive representations of Muslims are of Muslim women, but that these representations are usually ambivalent when analysed in the broader context of hegemonic representations of Muslims. This chapter also analyses the representations of Muslims and Islam that occur in the non-news sections of the two newspapers. It argues that these representations are frequently marked by the same negativity as the representations in more 'traditional' news sections of the newspapers.

Chapter Six: In their own words: Reflections on Media Representations

Against a background of relentless negative portrayals of Muslims and Islam in the media as outlined in the previous two chapters, Chapter Six shows how the women in my research view these representations and how they negotiate and challenge them. The perspectives and views of Australian Muslims (particularly Muslim women) are largely absent in both academic literature and public discussions of representation and the media, and consequently, this chapter does something different by foregrounding their responses and analyses. It weaves together the women's analyses

of selected media images with my own analysis of these images, as well as the women's reflections of how such representations impact on their interactions with broader Australian society.

For these young Muslim women in South Australia, dominant representations of Islam and Muslims in the media invoke a sense of anger and frustration as a result of their perceived bias, inaccuracy and hegemony. In particular, representations of Muslim women that implied that they are oppressed, especially where this implication of oppression was linked to clothing and appearance, were seen as inaccurate and often as deliberate acts of misinformation and misrepresentation. Analyses of such narratives draws upon arguments which suggest that the positioning of Muslim women as oppressed but simultaneously as desirable subjects for photography has its origins in orientalist approaches. Using the notion of 'symbolic revenge', this chapter argues that Muslim women who cover their bodies with a hijab frustrate the orientalist male gaze and are therefore punished symbolically either by being forced to cover *more* or remove their covering.

In this chapter, the women actively challenge media-dominant ideas about Islamic gender relations as being disordered, dysfunctional and disturbing, and as being characterized by violent, over-sexed men and submissive, abused women. Their analyses of such representations are astute and, while my interviewees recognised that there are instances of abusive Muslim male-female relationships, they rejected the idea that such relationships are the norm.

The women indicated that despite their best efforts at challenging and changing dominant media representations of Islam and Muslim women, the prospects for an improved relationship between the Australian media industry and Muslim Australians are not promising. Of particular concern is the mounting anecdotal evidence that dominant, overwhelmingly negative representations of Islam/Muslims have a direct link to the religious racism that many Muslim women experience daily.

Chapter Seven: Narratives of Religious Racism, Resistance and Impact

This chapter provides a number of narratives of religious racism as told by the interviewees. These experiences range from verbal abuse, physical harassment, and hostility to the refusal to be allowed to attend a particular school. The narratives of religious racism are framed by a discussion of theories of 'everyday' racism.

Using this theory, it is possible to identify the cumulative effects of a series of 'minor' incidents of racism. This chapter argues that all racism has serious implications for those who experience it in a range of areas of their life, most notably, in the public sphere in spaces such as airports, employment sites, schools and shopping centres.

The chapter then moves into a discussion of narratives of resistance. It argues that, although these women experience repeated and persistent religious racism, they are not passive victims. In discussing a range of strategies used by the women to deflect, deal with, minimise or absorb racism, this chapter argues that they are deploying their active agency. However, this chapter also makes an assessment of the emotional and psychological 'costs' of such resistance for the women.

Chapter Eight: Articulating Identity: Religion, Culture, Nation and Community

This chapter examines the intersections between the women's own articulations of identity and hegemonic national identity formations in which these young women are frequently marginalised. It is framed by an analysis of the Australians Against Racism campaign which attempted to challenge hegemonic discourses about Muslims in Australia and which is therefore a seemingly positive campaign but which can be read more ambivalently in the light of the women's experiences and articulations of belonging.

A number of narratives touched upon national identity and whiteness in the Australian context. Of particular interest and importance to this chapter are the ways in which these Muslim women were located as 'non-Australian'. In particular this chapter argues that the Christian infused whiteness of dominant Australian identity often makes it difficult to be identified as both Australian and Muslim.

In the young women's narratives about identity, a number of tensions could be identified. However these tensions are not in how the Muslim women see themselves but in how others see them, and, how this positioning impacts on their lives. For many of the women, their religious identity was the most important – all other identities were built around it and subordinated to it. For these women, identifying oneself within a nation/ality was largely unproblematic with regards to their own articulation and self-identity. However, issues arose when these identities were examined within the light of broader social understandings of national identity, especially hegemonic white Australian national identity in which these women do not figure.

This chapter presents arguments that suggest the futility and impossibility for Muslim women to fully belong to the white nation. However, these arguments are troubled, unsettled, disrupted by the women's continuing articulation of a distinctly Australian way of being Muslim, or, a distinctly Muslim way of being Australian. While it is true that the hegemonic view of the nation does not include or accept these women's belonging, many of the women have constructed a view of the nation in which they *do* belong.

Conclusion Chapter

The Conclusion draws together the key themes and ideas presented throughout the thesis. It weaves together the main arguments in a way which highlights the complexities of the intersections of religious racism, negative media representation and gender as they are played out in the lives of the young Muslim women in this study. Returning to the introductory premise about the possibilities of research into the lives of young Muslim women in South Australia, the Conclusion reflects on the achievements of this thesis and the potential for future research in contemporary Australia.

CHAPTER ONE

Constructing and Negotiating Identities

Given that the concerns of my research are religion, racism and gender, it has been necessary to look to the literature of the following theoretical fields in establishing the conceptual framework for my research: conceptualisations of identity, lived experiences of Muslim women, racism, the 'minority' experience of Muslims in 'the west', intersections of gender and religion, and, the role of religion and racism in Australian society.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the literature on identity formation and articulation. These theories are applied to the situation of Muslim women in majority non-Muslim countries. The chapter argues that identity markers such as religion and gender will be of most significance to the thesis. The chapter argues, using examples, that a large amount of literature in a range of genres share a history of representing Muslims, Islam and Muslim women in negative and stereotypical ways. It also maps the literature that critiques such representations. This chapter continues on to discuss the large body of work on Muslim women in non-Muslim contexts.

Muslim Women in the Literature

This section begins with a discussion of theories of identity formation and how these may be applied to the lives of Muslim women in Australia. It goes on to discuss representations of Muslim women in the academic and popular non-fiction genres and the extent to which these studies appropriately reflect the realities of the lives of young Muslim women such as my participants.

The literature suggests that processes of identity formation are fluid, this being proposed in a critique of traditionalist notions of 'essentialised' identities. Concepts of identity and the articulation of an individual's own identity are central to this thesis, which, however, finds neither the notion of a fluid hybrid identity nor an essentialised fixed identity completely appropriate to the experiences of the young Muslim women in my study. In particular, issues of religion, gender, representation and racism, and the relationship between them are highlighted.

In majority non-Muslim countries, particularly 'the west', a great deal of literature in a range of genres has represented Muslim women in negative and stereotypical ways. Through the presentation of examples from popular non-fiction and academic texts, this section demonstrates how these representations operate, but also presents a body of academic literature that critiques such representations.

In presenting the large body of work that focuses on Muslim women in a non-Muslim country, this section demonstrates not only an examination of the ways in which Muslim women have been the subject of academic research in the 'west', but also strengthens the argument that there are gaps in the literature. Studies relating to the lived experience of Australian Muslim women are scarce, as are studies relating to the intersections of gender and religion, as are, studies conducted from the standpoint of a Muslim woman. This section argues that the more numerous studies about the hijab or 'veiling practices' frequently objectify Muslim women and perpetuate negative representations about Islam. Such objectification is also present, and examined, in literature dealing with contemporary political issues relating to the hijab (notably the banning of hijab in various localities). This section argues that historical and negative representations of Muslim women and the hijab persist in contemporary Australia and presents material relating to recent debates in the public sphere about the 'place' of hijabs in Australian society.

Conceptualising identity

Traditionally it has been argued that individuals have one coherent, unified and un-changing identity, which refers to a core inner being and how you know yourself (see also Plumwood 1993). However, scholars have challenged, problematised and critiqued this definition (for example see Brah 1992, 1996; Matthews 2000), with Stuart Hall (1992, 1995, 1996) being possibly the best known theorist of this perspective. Hall (1995) argues that it should be *identities* we talk about rather than *an identity* because these are 'processes that constitute and continuously re-form the subject who has to act and speak in the social and cultural world' (1995:65). That is, identities may be understood as being 'points of temporary attachments' (1995:65) that are dynamic and allow for the continual re-articulation of the self, or the elements that constitute this self as these appear at specific points in time and space. Hall says that, although identities are not monolithic, unified or stable, they are necessary in allowing individuals to interact with, and act in, the world (1995:64). Furthermore, it can be argued that identity formation operates by way of binary oppositions, that

they are primarily constituted by our conceptualisations of who we are not, or who we have not been, or will not/do not want to become (Shain 2003:ix).

Given the highly personal and subjective nature of identities and their formation, Hall argues that identities are 'narratives ... they are stories we tell ourselves about ourselves' (1995:66). Like all personal narratives, they can change shape or focus according to the location and context (both the context of the articulation and the broader, socio-cultural/historical context) of the articulation. Like all other personal narratives, they are always, and only, partial and contingent accounts lacking the immutability of 'truth' (Visweswaran 1994)². It is this contingency, partiality and contextual nature of identities that leads Hall to describe them as 'sliding' (1995:66). Similarly, Farzana Shain argues that identities are internal 'struggles over modes of "being"' (Shain 2003:ix) and are thus shifting and mobile. It is important to note, however, that, although the various markers of identity are often delineated and defined, because identities are incomplete, incoherent and 'temporary attachments' (Hall 1996:6) to particular markers, there will always be overlap or intersections with other identity markers and no individual can ever be wholly and solely defined by any one marker of identity. To define categorically any marker of identity is a difficult task as they *are* conceptualisations of abstract ideas which shift and merge according to the particular context. However, in specific times and locations, it can be argued that certain identities can be more easily articulated than in others. Or, attachment to one or other marker may be more pronounced and relevant depending on the contextual circumstance. As Avtar Brah (1992:142-143) puts it, 'identity is never a fixed core, but on the other hand changing identities do assume specific concrete patterns as in a kaleidoscope against particular sets of historical and social circumstances'. That is, the operationalisation of different aspects of identity take on certain particular importance in different locations (of both time and socio-historical contexts).

As Robert Pauly Jr argues,

fundamentally, identity is a means through which human actors of disparate backgrounds decide and subsequently express who they are. The resultant definition a person constructs is based on factors ranging from blood to social class to religion to culture to political or economic ideology (2004:23).

² Kamala Visweswaran (1994) and Deborah Britzman (2000) talk about the 'unreliable narrator' whose stories and claims must always be analysed in terms of context and location and as being contingent and partial.

At various times, locations and situations, one or other of these markers tends to come to the forefront of our ontological struggle. Some of the common markers of identity are 'race', 'ethnicity', 'culture', 'gender', 'age/generation', 'sexuality', 'social class' and 'religion'. This thesis focuses on religion and gender as markers of identity because religion is the most salient marker of identity to the interviewees, because, on the one hand it is by both these two markers of identity that dominant society constructs representations of Muslim women, and, because, on the other hand, these are the two major areas addressed in the theoretical literature. Furthermore, as will be shown below, the literature focuses on these two aspects of 'Muslim women's' identity, to the exclusion of differences which result from class, ethnicity, nationality, age and so on (see for example Rozario 1998; Mubarak 1996).

The problem for analysis lies not so much in recognising the moments that these markers become more visible, but in articulating them, partly because language is always inadequate, but also because the very process of articulation fixes the concepts and implies that they are unchanging or unchangeable. Despite this, in having recognised the problematic issues of linguistic articulation it is still necessary to have ways of analysing and discussing identity. One way of doing so is to construct meanings and understandings around a number of key markers of identity. In this study, religion is of particular importance to the discussion of the women's lives and experiences, and, the intersections of religion and gender in the construction of Muslim women by hegemonic culture provides a context for this apparently unified identity.

Gender and Religion

Because of the role that Islam/Muslims are perceived to have played in such events as 'September 11' and the Bali bombings, as well as the roles and behaviour of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, Islam/Muslims have been figuring prominently in public, media discussions. This has meant that, not only have specific incidents and individuals been discussed (e.g. Osama bin Laden and the 'Bali bombers'), but also all the 'traditional' debates/images have been rehashed, including the 'position of women in Islam'. Thus it remains true that it is very difficult to discuss Islam without devoting space to a discussion of gender and more specifically, women, in Islam. Historically the fascination that the 'west' has had with Islam and Muslim communities has often included or incorporated a deep and abiding fascination with the lives and social positions of Muslim women (Said 1995). As with other studies of aspects of Islam and Muslim communities, studies of Muslim

women or 'the place of women in Islam' have often taken an approach in which Muslim women are presented as oppressed by Islam and/or Muslim men³ (Mernissi 1975; Zaidi & Shuraydi 2002). Such representations also occur in a range of other genres including popular non-fiction, film and pulp fiction.

One example of how these representations occur in popular culture non-fiction can be found in George Negus' book *The World From Islam: Muslims, Mass Destruction and Mutual Ignorance* (2003). George Negus is a well-respected and prominent Australian journalist with a long history and credentials as being able to convey complex news and current affairs issues in a clear manner to the mainstream public (see http://www.negusmedia.com.au/about_george.html). This text is written in his trademark casual style but, because of its content, and the context in which it was published, purports to be an authoritative text. Perhaps because of its accessible or 'pop culture' tone, although Negus' motivation for writing the book was to break down misunderstandings about Islam/Muslims amongst 'white' Australia, in a number of instances the book simply repeats and reinforces many of the orientalist stereotypes, particularly of Muslim women and gender relations. Negus' obvious fascination with the varying styles of dress and veiling provides a number of examples of orientalist writing; for instance, a photograph of a woman covered completely in black selling Negus vegetables from her market stall is captioned:

This is as close as a non-husband male is likely to get to *seeing behind* that distinctive Omani face cover. At first it feels *strange* to talk to women covered by it – but *you get used to it*. Their dress becomes part of who and what they are, certainly not a *barrier to communication*. (italics added)

Negus' caption reiterates the male orientalist gaze and desire to 'see behind' the veil of the Muslim woman, to 'know' her and thus have a claim of ownership over her (Said 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Bullock 2002). It is the male orientalist who feels strange speaking to women wearing a face veil, who must 'get used to' the women's mode of dress, who is thwarted from 'seeing behind' the women's face veils, and, who felt (at one point, although no longer does) that these veils were 'a barrier to communication'. Negus' caption also presents the orientalist male frustration at not being allowed intimacy with the woman in the photo (and women like her) – i.e. buying vegetables from a woman on the opposite side of a market stall is 'as close as a non-husband male is likely to get'.

³ This is particularly evident in contemporary mainstream media spheres as will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Similarly, Negus' patronising and assumption laden description of a visit to the guest tent of a Bedouin camp, highlights the perpetuation and repetition of orientalist representations of Muslim women and gender relations amongst Muslim communities. He describes entering the large tent which was divided down the middle by a rug:

The 'Muslim Curtain' is a very different one from either of those other great cultural divides, the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. But it has pretty much the same effect. The Bedouin tent-home is basically cordoned off into two parts, usually by ... a rug. One section is the men's domain, the *al-shigg*, and the other is the women's. Interestingly, the 'good side' of the patterned divider – the side where you don't see all the scraggy knots in the weave and the like – always faces the men's sections. The women get the scraggy side. You can read into that what you will (Negus 2003:36).

Thus Negus encourages us, despite his open ended comment that 'we' the reader could make whatever assumption we liked, to believe that Muslim women are treated as second-class citizens in relation to the men who always have the beautiful side of the rug to look at. He gives the impression that he, the omniscient male narrator, knows all there is to know about every Muslim and Bedouin family arrangement – the men 'always' get the good side of the divider, and there is never a blurring or cross-over between the men's and women's domains. However, his categorical statements are placed in a less certain light when, a few paragraphs later, he discusses how the women come into the men's side of the tent where the guests are seated to bring food and to offer 'some very stumbling attempts at conversation' (Negus 2003:37). Their attempts at conversation are simply a result of having little English language and their guests not being able to speak much Arabic. Thus, Negus' representation of these people as refracted through the prism of orientalism is disrupted and complicated by the protagonists' own agency and actions.

In an example from the academic literature about Muslim women Suzanne Brenner's article (1996) scrutinises Javanese Muslim women's decisions to 'veil in a society where veiling is neither deeply rooted in local tradition nor encouraged by a majority of the population' (Brenner 1996:673). Although she attempts to portray these women as free agents of personal change, she utilises

discourses and language which continues to objectify and stereotype the women. For example, she writes that

Yogyakarta, like Solo, is known as a city where women have traditionally enjoyed a good deal of autonomy and economic independence ... the sight of young women dressed in long robes and large headcloths (sic) – sometimes riding motorcycles, wearing helmets over their headcloths (sic)⁴ – is therefore rather startling in this context and seems to demand an explanation (Brenner 1996:676).

In this passage it is clear then that for Brenner, hijab is an anathema to ‘autonomy and economic independence’ and, even while she is confronted by evidence to the contrary, she persists in such a view and is determined to ‘demand an explanation’ of a situation she believes is inexplicable. Brenner’s work is characterised by an innate sense of superiority and moral ascendancy over her participants whom she describes as:

casually [peppering] their speech with contemporary, Western-derived expressions, speaking of their desire to ‘actualise [their] potential’ (*mengaktualisasikan potensi*) and of their *motivasi* (motivation) and *ambisi* (ambition) for veiling. While some might cite the wives of the Prophet Muhammad as their models in dress or behaviour, they are more forward-looking than regressive in their attitudes and lifestyles (Brenner 1996:679).

Here, modelling one’s ‘dress or behaviour’ on that practised by the Prophet Muhammad’s (SAWS)⁵ wives, Brenner argues, is backward, anti-modern and ‘regressive’. Rather than viewing their sophisticated use of the language as evidence of a high level of education and thus their ‘modernity’, she views it as inauthentic. Thus Brenner confines these young women to a negative stereotype which denies their agency and their freedoms.

However, despite the existence and continuing production of such representations of Muslim women, there are texts that critique and challenge these representations. Mohja Kahf’s (1999) book *Western representations of the Muslim woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* maps the rise and development of orientalist literature that focuses on representations of Arab and Muslim women, starting with early renaissance texts and finishing with texts written in the 1800s. Kahf examines the origins of stereotypes such as the harem, the alluring desert beauty, the exotic eroticism of the kohl eyed veiled woman as well as stereotypes of these women as frigid and oppressed by their menfolk, or as overbearing, nagging, ill-tempered, stupid and ugly. Her book is

⁴ The correct term is hijab.

⁵ This acronym stands for Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Sallam (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him). This is a respectful salutation that Muslims make whenever they hear or read the Prophet’s (SAWS) name or his title (such as Prophet, Messenger of Allah, Nabi (Arabic word for prophet)). While I am aware that a non-Muslim author may not feel bound to offer this respectful salutation I will do so throughout this thesis wherever it is necessary.

an important one, because it not only brings to light the full range and origins of many negative representations of Muslim women, but it also provokes debate and discussion about the repetition of these orientalist stereotypes in contemporary texts. By analysing historical literary instances of such representations Kahf is challenging their accuracy and appropriateness as well as exploring their on-going effects when contemporary Muslim women are represented within these long-standing orientalist ideas. This thesis is similarly concerned with challenging the continuing repetition of these representations in such realms as the print media. See also Bullbeck (1997), Badran (1995), Martin-Munoz (2002), Jackson (1996), and, Shohat & Stam (1994).

Muslim Women in a Non-Muslim Country

In conjunction with the recent increase in global concern and fascination with Islam and Muslim communities there is an increased interest from outside Muslim communities in the experiences of Muslim women. This interest has manifested itself in a number of genres including news (as will be discussed in Chapter Five), fiction, popular non-fiction/travelogue, as well as academic literature based on research into Muslim communities in a number of countries⁶. Many of the studies that focus on Muslim women are not written from the standpoint of a Muslim woman (Bloul 1994; Haw 1994; Rozario 1998; Dwyer 1999; Franks 2000; Martin-Munoz 2002). By standpoint I do not mean simply being a Muslim woman, but consciously writing from a practising Muslim standpoint. In this thesis my standpoint and identity as a Muslim woman is foregrounded in this thesis and provides a connection between myself, my experiences, the participants and their own experiences.

Many studies focusing on Muslims as 'minorities' simply provide a broad picture of the demographics and recent settlement patterns (e.g. Ansari (2002) and Peach & Glebe (1995) in Britain; Bouma (1994) and Omar & Allen (1996) for Australia), although they often also briefly raise some issues of concern or future interest (for example, how the nation can accept/integrate/assimilate/tolerate the increasing numbers of Muslims in their community (e.g. Hjarno (1996) and Pauly Jr (2004)), or how best to 'deal with' disenfranchised Muslim youth who may be drawn to acts of civil disobedience or violence) (e.g. Kundnani (2002)). Of those studies that do focus more specifically on an issue relating to a specific group of Muslims (such as employment, career opportunities, marriage processes and perceptions of the media), few are

⁶ Recent academic studies focus on the lives and experiences of Muslims in majority non-Muslim countries include, for example, Denmark (Hjarno 1996), Italy (Allievi 1996; Cere 2002), and Canada (Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998; Todd 1998; Bullock & Jafri 2000; Khalema and Wannas-Jones 2003).

focused upon the lived realities of women's lives as my study is, but rather focus on the community as a whole (ignoring gendered differences of experience) or on institutions. For instance, Jamila Hussain's (2001) discussion of the convergence and divergence of Islamic and Australian marriage laws and processes, while it is an excellent discussion of both, does not offer an insight into how individuals or communities of Muslims in Australia are negotiating and engaging with both legal systems.

There are a handful of studies which do focus upon the lived experiences of Muslim women in majority non-Muslim countries. In one of these studies, Santi Rozario (1998) writes about Muslim women in Australian (largely migrant) communities who find that they have become the repositories and transmitters of Islamic knowledge to new generations of Muslims (often children but also newly converted Muslims) and interested non-Muslims. She includes an analysis of how western and Islamic feminisms have impacted on the ways in which these Muslim women develop responses to their specific 'minority' situations. For example she writes that for many women of Lebanese, Pakistani and Turkish background, life as a Muslim in Australia presents an opportunity to become 'well-educated ... vocal and politicized' (1998:653) in a manner which is closely tied to their religious identity and which is not possible in their ordinary countries. This opportunity for active politicisation of religion and personal life is seen as having been established, in Australia, by decades of western feminism and which is, too often, missing from many majority Muslim countries (1998:657-658). However, it is the women's understanding of Islamic feminism (that is, a feminism based upon Islamic teachings and texts) that allows for many material improvements in the lives of Muslim women in Australia (1998:656-657). Some of these improvements have been the inclusion of women into the running of religious activities and organisations in Muslim communities around Australia as well as the provision for women-centred services such as domestic violence support and healthcare.

Because of her schema Rozario presents the women in her study as being 'caught in the middle' (1998:649) of a conflict between Islam and the 'Australian culture, which is racist and ethnocentric' (1998:659) and as maintaining an 'Islamist' position which she believes can curtail their freedoms (although she does not specify how) (1998:659). Indeed my thesis suggests, based on the experiences of my interviewees, that this contradicts her previous arguments that, *despite* Australia's racist and ethnocentric nature, these women have negotiated a highly articulate and

politicised position which makes full use of the freedoms offered by the 'Australian culture' while *simultaneously* maintaining a strong religious identity and practice.

A number of studies focus upon the ways in which Muslim women in majority non-Muslim countries negotiate and create spaces in which they enact their agency. Sara Johnsdotter (2003) discusses the various ways that Muslim women of Somali heritage in Sweden are increasingly rejecting the practice of 'female circumcision' because of their growing Islamic knowledge rather than through western feminist arguments against the practice⁷. Also in a Swedish context, Mehrdad Darvishpour's (2002) study looks at the ways Muslim women of Iranian heritage are renegotiating marital relationships and norms in the context of Iranian migrant communities by deploying both Islamic discourses and western feminist influenced discourses of equality and freedom. Arshia Zaidi and Muhammad Shuraydi (2002) conducted a study into the attitudes towards 'arranged marriages' held by young Muslim women of Pakistani heritage living in England. Kim Knott's and Sajda Khokher's (1993) study investigates the ways in which young Muslim women in the city of Bradford, England, articulate their religious and ethnic identities. Their participants argued against being characterised as 'caught between two cultures' and articulated strong, although varying, identity formations. There was a continuum of identities from those who most strongly identified with their religion and less with their ethnicity to those who most strongly identified with their ethnic background and minimally to a religious affiliation. This study provides a good case against constructions of young Muslim women as lacking agency or self reflexivity.

A number of studies look at the experiences of Muslim women in the field of employment, career choices and public employment. Some of these focus on specific issues such as access to opportunity (Khan 1992; Parker-Jenkins, Haw, Khan & Irving 1998), while others focus on educational choices and opportunities (Hoddinot 1992; Sabbagh 1992; Haw 1994; Ahmad 2001; Saeed 2003). Many of them focus on the difficulties facing Muslim women in seeking or gaining employment, difficulties which are attributed to racism. Some, such as Fauzia Ahmad's (2001), challenge dominant representations of British Muslim women as being uneducated (beyond compulsory schooling) and as not seeking professional employment.

⁷ For a discussion of western feminist arguments against 'female circumcision', including a discussion of the various names of the practice, see Winter 1994; Winter, Thompson and Jeffreys 2002.

Although studies that focus on issues of hijab are by far the most numerous in the literature relating to Muslim women in non-Muslim countries and will be dealt with shortly, there is also another significant body of literature that deals with the representation of Muslim women in 'the west'. Gul Joya Jafri et al's study (1998) into representations of Muslim women in 'mainstream' Canadian media (see also Bullock & Jafri 2000) identifies the most common representations of Muslim women as 'Alien Other, as veiled, passive victims of patriarchy' (1998:3) and Muslims in general as 'violent'. This study argues that such negative portrayals frequently have 'little to do with real Muslim women's lives' (1998:3). Jafri's study found that Muslim participants were aware of the racist implications and undertones of negative representations of Muslims in the Canadian media and expressed a sophisticated understanding of how 'the terminology used [...] the subjectivity of the journalists, and [...] the limited knowledge of Islam' (1998:3) can lead to such negativity. Although a minority of participants felt that there was adequate positive representations of Muslims, most comments 'revealed that the negative coverage often results in feelings of insecurity and a loss of confidence in their identity – as Muslims, and as Canadians' (1998:3).

Elizabeth Poole (2000a & b) takes a similar approach to Jafri (1998) in her study of British newspapers, although her wider focus encompasses both representations of Islam and of Muslim men. Poole's research found that British newspaper representations of Muslims homogenised them as 'backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalists, misogynists, threatening and manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain' (2000a:1). She also argues that much of the representation of Muslims and Islam is marked by racism and is often complicated by issues of race and ethnicity as well as gender. Poole's approach is also similar to the report by the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (2003) into the role played by the New South Wales, and broader Australian, media in constructing (negative) attitudes towards Muslims in the Australian community. Their research located similar findings to those of Jafri and Poole.

Methodologically both Poole's research and the work of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board involve detailed analyses of specific examples of representations utilising both discourse and content analysis. In this way they are similar to the approach taken in this thesis, although I will specifically focus on the print media available in South Australia and will combine my own analyses with the analyses provided by my participants. Similarly, Jafri's study was instrumental in the development and refinement of my own approach to discussing media representations with the participants of

my study⁸. Thus, my research combines the approaches of Jafri (1998), Poole (2000a & b) and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (2003).

Literature on hijab and ‘veiling’

Amongst the increasing interest in writing about Muslim women there has developed an interest in, or perhaps a fixation with, issues of ‘veiling’ including analyses of reasons why Muslim women would choose to wear a hijab (headscarf) in a predominantly non-Muslim country. This interest and emphasis is also to be found in public discussions by politicians, social commentators and the media. Although the scope of this thesis does not include a detailed discussion of hijab per se⁹, the weight of the literature, as discussed below, suggests that, as in many encounters and interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims, that the hijab is a significant factor, either in its presence or non-presence. Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) argues that the western colonial (and often feminist) fixation with hijab and veiling practices arises out of colonial and Orientalist discourses about Enlightenment and modernity. She argues, that this fixation is ‘to show the absence of “liberty”, “progress”, and humanism in Islamic societies and that the reason for this absence is located in the religious essence of Islam’ (Yegenoglu 1998:97). The application of this discourse to the ‘question of women’ in Islam becomes particularly pertinent with regards to hijab as the *unveiling* of Muslim women becomes a symbol of the success of western colonial feminism against the “backward” and “barbaric” Islamic customs which are assumed to be central in the enslavement and imprisonment of Muslim women’ (1998:98). Thus, the removal of hijab is seen as the ‘modernisation’ of the woman (and in Orientalist discourses the Oriental woman is a metonym for the Orient and its essence). Because hijab is ‘the most visible marker of tradition and religion, the veil provided the benevolent western woman with ... a clinching example that interlocks “woman” and “tradition/Islam” so that it could be morally condemned in the name of emancipation’ (1998:99).

The fixation on the hijab – wanting to know more, wanting to see more – is part of what Yegenoglu describes as the ‘imperial feminist desire’ which is based on the ‘disciplining and normalizing gaze of modern colonial disciplining power’ (1998:111). Consequently, my decision not to discuss the hijab or veiling practices beyond what is necessary to analyse the narratives presented by my participants is a thwarting of this imperial [read masculine] and imperial feminist gaze and desire.

⁸ This is discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁹ There are a number of important and influential texts that focus solely on issues of veiling as a practice such as Bullock 2002, Bhattacharya 1996, El Guindi 1999, El Saadawi 1997, Khan 1995, Mernissi 1975, Shirazi 2001 and Yegenoglu 1998.

This thesis is not a literary unveiling of Muslim women. Despite this, relevant to my thesis is the literature that, rather than focusing on the veil as a concept or ideology, discusses the hijab as it is experienced in women's lives in various contexts¹⁰.

Kay Rasool (2002) and the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (1996) have both completed studies into reasons why Muslim women, particularly young women, wear hijab in Australia. Rasool's work draws upon interviews she conducted for a documentary film¹¹ she created on the subject. The premise of the book is to speak to a range of women of various ages and from various ethnic and class backgrounds (mostly in Pakistan and Australia), what their experiences of hijab or 'veiling' are – why some do and some don't, why some previously did but now don't, or didn't and now do. She allows the women's voices to stand alone, respecting their stories and their choices while also asking questions that invite the women to be self-reflexive and self-analytical in their responses. Although Rasool does not explicitly discuss her work's academic links or outline a methodological or theoretical framework, it is clear that she is operating from a standpoint as a Muslim woman and a feminist who is engaged in feminist research (particularly interviewing) which respects women's stories and agency. In this regard, her work is similar to my own.

Canadian academic and hijab-wearing Muslim, Katherine Bullock's *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* is an attempt to 'challenge the popular Western stereotype that the veil is oppressive' (Bullock 2002:xv). It is a text which reclaims hijab-wearing Muslim women's right to speak for themselves and which honours and respects their choice to cover. Through an in-depth look at historical and contemporary western constructions, and representations, of 'the veil' and women who cover, as well as a number of interviews with contemporary Muslim women in Toronto, Canada, Bullock argues that:

the judgment that the veil is oppressive is based on liberal understanding of 'equality' and 'liberty' that precludes other ways of thinking about 'equality' and 'liberty' that offer a more positive approach for contemplating the wearing of the veil (2002:xv).

¹⁰ Such a literature review is also important because in the later stages of writing up this thesis the hijab in Australia (and in other countries such as France) has become a site of political and media contestation. This happened after the interviews but the way these public debates evolved reveals attitudes and beliefs towards Muslim women that were present prior to this media discussion.

¹¹ *My Journey, My Islam*, Kay Rasool, ABC-TV. 56 mins, 1999. This film premiered at the 43rd London Film Festival and was shown globally in a number of film festivals.

Her book offers not only a critique of western constructions of 'veiling' but also presents more positive experiences and understandings than is usually found in discussions and analysis of the practice.

Bullock provides a very detailed and comprehensive analysis and critique of much of the existing literature about veiling. Her chapters on Fatima Mernissi's work are a particular riposte to the widespread misunderstandings perpetuated by non-Muslim feminists¹². For many scholars (particularly white western feminists) Mernissi's works are treated as canon – accepted as the last authority on all things to do with veiling and the lives of Muslim women. However, Bullock argues here that Mernissi's work is often lacking, both in terms of feminist methodology and in terms of the reproduction of 'western' stereotypes of veiling. She argues that, although Mernissi frequently claims to base her research on the lives of actual women's experiences, there is little in her texts which provides evidence of the voices of (particularly veiled) women: 'covered women are silent, denied agency, and treated as passive victims of men' (2002:178). On the other hand, Bullock's text offers an articulate alternative to this view by relying on the voices of women who cover to analyse the reasons *why* they do so, and as an entrée into some sophisticated analyses of historical and contemporary dominant and popular representations of 'veiled' women.

Also contributing to the field of research into 'veiling practices' is Fatheena Mubarak (1996) who conducted her honours thesis into the way Muslim women in Australia conceptualise their hijabs in terms of religious identification and fulfilment. She maps their experiences of interacting with the broader Australian community, particularly in employment, when wearing hijab, and like Bullock, does so with a respectful approach that honours the women's own experiences and voices. The pre-occupation with hijab and other aspects of female Islamic dress is also at the centre of Hollie Kopp's (2002) study in which she discusses the ways immigrant Muslim women to the United States maintain, alter or discard Islamic dress codes, that is, they either take up 'western' forms of dress without concern for Islamic codes of modesty and appropriate dress, or, they modify 'western' clothing bought in high-street shops so that these conform to Islamic dress codes (for instance, women may 'layer' clothing so that their bodies are covered appropriately but the

¹² Fatima Mernissi is seen by many 'western' scholars to be the foremost 'expert' in the field of studies about hijab and veiling practices. Her texts *Beyond the Veil: male-female dynamics in a modern Muslim society* (1975), *Women and Islam: an historical and theological enquiry* (Mernissi 1991) and *Doing Daily Battle: interviews with Moroccan women* (Mernissi 1988) all have significant discussions of the hijab. Whilst Mernissi's work is very popular with many western scholars, many religious Muslim women disagree with her views on hijab but find it difficult to counteract the ascendancy that her work holds in western academe. Bullock's text is therefore particularly important because it is a lucid and academically compelling critique of Mernissi's texts.

individual items of clothing may not in themselves be appropriate, such as a sleeveless dress teamed with a long sleeved cardigan, or a knee length skirt which, over a pair of trousers, covers the tailored 'fit' of the pants).

Myfanwy Franks (2000) also focuses on the hijab when discussing the anomalous position held by 'white', Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Muslim women who wear hijab in Britain. She argues that hegemonic British society is fascinated by these women whose religious embodiment disrupts dominant assumptions of Muslims as non-white migrants. Franks (2000) investigates whether or not these women move to the fringes of whiteness when they put on hijab, that is, whether or not these women become 'less white' once they begin wearing hijab. The ambivalent relationship between whiteness and an Islamic identity in Australia as sometimes embodied by hijab-wearers is also addressed in this thesis.

Claire Dwyer (1999) and Sharon Todd (1998) also researched Muslim women and hijab, albeit from a different angle, as Dwyer was interested in the ways in which sixteen year old British Muslim women negotiated their difference from the broader society in terms of wearing hijab. Todd (1998), on the other hand, was interested in questions of how the hijab was viewed by non-Muslims in Canada (particularly Quebec), and the negativity that could occur when young Muslim women decide to wear hijab. She cites a particularly emotive and controversial incident in which a twelve year old Muslim schoolgirl decided to start wearing her hijab to school and was subsequently excluded from the school until she decided to remove her hijab. A court battle ensued but Todd does not dwell on the outcome of this incident, rather, she looks at the discourses evident in the public discussion of the hijab such as it being oppressive, male enforced and against the principles of secularity. Like Todd (1998), Shahnaz Khan (1995) focuses on the hijab in Canada (also with a focus on Quebec) and argues that attitudes towards women who wear hijab draw 'upon colonialist assumptions in which Europeans are set up as liberators of Muslim women from Islam' (1995:149). She is not concerned with veiling practices per se so much as she is concerned with the way in which 'many Muslim women are subjected to the antagonistic discourses which are fixated on the veil' (Khan 1995:150). These 'antagonistic discourses', such as 'hijab as oppressive' and 'hijab as archaic and anti-modernity', are discourses which this thesis touches upon where they impact upon the lives of the participants in the study.

Such discourses were reflected in the public discussions surrounding the decision of the French government to ban the wearing of 'overt religious symbols' such as the hijab in schools in early 2004¹³. Since this ban there have been a number of writers and commentators who have examined the motivations and implications of such a ban. Johannes Willms (2004) looks at whether or not the banning of the hijab is necessary to ensure full citizenship and assimilation/integration amongst French Muslims while Joel Windle (2004) and Nicky Jones (2004) examine the discourses that precipitated and surround the ban. Windle's study, like this thesis, is not concerned with 'the merits of arguments about any inherently repressive or liberating capacities of the hijab *in itself*, but rather with the processes and implications of symbolic investment' (2004:100). That is, neither Windle nor this thesis is concerned with reasons *why* women wear hijab or whether wearing hijab is an inherently liberating or oppressive action, but rather both are concerned with issues of identity and racism that surround the wearing of hijab. The discourses surrounding the French situation were, to a much lesser degree, mirrored in recent public discussions about the place of the hijab in Australian government schools.

'A little bit of a slave'?: towards a theorisation of the 'hijab in state schools' debate¹⁴

Recent social scientific research (Hage 1998; Imtoul 2004; Riggs and Augoustinos 2004; Imtoul 2005 (forthcoming)) has explored how white Australia constructs a view of itself as legitimate and unified through the construction of certain Others as outside its frame of reference. In particular, such research has suggested that white Australia constructs the other most frequently as infantilised, ignorant or savage – or a combination of these. These constructions may be understood as a projection of white anxiety, and as such often operate in ways that are entirely irrelevant to the realities of the subjectivities of the other. Derek Hook, following Homi Bhabha's theorisation of racism and racial stereotyping, argues that:

it matters little what the racial other actual[l]y does or how they are...The details of the actual black man or woman, of how they live their lives and disprove the racist stereotypes of the white racist, are, in a sense, completely incidental to the latter's racism (2005:29).

¹³ ABC TV (18 September, 2005) showed a documentary on *Compass* entitled 'The Headmaster and the Headscarves' which documented the implementation and impact of the ban in one Paris high school. It was screened at a time when public discussions about whether or not the hijab should be banned in Australian government-run schools was at its height and increased public discussion of this issue.

¹⁴ I thank the members of the Whiteness Research Group for their feedback and support on the writing of this section.

For Hook, the construction of a demonised or infantilised other is central to the construction of a racist/colonial white subjectivity.

Applying this argument to the example of constructions of Muslim Australians, it is possible to see how Islam is constructed as inherently oppressive to women, a construction that positions Muslim Australians as being outside the frame of reference considered as central to the Australian nation. In other words, where democracy is considered to be equivalent to the rights of women, Islam is positioned as being inherently undemocratic, in contrast with the supposedly democratic Australian nation. One example of this positioning has appeared in debates about whether or not hijabs should be banned in government schools in Australia. In these debates Muslims have been positioned as either active oppressors of women, or complicit in their subjugation, which is presumed to be embodied in the hijab.

The debate over banning the hijab began on August 26, 2005, when the federal Liberal backbencher Sophie Panopolous announced that, in her opinion, hijabs should be banned from public schools because 'for a lot of younger people it seems to be more an act of rebellion than anything' (Maiden & Lipman 26 August, 2005:6)¹⁵. Her comments were taken up with alacrity by fellow Liberal party colleague Bronwyn Bishop who said on national radio:

If a young girl is going to a Muslim school and that's part of their uniform, then that's part of their uniform. But if they're in public schools where there is a uniform, the uniform is a great leveller, it is a great sign of a society that is working with different schools, but it is being used by the sort of people who want to overturn our values, as an iconic emblem of defiance and a point of difference. If you saw interviews with certain young Muslim girls recently, they said they in fact wore that as a point of difference (Bishop 2005).

In the ensuing days, many public commentators voiced either their support for Panopolous' and Bishop's proposal, or opposed it. Most of the public (white) commentators who voiced opposition to the idea did so, not because they support Muslim women's choice to wear a hijab, but because they felt that a ban would be undemocratic and un-Australian and thus ultimately unproductive in

¹⁵ It is unclear what Panopolous or Bishop meant by 'rebellion': whether they referred to a youthful rebellion against the conformity of state school uniforms or a rebellion against 'Australian values', or indeed, both.

the 'reform' of Islam. In the brief analysis that follows, I explore how the terms of the debate are framed by white interpretations of Muslim identity and experience, rather than starting from the opinions of Muslim people them/ourselves. The framing of debates over the hijab on the terms set by white people serves yet again to reinforce the positioning of Muslim Australians as other to white Australians – as always failing to approximate the norms of the 'democratic white nation'¹⁶.

In the 'hijab debate' the most vocal and influential commentators can be divided into two 'camps'. On the one hand there are those who argued that the hijab must be banned, either because it represents an oppressive symbol of gendered oppression endemic to Islam, or alternately because it is merely an act of defiance made by unassimilated Muslims. Either way, proponents of a ban believe it is necessary to ensure Muslim women's 'freedom'. One example of this comes from ethicist and feminist columnist Leslie Cannold (31 August, 2005:17), who argues that the hijab should be banned because it is seen by most (white) Australians as a 'symbol of the gender-based oppression women suffer'. Cannold, and others like her, argue that Muslims should be forced to provide 'freedom' to their womenfolk whether they like it or not. Of course, this freedom comes in a particular format, one which unsurprisingly reinforces the hegemony of white interpretations of both Islam and the hijab.

On the 'other side' of the debate are those commentators who, whilst agreeing that the hijab is oppressive and an unpleasant emblem of women's subjugation, propose that a ban is undemocratic and 'unAustralian' and instead that white (non Muslim) Australia should be empowering Muslim women so that they can 'unveil' of their own accord. In a clear example of this patronising position, the *Herald Sun's* conservative columnist Andrew Bolt wrote that he did not support a ban on hijabs, although 'It's true a hijab can symbolise something many of us find confronting – the subjugation of women', because it would alienate 'moderate Muslims' and convince them that 'they were indeed persecuted' (Bolt 31 August, 2005:25). Bolt utilises a discourse which positions white Australians as above the pettiness of a ban on hijabs, and instead sees them as the protectors of 'the little girl in the hijab'. Such a discourse is evocative of colonial discourses of benevolence and paternalism in which the 'native' (that is, the inferior other) is seen as being in need of rescue (Kolhatkar 2002). The Muslim subject is objectified and infantilised as a

¹⁶ Similar points are made in the debates concerning Sati (see Rajan 1990:3-6 and 10-12).

small child without the mental faculties to protect themselves from degradation, or to 'progress' without the kindly intervention of the paternal white subject (Bullock 2002).

Both of these positions operate regardless and irrespective of the voices and experiences of Muslim women. In these debates many of the white female commentators position themselves not only as 'Australian' but as 'feminist' (see Bishop 2005; Bone 1 September, 2005:15; Cannold 31 August, 2005:17). One implication of claiming a position as Australian or feminist is that it precludes Muslim women from identifying as Australian and/or as feminist in any 'true' sense of the words. That is, as long as Muslim women reject the viewpoints of these (white, feminist identified, Australian) women and maintain an opposing view of their own subjectivity or the hijab issue, there is no public space for them to take up a self-construction as Australian or feminist. Indeed two women whose writing identified them as Muslim, as feminist, and as supportive of the choice to wear hijab, submitted opinion pieces to the *Age* newspaper but neither of these were printed¹⁷. Although the *Age* printed opinion pieces by a number of women on this issue, only one of them was a Muslim woman: while she deployed an Australian identity she did not identify as a feminist (Hage-Ali 30 August, 2005:15). Thus, through the media practices of the newspapers feminist was equated with the discourse of 'saving Muslim women', and Muslim women were refused the space to identify as Muslim, 'pro-hijab'¹⁸ and feminist. Indeed, the media refused to countenance the existence of women who identified as Muslim, as feminist, and as supporters of the right to wear hijab in Australian schools by denying such women the space to have their voices heard as part of the public discussion.

This refusal to recognise the subjectivity of Muslim women demonstrates, not only a projection of white anxieties about gender and oppression onto Muslim Australians (and Islam), but is also a reinscription of colonial discourses in which Muslim women were seen as oppressed and Muslim men as oppressors, which, by contrast, positioned 'enlightened westerners' as morally and intellectually superior (Said 1995, 1997; Yegenoglu 1998; Bullock 2002). Within these positions Muslim women clearly are considered either as not intelligent enough to recognise their own oppression, or, as too downtrodden or indoctrinated to take action (Bullock 2002; Kolhatkar 2002).

¹⁷ I was one of these women. A colleague and friend from an interstate university emailed me a piece of writing she had submitted to the newspaper while unaware that I had also done so. The similarity of the arguments we made was remarkable.

¹⁸ This is a loose categorisation which includes both those women who believe that wearing hijab is a compulsory aspect of Islamic religious practice and those who believe that wearing hijab is a personal choice and one which Muslim women should have the right to make without interference from others.

Bronwyn Bishop, in her radio tirade against the hijab, described Muslim women who chose to wear hijab (and justified it as their right and as giving them a sense of freedom) as akin to a citizen of Nazi Germany who *thought* they were free – ‘this is not the sort of definition of freedom I want for my country’ (Bishop 2005). She said further of these women that ‘neither can I accept someone who wants to be a little bit of a slave, or a little bit subservient’. Speaking as the morally and intellectually superior white woman, Bishop can condemn not only the ‘barbaric’ practice of wearing hijab and decree it to be outside of her imagined national space – ‘not for *my* country’ – but can also condemn Muslim women who wear hijab for being morally, spiritually and intellectually inferior to her (and other white Australian women) because, in her construction, they willingly choose to be ‘a little bit of a slave’.

Similarly, *Age* associate editor Pamela Bone believes that women who cover are colluding with their own oppression when they claim that wearing hijab is their choice. She constructs an argument in which she aligns women who wear hijab with women who petitioned against the right for women to vote in Australia, and women who opposed equal pay for equal work. In her own words, ‘there have always been women who have gone along with their subordinate status’ (Bone 1 September, 2005: 15). Unlike Bishop, however, Bone argues that a ban on hijabs would not ‘free’ Muslim women but would enact a further violence on an already oppressed group of people. Instead, she is ‘putting all my hopes into progressive Muslim women’ who she imagines will be instrumental in leading Muslim women into enlightenment (see also Yegenoglu (1998)).

Hook’s point that the realities of how the others lives their life or articulates their subjectivity bears little resemblance to the ways in which white peoples construct them (2005:29) is borne out in the debate outlined here. Media commentaries about Muslims and Muslim women in particular reinforce the construction of Muslim Australians as outside the white nation, irrespective of how Muslim Australians articulate their own subjectivity. Indeed the gendered nature of these discourses, while ostensibly about ‘freeing’ Muslim women from oppression, act to silence and subordinate Muslim women by denying them a voice. The ‘hijab in state schools’ debate was framed within a white interpretation of Islam which reinscribed and reinforced colonial binaries such as us/them, modern/backward and free/subservient. In a debate which claimed to be about women’s rights, feminist discourses were used to construct Muslim women as being unable to adopt a feminist discourse, regardless of the reality of ‘how they [lived] their lives’, because being Muslim was positioned as antithetical to women’s equality and freedom. It was also embedded in

the debate about Australian identity and 'values'. Several participants in this debate, such as Panopolous and Bishop, espouse a neo-liberal vision of national identity in which individuals and choice figure prominently. Conformity in adopting a form of religious dress is positioned as antithetical to an Australian expression of individuality.

Conclusion

Despite the recent critiques of identity as not fixed and unchanging, but as fluid and partial, the literature about Muslims in 'minority' contexts suggests that identity is structured around religion and gender. I argued that, rather than imposing an identity construct upon the participants of this research, it is more important to listen to the ways in which they articulate their own identity, and that 'identity theory' can then be read in the light of this, this issue being pursued in Chapter Eight. Whilst 'fluid' identity formations may be appropriate for certain studies, the particular context of oppression in which the young Muslim women in this study find themselves means that their religious identity not only remains paramount to their personal sense of identity, but, also heightens its importance, as it is on the basis of this religious identity that these women experience marginalisation. This thesis focuses on the participants' religious identities and is written from the standpoint of a practicing Muslim woman which therefore does not analyse these identities through the prisms of 'deficit' or 'culture clash', as is much of the literature. Instead, it argues that the difficulties these women have in their everyday lives stems from their experiences of religious racism and that religion operates as a positive part of the women's lives.

The focus on hijab remains overtly prominent in the literature about Muslim women, in academic texts, popular non-fiction and the news media. In many of these texts the Colonialist gaze (both male and feminist) is highly influential and acts to objectify and subordinate Muslim women. The recent debate about hijabs in schools confirms the continuing hegemony of orientalist constructions of Muslim women in the Australian news media, an orientalism that is secured by muting the voices of feminist Muslim women. Discussion of similar exclusions of the subjectivities of young Muslim women from representations of Islam and Muslims in the news media occurs in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis.

The hijab in schools debate also demonstrates that an individual's capacity to negotiate the identity in the public realm is limited to some extent because of public discussions and media

representations that focus obsessively on certain aspects of their identity (such as hijab). Because of this silencing it is often non-Muslim individuals with high public profiles (such as George Negus) who are able to make influential contributions to public discussions about Muslims and Muslim women despite their limited knowledge and understanding. Misconceptions of identity and particular practices associated with that identity are thus reinforced or more widely disseminated.

While Australia is often defined as a secular society, with the decline in religious attendance and affiliation for Christian denominations (see ABS 2001 Census table B10) cited as evidence of the increasing secularisation. In fact the negative portrayal of Muslims discussed above in relation to the 'hijab in schools' debate arises from a long history in which Australian national identity is implicitly connected to being Christian. This is explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

History, Law and Religious Racism

Locating Religion in Australia

Having outlined the literature that focuses on Muslim women, this chapter introduces literature that focuses specifically on the Muslim presence in Australia. In doing so it provides both a historical and contemporary context for this thesis. Despite the long history of Muslim interaction and settlement in Australia, the relationship between Muslims and white/settler Australia has often been fraught with difficulty and hostility. This difficult relationship can be traced back to European interactions with, and construction of, the 'Muslim world'. This chapter goes on to locate this hostility within a contemporary Australian and South Australian context that has a white history inextricably linked to Christianity. Utilising whiteness theory and critiques of Australian secularism, it argues that unless the Christian origins of South Australia (and Australia) are recognised, Muslims will continue to be marginalised in a number of ways.

Muslims in Australia: a historical overview

The presence of Muslims in contemporary Australia has long been associated with ambivalence and difficulties. Some argue that this has not always been the case, however. In their respective studies into the history of Muslims in Australia, Bilal Cleland (2001), Nahid Afrose Kabir (2004) and Peta Stephenson (2004a) argue that there was a thriving and positive relationship between Muslim traders from various South-East Asian lands (particularly Macassar) and Indigenous Australians (particularly the Yolnu people from Arnhem Land) in the north of the country before European invasion. While it is difficult to put a time span on the interaction between Indigenous Australians and peoples from South East Asia, Cleland estimates that Islam was an aspect of this interaction from approximately 674CE¹⁹ (Cleland 2001a:2), given the approximate time that Islam was introduced to the area²⁰. This interaction between Muslims and Indigenous peoples was

¹⁹ Cleland, like other writers sensitive to inclusive language, uses the abbreviation CE to denote 'Common Era' as an alternative to AD (Anno Domini – the year of our Lord) which is a highly Christianised time referent. The referents Common Era and BCE (Before the Common Era) are used by historians and archaeologists who do not wish to use overtly Christian time referents but who still wish to utilise the dominant dating system. See also Tuhiwai Smith 1999:53-56 for her excellent discussion on the white colonisation of time.

²⁰ Due to the scarcity of written historical records (which are traditionally privileged within the academy) from this time, there are differences of opinion about the time span in which 'Macassans' first began interacting with Indigenous Australians. Peta Stephenson estimates that this was somewhere between the early to mid 1600s CE (Stephenson 2004a:2).

predominantly based on trade but, as is to be expected in long-term social interactions, more personal interactions and relations developed. People from both sides visited, spent long periods of time in each others' homes, and intermarriages occurred which further developed deep cross-cultural ties, as well as a deep and abiding feeling of interconnectivity and 'kinship' between the groups (Cleland 2001a:4-5; Stephenson 2004a:2-4). Stephenson (2004a & b) argues that these ties between Muslims and Indigenous Australians can be seen today and play a role in motivating some of the increasing number of Indigenous people to become Muslims²¹.

It was not until after European occupation of Indigenous lands in 1788 that the Muslim presence in Australia began to be viewed as a 'problem' (Sabbagh 1992; Omar & Allen 1996; Cleland 2001b; Sukkarieh & Zahra 2002; Saniotis 2002b; Saeed 2003; Stephenson 2004a). It can be argued that part of the reason why Muslim Australians were, and still are, seen as inappropriate within the national framework is the Christianity that is deeply embedded within Australian structures and discourses.

Kabir's book *Muslims in Australia* (2004) is a wide ranging historical and sociological examination of Muslim settlement in Australia. After briefly outlining the pre-European invasion contact between Aboriginal people and Muslims from Macassar, she goes on to detail the presence of Muslims amongst the groups of convicts and free settlers who arrived in Australia shortly after invasion. For instance, Kabir cites that a 23 year old man called Rhamut known to be a 'Mohammedan' 'received free passage on the ship *Favourite*', a convict called William Boxo 'arrived on the *Mary Ann*' in 1805 and a Muslim couple, free settlers, Wooden William and his wife arrived on the *Kangaroo* in 1816 (Kabir 2004:3). Such historical information provides documentary and documented evidence of the presence of Muslims in Australia since colonisation. Kabir, using historical data, argues that the Muslim presence in Australia has, on the whole, increased over time since colonisation, but that, despite this rise in population, Muslims have continually been marginalised, demonised, misrepresented, stereotyped, and mistreated. Although Kabir's aim is to map the presence of Muslim communities in Australia, her book is also a mapping of the negative experiences that Australian Muslims have had since 1788. She details in particular the experiences of Muslim cane cutters of Javanese background, the 'Afghan' cameleers, Muslims during World War One, the

²¹ This initial interaction between Muslims and Indigenous Australians locates Muslims as outside a narrative of dispossession as they were interested in developing trade and social links rather than taking land. However, in the years since European invasion non-Indigenous Australians have benefited from, and are complicit in, the continuing subjugation and dispossession of Indigenous people.

experiences of large migrant influxes from Lebanon and Turkey during the 1970s, the impact of the Gulf War in the 1990s and the more recent experiences of Muslims since September 11 and the Bali Bombings. Her research allows me to place my own thesis within a historical context and trajectory and adds weight to the argument that negativity towards Muslims in Australia is not a new or recent development.

Locating religion in Australia: intersections of whiteness and Christianity

In *Orientalism* Edward Said argues that Europe first began experiencing a dread and dislike of Islam during the Middle Ages. Christian Europe began to respond with 'fear and a kind of awe' (Said 1995:59) to Islam which was rapidly spreading across the globe. In order to retain or regain control over 'what [seemed] to be a threat to some established view of things' (Said 1995:59) Islam was 'judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity' (Said 1995:59). As Said argues, from this point forwards Christian Europe largely defined itself in opposition to the Muslim world. Islam came to be seen as the 'great complementary opposite' (Said 1995:58) of Christianity²².

From the Middle Ages until the Enlightenment, Christianity overtly dominated European thought, operated as the 'framing tradition' (Sharp 1998:160) through which Islam was interpreted. However, the 'Enlightenment period' brought with it new, 'secular' interpretations of Islam. These interpretations drew on a number of discourses that constructed Islam as culturally, morally and socially deficient, and intellectually and spiritually inferior.

However, although western (that is, European) interpretations of Islam changed over time, they maintained their basic character (Said 1995). This was because during the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment periods many European writers and thinkers 'undertook to save the overview of

²² I am grateful to Barbara Kameniar for helping me clarify my argument in this section.

human history and destiny, the existential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage' (Abrams, 1971:66 as cited in Said 1995:115). Said argues that they did this by 'reconstituting, redeploying and redistributing [Christianity] in secular frameworks' (Said 1995:121) and thus the secular post-Enlightenment ideas existed with 'outlines [that] were unmistakably Christian' (Said 1995:115). Using liberalism as one example of what Said terms 'secular post-Enlightenment ideas', Charles Taylor argues that:

Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges. Moreover, as many Muslims are well aware, Western liberalism is not so much an expression of the secular, post-religious outlook that happens to be popular among liberal *intellectuals* as a more organic outgrowth of Christianity (Taylor 1992:62 emphasis in the original).

Contemporary notions of white western identity as well as the West's relationship to Islam (and other non-western peoples) are heavily informed by the historical relationship between western 'secularism' and Christianity (Watt 1991).

Richard Dyer argues that Whiteness is a complex amalgam of European Christianity, in particular the Christian theological understandings of the body, the spirit, and incarnation, as well as notions relating to 'race' and European imperialism (Dyer 1997:14-40). He argues that Christianity gives to Western culture many of its basic values and norms such as 'the forms of parenting, especially motherhood, and sex, the value of suffering [and] guilt' (Dyer 1997:15). He also argues that these values and norms come to the West from Christian theology (and have a strong influence) even when individuals may be unaware of Bible stories or 'recognise the specific items of Christian iconography' (Dyer 1997:15). Central to Dyer's argument is the idea that 'the Christian structures of feeling are realised in concrete images and stories, for that itself is in the nature of Christianity, and those images and stories centre on the body, or rather on embodiment' (Dyer 1997:15). This focus on bodies and embodiment sets Christianity apart from the two other major world monotheistic traditions, Islam and Judaism, and it is this focus which also allowed for the historical trajectory in which 'Christianity [became] the religion, and religious export of Europe' (Dyer 1997:17) marked by an emphasis on whiteness. This trajectory includes what Dyer terms 'the Manichean dualism of black:white that could be mapped on to skin colour difference', as well as the role that the Crusades played in whitening the notion of 'Christendom making national/geographical [and religious] others into enemies of Christ', and the ease with which Christian theology can bolster notions of 'racial superiority and imperialism' (Dyer 1997:17). One of the most important aspects of

this trajectory is the way in which images of Christ were gradually whitened until, by the end of the 1800s, he was 'not just fair-skinned but blond and blue-eyed' (Dyer 1997:168) with definite Anglo-Saxon/Celtic features. Dyer argues that despite the rhetoric of secularism that is popular today, Christianity is inseparable from, and therefore inherent in, concepts of Whiteness. As he states:

If Christianity as observance and belief has been in decline in Europe over the past half-century, its ways of thinking and feeling are none the less still constitutive of both European culture and consciousness and the colonies and ex-colonies (notably the USA) that it has spawned (Dyer 1997:15).

In the current Australian context, Anglo-European Christianity remains the religion to which the majority of Australians claim some affiliation, with over 67 percent of respondents in the 2001 census identifying as Christian (see ABS 2001 Census table B10). However, despite common claims that the nation is a secular state, Christianity continues to have a much deeper societal influence. This influence is most clearly apparent in political decisions and discussions that relate to matters involving 'the family' and 'morality'²³ (Earle and Fopp 1999:241-254; see also Sharp 1998; Johnson 2004; Maddox 2005; Phillips 2005). When terms such as 'values', 'rights' and 'ethics' are unpacked, the centrality of unnamed Christianity in public discourse is also unpacked. Holly Randell-Moon (2005) unpacks such discourses in media reports of asylum seekers converting (primarily from Islam) to Christianity in order to secure permanent residency. She argues that many of these reports '[convey] the implicit assumption that Christianity is the dominant religion in Australian society' and argues that Christianity is frequently 'invisibilised within a language of national values as "common values"' (Randell-Moon 2005:1). For Randell-Moon, the discourses surrounding asylum seekers as 'unfit' to be accepted as 'decent Australians' during the children overboard scandal (see also (Osuri & Banerjee 2004)) are evidence of the naturalisation of Christianity in the Australian political landscape (2005:8).

In arguing that Christianity does inform all aspects of a white Australian world-view, Michael Phillips states that 'conceptualising religion [Christianity] as a continuing influence in Australian political life also requires re-thinking the notion of secularisation' (2005:112). In order to begin this re-thinking, it is useful to examine the historical religious origins of the Commonwealth of Australia, in particular, South Australia.

²³ In recent times this has become evident in public discussions of 'values' in education whereby schools were exhorted to explicitly teach 'common values' – which were understood to be based on Judeo-Christian 'values' (Gulson, May 19-25, 2004; Voigt 3 February, 2003).

Locating Religion in South Australia: whiteness, secularism, racism and religion

The religious nature and character of Australia and the colonies that preceded the Commonwealth has been well documented. Douglas Pike (1957) in his influential history of South Australia, *Paradise of Dissent*, outlines the clearly religious foundation of the colony that belies claims that South Australia was a secular colony (which, after Federation in 1901 became a state in the Commonwealth of Australia) uninfluenced by any religious tradition. At the time, in Britain when plans were being made for the colony of South Australia to be created, 'secularism' was constructed as the separation between Church and State as well as 'equality for all religions' (Pike 1957:3) in the sense that no 'religion' would have been endorsed by the State at the expense of other 'religions'. However, in this historical formation, 'all religions', was clearly understood to mean 'all Christian religions' (1957:12-28)²⁴.

The impact of this construction on South Australian Muslims was clear from as early as 1846 when Muslims were listed in the census (although they were listed erroneously as 'Mahomedans' and grouped with 'Pagans') but no provisions were made for their religious rights or presence in legislation (1957:358). For example, no land was set aside for the development of mosques as was the case for Christian churches.

Once the colony was created and in operation a commonly expressed belief was that although the state was 'secular', it should always 'remain Christian in its influence' (1957:249). Such an attitude quickly translated itself into practice and became evident in the social structures set up in the colony such as the public education system. Under the 1851 *Education Act*, the colonial government made provisions for a 'good secular instruction based on the Christian religion' (Almond and Woolcock 1978:5). Similarly, once a parliament was established, each parliamentary sitting day began, as they still do, with the recitation of 'The Lord's Prayer' (South Australian House of Assembly Standing Orders No 39). While Pike's work is primarily concerned with the historical period of 1829 to 1857 it can be argued that South Australia is still heavily influenced by the vision

²⁴ This thesis acknowledges the internal hierarchies within Christianity which saw the marginalisation of particular forms of Christianity, such as Catholicism, but argues that the specific history of South Australia being seen as a 'paradise of dissent' for forms of Christianity which were persecuted or marginalised elsewhere, meant that on the whole, such hierarchisation happened to a lesser degree. Indeed, specific legislative provisions were enacted to ensure that such hierarchisation did not occur although it must be acknowledged that the legislators did not have in mind non-Christian religions who were not taken into consideration in the construction of the 'paradise of dissent' (see Almond and Woolcock 1978).

of the colonial planners – a vision that saw South Australia as a ‘secular’ colony being built upon a Christian foundation.

While the Christian foundations of South Australia have been well documented by Pike, Walter Phillips has written a similar history of New South Wales noting that the colonists of New South Wales described Australia primarily as a ‘Christian country’ (1981:171). Differences in religious belief or unbelief were ‘tolerated’ as long as individuals or religious groups did not try to ‘interfere’ with the operation of the colony along Christian guidelines²⁵. Phillips quotes Sir Henry Parkes, the so-called ‘Father of Federation’, as expressing the wish that this nation could be ‘a great, free, independent nation based upon the broad principles of our common Christian religion’ (1981:171). Pike and Phillips both make it clear that Christianity had enormous influence on the way social structures were created in Australia after the European invasion, despite the rhetoric of ‘secularism’ and ‘separation of Church and State’²⁶. Thus, this thesis concurs with Michael Phillips’ argument that:

the characterisation of the Australian polity as a deeply secular republic of reason, or alternatively, as a polity endowed with a common sense mutually antagonistic to abstraction of either the religious or the academic kind, is in certain respects misleading (2005:111).

Writing about contemporary Australia, Ghassan Hage argues that Christianity can be, and is used, as a form of ‘cultural capital’ which allows individuals access to ‘governmental’ forms of national belonging (Hage 1998:70). Those seeking to deploy Christianity as a mechanism of belonging are often those ‘lacking’ the two main characteristics of the imagined ‘Australian’ identity – being white and being proficient in spoken English (see also Pettman (1986, 1992)). Hage further argues that this strategic deployment of Christianity is perceived to have the power to ‘[offset] other negatively valued traits in the field of national belonging’ (Hage 1998:61). Those most likely to deploy Christianity in this way are, as Hage calls them, ‘third world looking migrants’.

Thus, the crux of the argument is that, in an Australian context, religion and nation, and religion and race, are inextricably linked even when that link is not immediately apparent or visible, or when the rhetoric of the nation claims that it is secular and that secularism has expunged religion. This thesis

²⁵ It’s important to note that Indigenous forms of spirituality were not given any consideration by the European invaders – rather, they quickly set about trying to Christianise the Indigenous peoples (Stephenson 2004a & b).

²⁶ There was a belief then, as now, that there was something in which ‘we’ all believe called ‘Christian values’ which are the ‘civilising’ principles underpinning ‘secular’ society. In this instance ‘secular’ seems to mean a non-practising or non-sectarian Christianity (Maddox 2004; Randell-Moon 2005).

argues that there is no secularism without a religion that informs it. As Randell-Moon argues, the 'relationship between "whiteness" and a "common morality" informs [areas] of government policy and has implications in relation to the operation of the secular and non-secular in political discourse' and that 'religious values that privilege whiteness can thus be invisibilised through the assumption of secularity' (2005:4). Similarly Jon Stratton (1999) argues that Australian whiteness has been inextricably tied to Christianity particularly since the large intake of migrants in the 1900s. He argues that 'the idea of a common morality has usually been tied to the claim of a common religious heritage, a claim that equates "white" people with Christianity, or a "Judeo-Christian value system"' (Stratton 1999:165).

In his analysis of political debates on Aboriginal Reconciliation, Michael Phillips argues that, 'A secularised theological element continues to mark Australian political debate. This theology passes as a "secular" political idiom because it no longer refers explicitly to God or to religion' (2005:112). He further states that "'secularisation" is not the triumph of reason over faith but the transposition of theological concepts into mundane or earthly political language' (2005:115). It is therefore possible to identify these theological concepts where they appear in both action and discourse.

Indeed, Marion Maddox (2004, 2005) argues that contemporary Australian society (in particular, Australian politics), is experiencing a significant increase in the prominence of these theological (Christian) concepts with regards to a range of key issues. She argues that this rise can be attributed partly to eight years of a conservative Coalition government under the prime ministership of John Howard, combined with the simultaneous rise of the Christian 'Moral Majority' in the United States (and its associated cultural and political implications for Australia), and the perceived threats associated with Islam/Muslims since September 11. Under this political regime, Australia has increasingly seen Christianity portrayed as "'Christian values" as "tradition", related to nationalism, civic order and public safety' (2004:2). Because 'in our much more secular political environment, religion is likely to seem suspect in the same way that race is to post-1960s Americans' then these theological ideas and influences must be subtly couched: 'they just have to be deniable, so their subliminal appeal is not interrupted by rational dissociation' (2004:8).

As many researchers have come to understand, 'white' and 'whiteness' do not refer simply to skin pigmentation, but are used in a political sense in referring to the location of institutional privilege and power as conferred through, and by, the ideologies surrounding race, social class, gender,

sexuality, ability and cultural practices (see also Frankenburg 1995; Dyer 1997; Hage 1998; McKay 1999; Docker & Fischer 2000; Moreton-Robinson 2000). Whiteness studies over the past decade have provided opportunity for critique and reflection upon the privileges and injustices related to these markers of whiteness and yet there has been almost complete silence concerning the way religion is tied up in notions of whiteness in Australia (the exceptions being Hage 1998; Stratton 1999; Randell-Moon 2005). This continuing silence marginalises those people of 'minority' religions in white societies from talking about their experiences of racism.

In recent years in Britain, as in other European countries this discussion of the connections between whiteness and Christianity has begun (Joly 1995; Nonneman, Niblock and Szajkowski 1996; Parker-Jenkins 2002; Modood 2003; Pauly Jr 2004). Britain is a society with a well established, overt and well recognised institutionalised Christianity. Certain 'minority' religions, particularly Muslims and Jews, have called for the dissolution of the links between the Church of England and the State, particularly as represented by the Monarchy and the Houses of Parliament (James 1996:2). They argue that, under the current system, 'minority' religions experience heightened levels of religious racism, and that if the Monarch were to be seen as 'Defender of Faiths' rather than 'Defender of *the* Faith' (that is Defender of the Church of England), Bishops removed from the House of Lords and a more multi-faith approach to religious education introduced, this would ease the situation dramatically (James 1996:2). They see these adjustments as being the start of redressing the impact of racism and reducing future incidents. However, there are a number of critics of this approach, among them, Professor Tariq Modood and Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks who argue that, under the present circumstances, 'minority' religions at least 'know where they stand' whereas if disestablishment were to occur the influences, underlying values, and structural frameworks would remain (Christian) but under the cloak of what Modood calls 'triumphal secularism' (James 1996:2). Thus, some minority religions in Britain, searching for an alternative, are arguing for an option that many Muslims in Australia would argue, does not reduce religious racism and in fact, institutes a discursive framework which allows and encourages a lack of self-reflexivity and critique of the privileges associated with the religious influences in whiteness. Until religion begins to be put under the same scrutiny that other aspects of whiteness are, the experiences of religious racism by 'minority' religions will continue to be marginalised and ignored. In particular, for as long as the discourse of secularity continues, legislative recognition of the marginalisation of religious others that such discourses produce, will remain difficult.

Religious Racism

This thesis argues for a new terminology to describe the experience of negativity and oppression experienced by people based on their religious affiliation, particularly in relation to the experience of Muslims. The term I devise is religious racism and is based on a critique of islamophobia, discrimination and prejudice as inadequate to capture the experiences of Muslims. This thesis also investigates whether or not Muslims are appropriately protected against religious racism under state or commonwealth legislation.

Racism, discrimination or prejudice?

This thesis' argument that religion can be associated with 'racism' is a significant point of departure from many other studies of people with religious 'differences'. It is also one which is crucial because of the inability of most of these existing studies to address the specificity of the experience of individuals, on the basis of their religious affiliation, especially in regards to negativity and hostility. One of the difficulties in writing about racism is the lack of concrete definitions available. The vast majority of writings about racism operate with a taken-for-granted understanding of what racism is, often based upon socio-biological definitions of 'race' and 'culture' (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988; Blaut 1992). In some cases, writers critique common usages of 'racism', for example as being too restrictive, or, too broad, but all too often they do not provide a definition to argue 'for' or 'against' (see for example Hage 1998; Ahmed 2004).

Fazal Rizvi is one of a few writers who elucidates both common understandings of the term 'racism' and some problematic issues related to these definitions:

It has become obvious that racism is a highly contested concept, without any agreed meanings with which to identify its expressions [...] Debates over its meaning and relevance in explaining social relations involve such issues as what counts as 'racism'; how it is best represented; how have its forms changed; how generalisable are its forms; how extensive are its expressions – in sum, what is its nature and scope (1996:2-3).

This thesis is not suggesting that all racism is the same but, although racism is 'not a static, fixed or coherent set of beliefs that uniformly influences the way individuals think and behave regardless of context' (Connolly, 1996:174 as cited in Aveling 2002:122), it can be argued that it is possible to

name racism where it appears (Berger 2001). Rizvi provides a good working definition of racism in which he describes it as manifesting itself not:

only in the explicit attitudes or the use of deliberate emotive and inflammatory language, or even playground fights. More insidiously, it consists in (sic) 'inferential' racism, a more pervasive and subtle form that is based on taken-for-granted assumptions which often pass as commonsense. Racism does not always rest on conscious intentions, but is often built into the structural practices of the state. When located in policies and entrenched practices, it goes beyond simple acts of discrimination, such as direct abuse at (sic) one's background, but constitutes the very pattern of the options and opportunities that people have (Rizvi 1996:6).

It is also important to point out that racism is not always intentional but regardless of intention, racism still has real effects (The Runnymede Trust 1997:1; Beagan 2003; Shain 2003:1; Crittenden 2003:4).

Rizvi, although having developed this concept of racism, discusses its problems, and, also helps explain why so few writers offer their own definitions or conceptualisations of racism. He argues that such a conceptual approach, while it allows for 'empirical observation' because the researcher has already established what is to be identified, does not allow for 'historical trajectories' or discussions of how the term has developed and changed over time (Rizvi 1996:9). He, like Shain (2003), Brah (1992) and Sara Ahmed (2004), agree with Hall's assessment that it is more useful to 'look for "not racism in general but racisms", to study its particular formations in actual practices' (Rizvi 1996:9).

Discrimination has frequently been used as a term that is interchangeable with 'racism'. Discrimination may be defined broadly as the *active* disadvantage experienced by *individuals* on the basis of one or more of their markers of identity (Weller, Feldman et al 2004) which are 'irrelevant' to the situation (although what is considered 'irrelevant' is culturally defined and contextualised). For instance, it is not discrimination to refuse to employ a male in a job that involves body searching females, as being female is deemed a necessary element of that job²⁷. This active disadvantaging includes such behaviours as the refusal of employment, failure to provide equal pay for equal work, or the refusal to provide adequate housing or medical care to these individuals. Some definitions also expand the definition of discrimination to include the

²⁷ Using an example involving religion, it would not be discrimination if an organisation seeking to employ a Hindu priest refused to employ a Catholic nun because being Hindu is deemed a necessity for that particular job.

curtailment of certain civil and political rights such as the prevention of individuals from performing religious or cultural duties/devotions/ceremonies/worship, or the prevention of the building of places of worship (Dunn 2001; Weller, Feldman et al. 2001).

It is clear that this definition of discrimination does not address negative attitudes or pervasive/unspoken codes of conduct that systematically and repeatedly represent people with a particular identity (Bhabha 2000:354) without *actively* and directly disadvantaging them. Consequently, I would argue that, due to its narrow focus, 'discrimination' is not an appropriate alternative to 'racism', but rather, discrimination can be seen as one aspect of a racist framework. Another criticism is that the term discrimination is also primarily concerned with individuals: it is *individuals* who are disadvantaged and *individuals* who perpetrate the disadvantage. This discourse of individualism allows the wider society to abdicate any responsibility for the incidents and means that the structures and discourses that facilitate and enable racism remain unchallenged (Rizvi 1990:171; The Runnymede Trust 1997:61-62).

Another word that is commonly used as an interchangeable alternative to 'racism' or 'discrimination', and which also erroneously attributes negativity solely to individuals is 'prejudice'. Rizvi (1990) and Basil Moore (1993) discuss the origins of this concept as being the work of 'social psychologists in the 1950s, such as Theodore W. Adorno [*The Authoritarian Personality*] (1950) and Gordon W. Allport [*The Nature of Prejudice*] (1954) (Rizvi 1990:170). While both Rizvi and Moore argue that there have been different manifestations of the 'Prejudice Thesis' in the relevant literature, they also argue that all the theorisations place the individual as the locus of racism and that all theorisations are heavily psychologised. Moore particularly critiques the two most commonly used variants of the thesis: 'racism-as-product-of-ignorance' and 'racism-as-product-of-deviant-personality' (Moore 1993:54). The theorising of racism as an individual expression, that is the actions and beliefs of individuals who do not 'understand' the 'cultures'²⁸ of people different to themselves (i.e. in Australia this would be the cultures of those who are not white, Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Christian) and, who therefore fear these differences, position this 'misunderstanding' as a phenomenon that can be 'solved' through 'cultural exchange' and education. As Moore reports, the 1989 Commonwealth government policy statement, *The Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* claimed 'racism is grounded in ignorance and will not be rooted out until all Australians

²⁸ Again, in many of these studies, religion is included in the term 'culture'.

have a sympathetic knowledge and understanding of other cultures' (Moore 1993:53). Both he and Rizvi (1990) argue that this 'cultural exchange' in reality does little to reduce 'prejudice' and 'ends up placing the onus of racism on those most at risk in our society' (Moore 1993:54). This is because under a psychologised perspective of 'prejudice' issues such as poor self-esteem, disillusionment with prospects of employment, the mental impact of poverty and marginalisation increase the prevalence of 'prejudice'.

Moore also critiques the theorising of racism as the behaviour of aberrant individuals, that is, individuals who behave in a racist manner towards other individuals because of some 'unfortunate personality structures' (Moore 1993:53). Rizvi describes this as constructing individuals as if they are 'irrational, even pathological [and] it suggests that where individuals are prejudiced, they must be trained to become more rational' (Rizvi 1990:170). This theorisation also assumes that there exist 'sane', 'normal', 'unprejudiced' individuals who are 'ultimately the locus of [their own] judgements or capacities' (Rizvi 1990:170). Rizvi here is demonstrating that this view of prejudice assumes that the concept of a normative individual is a spurious one 'located in the traditions of the West' (Rizvi 1990:170), that is, traditions of 'rationality', normativity and 'reason' (Said 1995; Rizvi 1996).

While prejudice has developed popular commonsense understandings and usage it is still a concept in use within the field of psychology today. These studies retain the use of prejudice to describe the motivation, symptoms, effect and impact of racisms (Cunningham, Nezlek and Banaji 2004; Ekehammar, Akrami, et al 2004; Hugenberg & Bodenhausen 2004; Ito, Thompson & Cacioppo 2004; Plant 2004; Vanman, Saltz et al 2004). Thus, understandings of 'prejudice' concentrate on the attitudes that inform the behaviour of individuals while ignoring the possible or actual effects of these attitudes. Where they do focus upon results they tend to be on overt forms of racist violence (physical and verbal abuse) rather than the 'more pervasive form that is based on taken-for-granted assumptions that often pass as commonsense' (Rizvi 1990:171).

In another significant point of difference from previous dominant understandings, this thesis delineates religion from culture and thus differentiates between 'cultural racism' (Blaut 1992) and 'religious racism'. Both Shain (2003) and The Runnymede Trust (1997) use the term 'racism' in relation to religion as well as ethnicity, race, nationality and other aspects of identity, thus recognising that religion can no longer be adequately addressed by analyses of such elements as

'culture' or 'ethnicity'. I have conjoined the words 'religious' and 'racism' to reinforce my argument that 'racism' can denote both individual attitudes and behaviours as well as social structures which embed advantage and disadvantage for different groups, and my argument that 'religion' must be analysed if the specificity of experience, situation and context relating to Muslims is to be appropriately addressed.

Islamophobia: an Example of Religious Racism or the 'Prejudice Thesis' Revisited?

Having established arguments for a discrete category of racism called religious racism, this section will focus on what has, until now, been theorised as one specific type of racism, that is, 'islamophobia' (The Runnymede Trust 1997; Bloul 2003). 'Islamophobia' is a term that has been increasing in usage in recent years and commonly refers to 'dread or hatred of Islam – and therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims'²⁹ (The Runnymede Trust 1997:1)³⁰. The first formal study of this phenomenon came from British anti-racist activists in 1997 who conducted an inquiry into the presence of anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain. Although the report draws links between the sorts of racism experienced by Muslims in Britain and that experienced by other 'minority' groups, it is clear that the form of racism most similar to 'islamophobia' is anti-Semitism³¹ (The Runnymede Trust 1997).

Since the Runnymede Trust's report, 'islamophobia' has gained currency within popular and academic debate, although the Trust admits that it did not 'coin the term' (The Runnymede Trust 1997) as it was already in use among many British Muslim communities. However, like the Trust, I do not believe that 'islamophobia' is an adequate/appropriate term as the theoretical underpinnings appear to be a return to the 'prejudice thesis' whereby racism/discrimination is located as a problem within misguided or 'ignorant' individuals³².

²⁹ A number of commentators use this definition of islamophobia (or versions of it) (Appleton 2002; Vertovec 2002; Bloul 2003).

³⁰ The Trust's definitions of 'islamophobia' appear to be contradictory. On page one it is described in the above terms but later, on page four, it is defined as 'unfounded hostility towards Islam ... also [as] the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and ... the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs'. This second definition is closer to my view of religious racism – as a definition which acknowledges both individual and structural racisms and which has a variety of causes, not just fear. The report vacillates between both definitions throughout.

³¹ The fact that this report arose as a direct result of the Trust's investigation into British anti-Semitism adds credence to my argument that there is a specific form of racism that can be termed 'religious racism' (see The Runnymede Trust 1997).

³² The Trust itself argues that the term 'islamophobia' is not 'ideal' for the same reasons as I have outlined above (The Runnymede Trust 1997:4).

Islamophobia is seen to be a 'phobia', an uncontrolled and uncontrollable fear of Islam and Muslims that a deviant individual may experience in much the same way that certain individuals have an uncontrollable fear of heights or of spiders (see also The Runnymede Trust 1997; Halliday 1999; Appleton 2002; Vertovec 2002; Crittenden 2003). It is this uncontrollable fear that marks the individual as aberrant – 'normal' people do not have phobias – however their response to the stimulus of their phobia is excused as an uncontrollable action³³. In this way, individuals exhibiting such racist behaviour can be exonerated, *they* become the victims rather than those they attack³⁴.

One of the solutions that is invariably raised when 'islamophobia' is discussed, both in British and Australian studies, is the need for 'cultural exchange' with Muslims so that 'ignorance' and 'fear' is reduced (The Runnymede Trust 1997; Halliday 1999; Saniotis 2002a). However, this has the effect of placing responsibility for overcoming racism on the shoulders of the targets rather than on those who evince or encourage (intentionally or unintentionally) religious racism. Thus, Muslims are exhorted to initiate such exchanges, to be generous, understanding and open-hearted to those who may have behaved inappropriately and to excuse them for 'being ignorant'. Muslim communities are encouraged to open their mosques, their schools and their community centres so that non-Muslim Australians can see that Muslims are not people to fear. If Muslims refuse or resist this 'cultural exchange' they are positioned as being obstructionist, mean spirited and somehow justifying or encouraging further racism against themselves (Halliday 1999:899-900).

Not only has religious racism been largely ignored in academic studies and texts, it has also been marginalised in legislative documents and discussions. The following chapter section maps the absence of due legislative attention to the issue of religious racism as it relates to South Australia.

³³ See the examples of racism which is excused by the aggressors as being a natural response to a 'terrifying' opponent – Islam (The Runnymede Trust 1997:7-10).

³⁴ This phenomenon of blaming the victim has been discussed by Eve Sedgwick in relation to 'gay bashings' in which she argues that there has developed a defence of 'homosexual panic' when someone attacks a person who has made a homosexual advance. She ridicules the argument that this is a pathological psychological condition by noting that it is not a defence for a woman to plead 'gender panic' after attacking a man, nor is it a defence to plead 'race panic' when one bashes a person of another race (Sedgwick 1990:18-19).

A Gap in the Legislation: Bureaucratic Recognition of Religious Racism?

Under Australia's two tier political system there are, consequently, two tiers of legislation – Commonwealth and State. With regards to anti-discrimination or anti-racism legislation within the South Australian jurisdiction three major pieces of legislation are of particular importance: the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975), the Commonwealth *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act* (1986), and the South Australian *Racial Vilification Act* (1996).

The 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) states that the Commonwealth has the power to create laws:

with respect to the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws ... to make the provisions contained in this Act for the prohibition of racial discrimination and certain other forms of discrimination (1975:1).

The RDA defines its purpose of outlawing racial discrimination in the following way:

It is unlawful for a person to do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (part II s9(1)).

The first part of this legislation is concerned with the consequences of material deprivation that a person may experience on the basis of their race which, according to the legislative definition, includes ethnicity and national identity. By material deprivation I refer to the deprivation of, or access to, 'equality before the law' (part II s10), 'access to places and facilities' (part II s11), 'land, housing and other accommodation' (part II s12), 'provision of goods and services' (part II s13) and 'employment' (part II s15), among others. The second part of the legislation refers to a more general understanding of racism rather than quantifiable material deprivations. It outlaws the use of visual images, words, gestures, writing, sounds or any combination of these that occur in public and are 'reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:30) on the basis of a person or people's race, colour, ethnic or national origin. There is broad provision however for such examples as artistic works and performances, academic debates and publications, and journalistic reporting to be exempt from liability.

The RDA operates on the premise that racial discrimination affects people primarily on the basis of their ethnicity but it does not provide a working definition of the term. In 1995 the RDA was amended to increase the types of behaviours that were deemed unlawful under the act. The Explanatory Memorandum³⁵ attached to the amended RDA explained that, because ethnicity is a contested and broad term, the Australian courts would follow the precedent set in overseas cases, in particular the British case *King-Ansell v Police* (1972) (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:30). It further states that:

The definition of an ethnic group formulated by the Court in *King-Ansell* involves consideration of one or more characteristics such as shared history, separate cultural tradition, common geographical origin or descent from common ancestors, a common language (not necessarily peculiar to the group), a common literature peculiar to the group, or a religion different from that of neighbouring groups or the general community surrounding the group. This would provide the broadest basis for protection of peoples such as Sikhs, Jews and Muslims.

The term 'race' would include ideas of ethnicity so ensuring that many people of, for example, Jewish origin would be covered. While that term connotes the idea of a common descent, it is not necessarily limited to one nationality and would therefore extend also to other groups of people such as Muslims (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:30).

While the Memorandum appears to be broad enough to protect Muslims it is still the role of the courts to decide if 'Muslim people are included in the term race or ethnic origin' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:31). The HREOC report (2004:31) makes it clear that, regardless of the Explanatory Memorandum, current case law indicates that it is 'uncertain whether a court would find that Muslim people constitute a group with a common race or ethnic origin' as required by the RDA.

Despite this, and despite religion or religious affiliation not being specifically mentioned in the RDA, it is possible for some Muslims who feel disadvantaged, wronged or discriminated against to seek justice, recompense or restitution under the legislation providing that the act can be judged to have been:

³⁵ This is a memorandum issued by the relevant Minister which explains the legislation's aims and objectives (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:39).

done for 2 or more reasons; and

(b) one of the reasons is the race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin of a person (whether or not it is the dominant reason or a substantial reason for doing the act);

then, for the purposes of this Part, the act is taken to be done for that reason (part II s18(a-b)).

Thus, under the RDA, Muslims in Australia remain unprotected from religious racism (as manifested either as discrimination (material deprivation) or more subtle forms of racism) unless they can prove that the act took place at least partially on the basis of issues such as race, ethnicity or national origin. This however means that the 'religious' aspect of the racism is, in effect, ignored by the justice process. As the HREOC report argues, 'if a person feels they have been discriminated against solely because they are of the Islamic faith then, on the basis of the current case law, it is unlikely that they are covered by the grounds in the RDA' (2004:29).

The Commonwealth *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act* (1986) (HREOC Act) is the legislative basis for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). Unlike the RDA, the HREOC Act specifically mentions religion (part I s3(a-d)). It ensures that HREOC has the power to protect the right to freedom of religion and belief of all Australians by establishing that it is unlawful to prevent an individual from practising their religion or belief³⁶, it is unlawful to prevent the free assembling for worship, unlawful to prevent proselytisation via publications (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:32). The HREOC Act also gives the Commission the ability to investigate and 'attempt to conciliate complaints of discrimination in employment or occupation on a number of specified grounds including religion' (2004: 32). However, the key difference between the RDA and the HREOC Act is that actions brought about under the RDA are assessed in a court of law and therefore any decisions are enforceable ones made by the Federal Court or the Federal Magistrates Court whereas the findings of the Commission are not and therefore 'the respondent can ignore them if it wishes to do so' (2004:33). Consequently the HREOC Act provides very limited protection for Muslims in a very limited manner.

The third piece of legislation that relates to racism is the South Australian *Racial Vilification Act* (1996) (RVA). This legislation covers racist acts which are deemed to occur in public, incites 'hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:33), or threatens physical harm against another person or group of people on

³⁶ The Australian Constitution guarantees religious freedom in Ch5 s116, a freedom which no longer appears in many of the contemporary Acts.

the basis of the 'nationality, country of origin, colour or ethnic origin' (s3) but does not cover religious discrimination. In the RVA, s4 makes racial vilification a criminal act while the *Wrongs Act 1936* (SA) in s37 has 'provisions for torts for acts of racial vilification' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:40).

The RVA does not mention religion and therefore South Australians are not protected if they feel vilified or discriminated against on the basis of their religious affiliation. South Australia has the unhappy distinction of being only one of two states and territories not to address this aspect of racism³⁷. New South Wales is the other state but, unlike South Australia, New South Wales at least has legislation which outlaws discrimination on the grounds of 'ethno-religious origin' although it precludes those who cannot establish that their religion is closely tied to their ethnic origin³⁸ (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:33-34). Although this is inadequate in addressing all religious racism it does provide some people with some protection whereas no-one is protected under South Australian legislation on the basis of their religion.

To summarise the legal protection of Muslims in South Australia who feel that they are the recipients of religious racism, it is clear that they are largely unprotected by either State or Commonwealth legislation, in either a criminal or civil court. As HREOC states, 'a person who believes they have been discriminated against (or vilified) solely because of their religion has no legally enforceable rights' if the act occurred in South Australia (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:35).

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has long suspected that Muslims in Australia suffer racism on the basis of their religion and that this is not recognised and reflected in legislation. In 1991 they began an investigation into the experiences of racism and racist violence. The *National Inquiry into Racist Violence* (1991) heard numerous anecdotes of violence

³⁷ In 2002 in Victoria a new piece of anti-racism legislation was brought into effect – *The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2002* (RRTA). This act outlawed vilification on the basis of race or religion. The Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission describes vilification as 'public behaviour that incites hatred against, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of, another person or group of people because of their race or religion. [The Act] also prohibits "serious" vilification which includes intentional intimidation, threats of physical harm, damage to property or the intentional incitement of others to do this' (see Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria website www.standuptoracism.com.au/default.asp?nc=7848&id=401). A few months after the legislation came into effect the Islamic Council of Victoria lodged a complaint under the RRTA. They alleged that comments made by, and literature published by, an evangelical Christian church, Catch the Fire Ministries, vilified Muslims. In a decision by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) two of the church's pastors, Danny Nalliah and Daniel Scot, were found to have vilified Muslims. They appealed their case but on July 22 2005, Justice Michael Higgins ordered that they did make incorrect and vilifying comments about Muslims and he ordered that the pastors make an apology and an undertaking not to commit further vilification (Downie July 3, 2005; Zwartz June 22, 2005; Monson June 24, 2005).

³⁸ Thus many Muslims would not be protected by these pieces of legislations, for example, Muslims of Italian, German, French, Maori, Torres Strait Islander, Spanish or Japanese background.

experienced by Arab and Muslim Australians during the Gulf War. After hearing submissions from individuals and communities around Australia, the report argued that there were 'deeper, long-term underlying tensions as the root cause of racist violence against Arab and Muslims Australians' than simply the Gulf War (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:36). It recommended that the RDA be amended to outlaw incitement to racial hostility. This recommendation was taken up by the Commonwealth. Five years later, a *Review of the Racial Discrimination Act (1995-1996)* was part of HREOC's marking of the 20th anniversary of the RDA. Many submissions were taken from individuals and community representatives which argued that the RDA needed to be amended to protect people on the basis of religion.

In response to these two studies, the *National Inquiry into Freedom of Religion and Belief (1997-1998)* recommended that a Commonwealth Religious Freedom Act be enacted which would have provisions for the outlawing of 'both discrimination and vilification on the grounds of religion and belief' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:37). The federal government rejected this recommendation but the following year, in 1999, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquired into Australia's 'efforts to promote and protect freedom of religion' (2004:37) and published its report in 2000 which endorsed HREOC's work regarding freedom of religion. It also made a recommendation that all Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation be reviewed to improve the protection for religious freedom.

In 2003 the *E-race forum on Islamophobia* was implemented as a direct response to the wave of racism that Arab and Muslim Australians experienced initially after September 11, 2001, and then again after the Bali bombings on October 12, 2002. The forum was set up to investigate whether 'the federal RDA can protect people discriminated against or vilified as Muslims' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:37). Individuals and community representatives made submissions to the electronic noticeboard about whether or not current legislation adequately protected Muslims. They were also asked to respond to the question of whether or not Muslims constitute an ethnic group (which are protected under the legislation). HREOC took this approach because they argued that there was a likelihood of altering existing legislation (RDA which protects people against ethnicity based racism) in order to include Muslims (if there was consensus that Muslims constituted an ethnic group). HREOC also believed that there was little likelihood of convincing the Commonwealth parliament to enact new legislation aimed at outlawing religious

racism. The forum concluded that because Muslims are not an ethnic group 'it is unlikely that they are protected by the RDA' (2004:37).

Thus, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, on the basis of the five studies they have undertaken, argue that Muslims can/do suffer 'racism' that is based solely on their religious affiliation. While HREOC writes about 'religious discrimination' and 'religious vilification', as has been argued earlier, 'religious racism' is a more appropriate and encompassing term. Indeed, HREOC uses the word 'racism' throughout their report although interchangeably with 'discrimination' and 'vilification'. HREOC's various reports provide incontrovertible evidence that religious racism exists in Australia and that Muslims in South Australia are largely unprotected by any legislation.

Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining the history of Muslims in Australia from pre-white invasion to the present. It argued that, while pre-invasion interactions with Indigenous people during this time were positive overall, the interactions with white Australia since then has not been so positive. Drawing on the work of Dyer and Said, this section located current tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim white Australians within a long history and one in which a racist version of Christianity figures strongly. The claim that South Australia is a 'secular' state is critiqued by outlining the continuing influence of Christianity in South Australia.

The final section took up marginalisation and oppression of Muslims within this Christian-influenced state, and attempted to define the oppression, hostility and disadvantage Muslims experience based on their religious affiliation. Terminologies currently in use are critiqued as being inappropriate or inadequate. Instead religious racism is a more useful term that better encapsulates the phenomenon. This chapter argued that Muslims in South Australia are completely unprotected against religious racism.

The following chapter explains the methodological basis for this thesis and contains a discussion of the research methods used. The primary data for the thesis was collected both through an analysis of the print media and interviews with young Muslims women, these two sources are brought together when the impact of media representations and their impact on the lives of young Muslim women in South Australia are discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six, Chapter Seven takes up the theme of religious racism in everyday experiences, and Chapter Eight addresses issues of identity formation for women who experience religious racism.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Methodology

This thesis is built around data collected from two primary research strategies: an analysis of print media representations of Muslims and Islam and interviews with young Muslim women. The interviews provide perspectives and 'real life' experiences from the women while the media analysis offers insights into the social context in which the women experience the world. Further complementarity is provided in the interviews when the women specifically reflect on media representations and the ways in which these impact on their lives. Precedent for combining media analyses with interview data can be found in studies such as Hall, Chritcher et al (1978); Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization (1998); Bullock & Jafri (2000); Bullock (2002); Shain (2003). In particular I drew upon the work of Jafri et al (1998) in developing the intersection between the two research strands. Jafri et al's study provided me with a method of developing interview questions that drew out the women's responses to the media representations. While I drew upon this research in the formulation of some of the interview questions, my interview process differed significantly from Jafri et al's, particularly in its use of concrete examples of media representations. As will be discussed later, I selected a number of representations which I felt were examples of a range of common representations of print media representations of Muslim women. I asked the women to reflect on these representations and talk about their feelings and responses to them. Further discussion of the methods used in the analysis of the media representations is provided in Chapters Five and Seven. This chapter focuses particularly on the interview strand of the data gathering process.

This chapter argues that, although it may not be numerically or demographically representative, this study provides an opportunity to hear the voices of Muslim women in South Australia on issues of racism and representation. Using the concept of an 'insider researcher', this chapter argues that as a young Muslim woman in South Australia myself, I am well placed to conduct this particular study. However, some of the complexities that may arise when conducting insider research, and, specifically the particular issues which arose during the course of this study, are addressed. The chapter outlines some of the motivations and inspirations for particular decisions taken in the planning and execution of the research, as well as evaluating these decisions.

The chapter then moves into a detailed examination of the methodologies used in the interview stage of the research. It addresses both the feminist methodology underlying many of the decisions taken in how to approach and structure the interviews, as well as the specific criteria developed to select appropriate participants. This chapter also includes a discussion of the process taken in the post interview analysis phase of the research. It concludes with a brief biography of each of the women who participated in the study.

Methodological considerations

As outlined in Chapter One, due to the paucity of studies that focus on either Australian Muslims' experiences of religious racism or on young Muslim women with a strong religious identity, this study necessitates the participation of young Muslim women with strong religious identities and who are able to speak about their experiences (or lack thereof) of religious racism in contemporary Australia. I argue that it is important that the participants of this study place a strong emphasis on their religious identity because I am investigating how these women negotiate their lives in a society that is inherently hostile to those uninfluenced by a Christian tradition, especially those who actively practise a non-Christian religion such as Islam. This study also investigates the gendered particularity of these experiences of religious racism by examining the intersections of gender and religion in racist encounters and to this end it is important that the participants be women.

Using South Australia as a case study was the most logical decision for a timely completion of the project as it was a context and location with which I was familiar, having grown up in South Australia and living there at the time of conducting the research. As will become evident, many of the participants in this study were located within the Adelaide area because the majority of Muslim South Australians live within its metropolitan area along with 73 percent of the South Australian population (in the ABS 2001 Census, 7478 South Australians identified themselves as Muslim and of these 6644 were in the Adelaide metropolitan area).

'Me' as a researcher

Given the relatively small Muslim population in Adelaide it is highly unlikely that even in a random selection of ten Muslim women aged between 18 and 30 I would not know at least a few on a personal basis (in the 2001 Census there were 2967 Muslim women identified as living within the

Adelaide metropolitan area but it is not possible to identify how many of these women fall into the relevant age category for this study). Consequently my being acquainted, and in some instances very good friends, with all the participants is not unusual or alarming. Chilla Bulbeck writes a clear and interesting justification of her interviewing of close friends in *Living Feminism* (Bulbeck 1997) in which she talks about the value of the practice. She argues that the interviewer is often able to pursue issues to a much 'deeper' level because they are aware of the interviewee's personal background and ideas on the subject. There is also an already existing bond of trust and intimacy between the two which allows for a greater range and freedom of conversation. The dynamics of power may not be quite so marked or potentially disruptive to the 'flow' of the interview as they might be if the bond of friendship did not exist between interviewer and interviewee. Interviewing my friends was a very interesting and enjoyable experience, particularly the light-hearted moments we shared while we adjusted our register from a very informal friendship register to one more suited to an in-depth interview whilst still retaining a degree of informality and 'conversation'. The moments which caused us the greatest mirth were those in which I, as researcher, asked the participants questions about their family and community backgrounds for the purposes of the tape recorder although I knew what their answers would be, having been friends with those particular people since my childhood.

Doing 'insider research' means that the particular kinds and the depth of responses make this research different to many other studies carried out that have involved Muslim women and which have relied on selecting participants in a more 'detached' or 'random' way (Mubarak 1996; Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998; Zaidi & Shuraydi 2002; Shain 2003). This approach to participant selection marks my study as being grounded in a feminist methodology which rejects more 'scientific' or positivist approaches to qualitative research (Stanley and Wise 1990). Anne Sofie Roald, a Norwegian Muslim woman researching and writing about Muslim attitudes towards and about women, writes:

As an 'insider' I acquired knowledge which would perhaps never have been accessible to a non-Muslim researcher...I thus believe that the knowledge a Muslim researcher obtains in studies on Muslims is *different* from the knowledge a non-Muslim might obtain due to different approaches and due to the difference in 'cultural language', i.e. perceptions of objects or statements between Muslim and non-Muslim researchers (Roald 2001:70).

This 'insider' status was a positive aspect of my own study as I was able to connect with the participants on the basis of a shared sense of Muslimness, a shared gender, a similar age, class

and educational background, thus I was well placed to pursue 'leads' which arose during the interview process (Altorki & El Solh 1988). The value of my insider knowledge is evident even in the process taken to locate participants – via an usra³⁹. A non-Muslim researcher would be unlikely to know about the existence of such a study group. In the unlikely event that they were aware, they would not have direct access to such a group on account of it being limited to Muslim women. Similarly, my implicit understanding and shared experience of many of the incidents the women narrated assisted in the creation of a comfortable interviewing environment in which the participants were able to tell me deeply personal stories trusting that, as a Muslim woman and as a friend, I would honour their stories and their agency. One of the participants told me after the interview that she had really enjoyed the experience and felt comfortable telling me things 'warts and all' because she felt that I would understand her viewpoint and therefore she did not feel as if she had to mediate or alter her stories. Thus, my own identity as a young Muslim woman was essential in creating the necessary bonds of trust for these interviews to take place. This is particularly important given the current 'war on terrorism' context in which many Muslims feel uncomfortable about expressing any dissatisfaction with the society in which they are located for fear that this may in some way be construed as a rejection of that society, or worse, as a statement of bad intention towards that society. In particular, some narratives of harassment and the women's dissatisfaction with the behaviour of public servants and officials would not have been told to non-Muslim interviewers because the women would have felt too unsure of their research agenda and motivation. Interviewees would have wondered: what is this interviewer's attitude towards Islam? Will my stories be co-opted to tell a 'tale of oppression' or similar stereotypical narrative? What is this interviewer's relationship with governmental forms of surveillance and control? How anonymous will my stories be? Will my stories be used 'against' the broader Australian Muslim community under current regimes of surveillance and control as encouraged by the 'war on terror'? Will the interviewer respect and acknowledge my agency and personal choices or will my stories be written into a narrative of religious extremism and/or religious oppression?⁴⁰

³⁹ The usra is an informal group which meets almost every Saturday night to discuss various religious texts, pray together, eat together and share some social time together. While it is informal and not hierarchically organised, with most people taking turns to prepare a discussion or choose a topic and reading for discussion, there is an understanding of which women are more religiously knowledgeable and it is these women to whom the usra turns for specific explanations or exposition of certain points.

⁴⁰ For a detailed discussion of some of the issues that may arise for 'minority' researchers engaged in insider research see Tuhiwai Smith 1999:137-140. See also the discussions in Altorki & El Solh (1988) and Joseph (1996). These texts detail some of the tensions and benefits (ethical, social, emotional and methodological) for women who engage in research with their 'own' people.

However, as Roald (2001:70-71) suggests, there can be drawbacks to 'insider' research as well. When so much is taken-for-granted between the interviewer and interviewee there is the possibility that the interviewer will make certain assumptions or reach conclusions without pursuing these within the interview situation. Altorki & El Solh argue that on occasion 'insider' researchers 'may experience difficulty in recognizing patterns in which he or she has been socialized' (1988:8). Indeed, in my own research, this drawback became apparent when I reflected on what I had taken for granted in the interviews with young Muslim women, I shared a great deal of commonalities with these women, particularly the gendered aspects of our identity and experiences. The interview situations can be conceptualised as women-only spaces (Bullock 2002) in which gender is not only taken for granted but becomes a positive point of connection. It was expressed as humour and play, and, celebrated but also commiserated over with regard to shared experiences that are less positive. But in constructing such an environment this can, and indeed did, lead to some of the foundational aspects of gender being taken for granted. Because the women I spoke to emphasised their religious identity, as being Muslim women and perhaps because of shared assumptions concerning gender the research process did not take explicit interest in the specific experiences of 'gender' per se, but only focused on gender when it intersected with the women's religious identity.

Thus, this thesis contains analyses of how Muslim women are presented in gendered ways in dominant discourses but does not contain analyses of the women's gendered experiences, within their Muslim communities. This is not to say that I did not collect such data. On the contrary, after much reflection about my initial lack of focus on the women's gendered experiences, I decided to explore the issue of gender with a small focus group interview made up of two women I'd previously interviewed (Naima and Mariyah) and two women who met all the criteria for the initial interviews but who were unable to participate in those first interviews (Amina and Fauzia). This focus group was conducted in July 2005 and once again I utilised a semi-structured, in-depth method of interviewing (see Appendix Three for list of prompts) and, again, the interview was recorded and transcribed.

My main motivation for conducting this focus group interview was to answer a number of questions that had arisen in my own mind from studying the 'gaps' in the data I previously collected. How did being a woman figure in their identity and did this ever shift in focus so that in some contexts they would be more aware of their gendered identity than they appeared to be in the interviews? If, as

the data in this thesis conclusively shows, Muslim women and Muslim men are positioned/represented differently in the media and by the non-Muslim population, how did this impact on the women's sense of a gendered self⁴¹? Was their gendered identity constituted positively or negatively in relation to their religious identity? The focus group generated some very interesting material, and, in some places in the thesis, I have utilised this data to support arguments made. Where such data appears it is clearly labelled as arising out of the focus group rather than the initial interviews.

I argue that my research can be seen as part of the assertion of a Muslim academic voice, in much the same way as there is a growing Indigenous Australian academic voice, a voice which seeks to revise dominant academic and popular discourses which objectify Muslims and which seeks to facilitate the speaking out of Muslim women in a manner that demonstrates their agency and subjectivity (Abou-Bakr 2001; Roald 2001; Bullock 2002). As such, my project can also be seen as coming from a feminist research history in which there is an emphasis and a legitimacy placed on 'women's own understanding of their experiences' (Maynard 1994) through the lens of the specificity of experience of being young, female and Muslim in Australia (rather than through the lens of the 'universal woman'). My research also combines an analysis of the wider discourses surrounding the women's experiences.

My research also takes up the traditional feminist research approach of 'standpoint' research. As Harriet Moore argues 'standpoint theory assumes that women have a different perspective from men, and that different groups of women will also differ in their standpoints' (Moore 1994:84). In this thesis I write from the perspective and standpoint of a young Muslim woman and I present the ideas and analyses of young Muslim women in South Australia – a group of women whose voices have often been ignored or obscured in academic research.

⁴¹ Part of the taken-for-grantedness relating to 'gender' in the interviews may have arisen from our (the interviewee's and my own) understandings of the gendered roles/responsibilities in Islam. While there is debate about how to define or articulate the religiously ordained differences between men and women in Islam, there is no doubt that within Muslim communities there are particular sets of rights/responsibilities/behaviour for women and a corresponding but differing set of the same for men. This thesis does not focus on these gendered practices and knowledges unless they arise in the interviews. Although these practices/knowledges may have operated as taken-for-granted in this research they are not well understood by non-Muslims in Australia. As a result, a discussion of these issues also appears when I discuss the gendered aspects of popular representations of Muslim women.

'From the perspective of a Muslim woman': Feminist Standpoint Theory

Harding (2004a) argues that feminist standpoint theory had its origins in 1970s and 1980s feminist debates about knowledge production and the location of power. Standpoint theory challenged traditional 'scientific' approaches to research that saw politics as detrimental to knowledge production, and therefore, necessarily separate from it (2004a:1). Feminist standpoint theory offered both a method and a methodology that enabled a politically empowered and empowering form of research. At the heart of this research approach was the notion that all conventional research philosophies 'obscured their normative features behind a veil of claimed neutrality' (2004a:2), and the notion that research can be used as a way of 'empowering oppressed groups, of valuing their experiences, and of pointing out ways to develop "oppositional consciousness"' (2004a:2).

Harding's edited collection (2004b) maps the various trajectories and manifestations of feminist standpoint theory but the arguments of most pertinence to this thesis are that research which claims to operate using feminist standpoint theory, as this thesis does, automatically must engage with discourses of power and privilege and seek to locate these oppressive structures and practices within the everyday lives of women, particularly women identified as 'minority' (2004a:6). Applying these notions to this thesis, my research engages with the discourses of power and privilege in contemporary Australian society with particular emphasis on discourses of religious racism and it also seeks to locate these oppressive structures and practices within the everyday lives of young Muslim women in South Australia.

Standpoint theory politicises knowledge production and identifies its power and its potential for social change for oppressed groups. As Harding argues, 'standpoint theories map how a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage' (2004a:8) and so studies that discuss the oppression of particular groups are necessary for the development of political strategies which overcome such oppression. This thesis deals with the social and political disadvantage of young Muslim women in South Australia as a way of contributing to the production of epistemological and political strategies that can be utilised to the benefit of these women. Although a number of studies detail the oppression and disadvantage of a range of oppressed groups it is important to detail the specific experiences of young Muslim women in Australia because:

different groups are oppressed in different ways, each has the possibility (not the certainty) of developing distinctive insights about systems of social relations in general in which their oppression is a feature (Harding 2004a:9).

Interview Methods and Methodology

The material in a number of the following chapters (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight) comes largely from interviews conducted with ten young women. My criteria for selection were that the women self identified as Muslim, were aged between 18 and 30 years old, had lived in Australia for a minimum of five years and in South Australia for at least the previous two years, were fluent in spoken English language and had a familiarity with the Australian media. These criteria enabled me to access people with a fairly detailed knowledge, and experience, of the political and social context of life as a Muslim in (South) Australia. It was important that the women in the study met the criteria because I wanted to ensure, as far as possible, that the narratives of racism (if any) that the women told me could not be 'explained away' by issues such as maladjustment to Australia, i.e. as a recent arrival, misunderstanding of the nuances of the English language, or as a lack of familiarity with South Australian institutions and media (and thus the incident was simply a misreading of the cultural and contextual norms).

I decided that the most appropriate form of participant data collection for this research was through the medium of interviews. Traditionally interviews have been seen as a scientific tool to gather data about aspects of the research objects which are not otherwise observable (Benney and Hughes 1970) but feminist approaches to interviews have placed more of an emphasis on the shared nature of the experience and tried to redistribute or equalise the location of power generated within the interview situation (Oakley 1981; Stanley & Wise 1990). Consequently feminist methodologies have most often favoured in-depth and semi-structured (or unstructured) interviews in which there is a greater level of opportunity of interviewer/interviewee interaction and rapport. In these types of interviews, the interviewees have opportunities to speak about the research in ways which may diverge from the interviewer's conceptualisation of how the interview will progress. They can question the questioner, they can open up areas for discussion which the interviewer hadn't thought of, or was reluctant to open, or they can side-track the discussion in ways which subvert the interviewer's agenda. These sorts of interviews challenge the notion that the interviewer is the repository of all power and knowledge and the interviewee is merely an object worthy of

observation and study (Oakley 1981). For example, in the discussion of one of the media images one of the interviewees gave an analysis that I had not thought of. This analysis allowed for a totally different reading of the image to the dominant reading but would not have arisen in a more structured interview.

In each interview I had a page of interview prompts that was a list of all the issues I wished to cover within the interview (see Appendix Three). These prompts were devised after a careful analysis of the literature in which I developed a number of themes and issues that I wished to pursue with the participants. For example, the literature around identity suggested that most people have a range of identities that are equal but that different identities come to the fore depending on the context. I wanted to find out from the young women how they articulated their own identity, in particular their religious identity, and so I created a series of prompts that were designed to stimulate discussion on this issue. Some of the prompts were drawn from other studies, in particular Jafri's (1998) Canadian media analysis study provided me with many good prompts for discussing media representations of Muslims in the print media.

I made sure that throughout the course of the interview each of the prompts were addressed but I was not concerned about the order in which they were addressed. Once the interview had come to an end I reviewed my list of prompts to ensure that I had addressed all the issues. This mode of interviewing differs significantly from traditional or masculinist interviewing in which there is a series of carefully worded questions which must be asked in the same order to each participant, effectively rendering the interview into a verbal survey (Benney & Hughes 1970). The semi-structured interview format also allowed me to pursue any issues raised in the discussions which I felt were interesting and pertinent but which did not appear on the list of prompts. It also provided opportunity for the interviewees to question me about my views on an issue or about the research itself.

Having had experience conducting other semi-structured in-depth interviews I estimated that, given the list of prompts I had, each interview would take approximately one hour. This estimation proved to be accurate with some interviews taking slightly more than an hour and some taking slightly less. I made a judgement that, for those willing to be involved in this research, one hour was a reasonable time commitment. Each of the women was willing to spend an hour of her time on this research.

Identifying participants

Voluntarily attending a religious gathering strongly suggests that an individual has a deep commitment to religion and a well-defined religious identity, in this case as a Muslim woman. Had I begun the snowballing in any other context I may have made contact with women who, although they identified as Muslim, did not place such an emphasis on this aspect of their identity. I located the interviewees through the use of snowballing whereby I asked fifteen members of a young Muslim women's religious study group (usra) that I attend whether or not they were willing to be interviewed, and if they could recommend any other young women who may be interested in being involved. Many of the young women who attend the usra take it in turns to host the usra at their homes so as to share the 'burden' of preparing a meal and making sure one's house is in a state to receive visitors. The usra that I, and the participants, attend is not the only one of its kind in operation in Adelaide. Other usras have been started for people with various needs and preferences. As they are gender segregated, there are usras for men, there are usras for older retired or non-working women, usras for university (mostly international) students, usras in a variety of languages including Arabic, Turkish and Eritrean, among others⁴². The usra in which I began my snowballing was an English language one made up of mostly young women between the ages of fifteen and thirty, although sometimes younger and older women attend. Of the young women who have children, many brought their children along to the usra (many of these young mothers are students whose student husbands have taken evening and weekend jobs such as taxi driving in order to supplement their incomes and consequently they have no-one to mind their children while they come to usra) where they play with the other children, or join the study circle, or wander to and fro from the study group to the play area as their attention span dictates. The usra is, therefore, a warm and welcoming place that plays a significant role in the lives of the young women who regularly attend. It is a place where they can share religious convictions and develop further religious understandings in a comfortable and supportive environment with like-minded people. In addition to this, the usra nights also provide an opportunity to discuss any issues of personal concern with friends who understand her identity and share her worldview. Many of the issues pertinent to this study, such as religious racism and the representation of women in the Australian

⁴² The ethnic or cultural differences between the participants were irrelevant for the purposes of this study because experiences of racism amongst the women, regardless of ethnic heritage, were remarkably similar. Both this study, and the literature, suggests that ethnic background does not play a significant role in Muslim women's experiences of religious racism (see Franks 2000; Jafri et al 1998; Akram 2002). On the contrary, Franks' study of the racism experienced by 'white' Muslim women in Britain argues that the racism they experience is similar to that experienced by 'their British South Asian, African, and Arab sisters' (2000:926-927) despite their differing ethnic backgrounds and physical appearance.

media, have been raised in one way or another at an usra I have attended. This knowledge was part of what motivated me to use the usra as a starting point for the snowballing.

Of the fifteen people I initially approached, seven agreed to participate, three declined the invitation and five did not fit the relevant criteria, for example they were outside the age range or they had not lived in South Australia for the required length of time. After approaching the women at usra and asking them to pass on my details to other young women, I gained a further three participants. A further two women agreed to take part in the study but did not commit to an interview time. Ultimately these women did not end up taking part in the research. A number of other women expressed interest in the project but did not take part in the study either because they did not meet the relevant criteria or because they did not commit to an interview time and later were uncontactable.

In total I interviewed ten young women: a brief biography of each interviewee is presented below, the minimum of the range of ten to fifteen I had set myself. However, these interviews provided very rich material for analysis, especially given that they explored an unresearched area. The involvement of these particular young women in the study means that this thesis adds significantly to the literature. Studies which focus on Muslims are scarce especially those studies in which the participants are strongly committed to their religion (see also Mubarak 1996; Rozario 1998; Franks 2000; Ahmad 2001; Franks 2001; Roald 2001; Bullock 2002; Rasool 2002), and in which neither the individuals, nor their faith commitments are seen as being problematic (i.e. through a lens of terrorism or non-compliance with broader society's standards such as refusal to stop wearing hijab in French schools) (see also Ahmad 2001; Roald 2001; Bullock 2002; Johnsdotter 2003). Similarly, the non-problematized faith commitments of these young women mark this thesis as making a significant contribution to the literature because these women, as a result of their faith commitments, cannot be constructed as 'caught between two cultures', which has often been the analytical lens through which young Muslim women (and men) have been seen (see Brah and Minhas 1985; Keller 1998; Archer 2001; Das March 15, 2003). Studies which do all of the above, and which focus on the lives of Muslim women in Australia, are exceedingly scarce (see also Mubarak 1996).

Given that the starting point for the snowballing was a young women's usra, this has implications for both the sort of participant I attracted and the sort of data I ultimately collected. For example,

each of the young women I interviewed had a university and/or TAFE qualification (some held, or were currently enrolled in, postgraduate degrees). While factors such as educational background cannot be 'checked' against census data in order to assess my group's representativity, I would argue that factors which make this group different to other groups of participants in studies about Muslim women are also the factors which give this study some of its strengths. Thus, the women's high level of education meant that all of the women were familiar with the underlying conventions of the kind of research I was involved in, and therefore, had a greater capacity for offering insights and analyses that were ultimately of great value to me.

Religious Identity, Age, Gender, Length of Residence in Australia

Because this study focuses on the experiences of Muslim women, it is therefore obvious that the participants in this study needed to self-identify as Muslim. Religious identity is deeply personal despite also being connected to social networks such as family and community. I wished to speak to women who actively held a Muslim identity rather than participants who were nominally Muslim due to the expectations of family or communities. Using the young women's usra was a good starting point because attendance at an usra generally indicates that a person feels a deep sense of commitment to Islam, is interested in gaining further knowledge about Islam and Islamic practices, and feels connected to a sense of Muslim community (as usras are a communal event). However, using the usra as a starting point meant that the women I interviewed were all Sunni Muslim⁴³ because it was an usra which catered for Sunni Muslim women. Because I set the criteria for participation as 'those who self identify as Muslim' it would not have been a concern if women who ascribed to other 'forms' of Islam wished to participate, however this situation never eventuated because the snowballing process only located women who identified with Sunni Islam. However, given that few non-Muslim Australians are able to identify the differences between Sunnis and Shias it is also unlikely that my data would have been significantly different had some of the participants identified as Shia.

I decided to focus this study on young Muslim women aged 18 to 30 years old for several reasons. I felt that Muslims in this age group were more likely to have been born in, or come to Australia as

⁴³ Sunni Muslims make up the majority of all Muslims. They follow the original teachings and example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and differ from the other main branch of Islam, Shia Islam, particularly in their acceptance of the five Caliphs as the Prophet's (SAWS) worthy and true successors. Sunni and Shia Islam differ also in a number of daily practises and rituals as well as having other theological divergences.

very young children than people in their parents' generation, and therefore have a much longer and more intense experience of interaction with the wider non-Muslim community. They would be more likely to have attended school and/or further study, have a better command of spoken English (which was also important as the interviews were to be conducted in English) and a greater familiarity with the Australian media than older age groups because many of these older people were born overseas (Omar & Allen 1996). Also, as Knott and Khokher argue, young people are of particular interest in regards to studies about religion, race, ethnicity and racism because 'they are frequently aware of, even outspoken concerning, religious and ethnic norms and practices as they impinge on their lives' and are therefore well-placed to speak about their experiences and the 'strategies they adopt for making sense of them in their own lives' (1993:593).

Interviewing women in this particular age group would also remove certain issues that could have arisen for me as a young woman interviewing older women. It is well recognised that particular power relations exist in the interviewing process and which, although they often shift and change, often set up a power hierarchy in which the researcher/interviewer is (or is perceived to be) in a superior or more powerful position than the interviewee/participant (Stanley & Wise 1990, 1993). Such a power hierarchy, while undesirable in any circumstances, would have been completely inappropriate for myself in the position of interviewing Muslim women much older than me. In my family and community sphere I am expected to treat Muslim women who are markedly older than myself with politeness and deference. As a mark of respect I do not call these women by their first name alone, I preface it with 'Aunty'. I felt uncomfortable with the idea of asking these Aunties the sorts of questions that I wished to ask in the interviews. I feel that my discomfort would have precluded the sort of in-depth discussion that I wished to conduct and this assisted in the decision to focus on women who were approximately my contemporaries.

The interpersonal aspect of this research was also part of the reason why I decided to only interview women. As Islam discourages personal interactions between unrelated men and women where such interaction is not absolutely necessary, I would have been extremely uncomfortable interviewing Muslim men on a one-to-one basis (and they would have been equally uncomfortable). Roald (2001) dealt with this issue by employing her husband as a research assistant and Arabic language interpreter in interviews with Muslim men. She also invited the wives/female relatives of

the male interviewees to the interview as witnesses/chaperones⁴⁴. I did not have this option available to me. While this was a factor in my decision making, there was a more compelling reason why I decided to focus the interviews on Muslim women. I wished to do what Katherine Bullock (2002) did in *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, which is to 'first ... hear these women's voices, and only then to interpret them' (2002:40) because for too long Muslim women have been cast as "the" victim, as "the" submissive, oppressed Muslim woman [and] negative stereotyping has denied that Muslim women have agency, that they have autonomy, and even that they have any "critical perspective" on their own situation' (2002:39). I wished to provide these women with a forum to speak about their experiences, to show that each of the women lives complex and multi-faceted lives that move beyond simplistic stereotypes, and also to show that these women have a sophisticated understanding of their own situation and experiences.

Ethical Considerations

In any sort of research where participants are sharing their personal thoughts or details with a researcher, confidentiality is an important issue. Before I began approaching potential participants I first applied for, and received, ethical approval from the Discipline of Gender Studies in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Adelaide. This ethical approval conforms to the Australian Sociological Association Guidelines.

In this study, and in keeping with the standards of ethics required by the Australian Sociological Association Guidelines, I took steps to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Although I tape recorded the interviews and had them professionally transcribed, I gave the interviewees assurances that the only other person who would (possibly) ever listen to the interviews was one of my supervisors, Chilla Bulbeck. I guaranteed to provide each of them with a pseudonym and to make sure I did not provide any identifying material in the thesis or other publications. I also took steps to protect anonymity and confidentiality when conducting the interviews. I conducted each of the interviews in a private, quiet room at the University of Adelaide. Only one of the interviews was conducted off-campus and that was at the participant's workplace⁴⁴ because she was unable to travel into the city. This interview took place in a private, quiet room at her workplace.

⁴⁴ Although Roald does not explain why she invited the wives of her participants to their interviews, I would suggest that it was to make the meetings more 'public' so that the wives did not feel marginalised or uncomfortable about their husbands meeting with a female interviewer, despite the interviewer's (Roald's) husband being present. Thus, she was giving the women an opportunity to see for themselves that the interviews were meeting all necessary codes of propriety rather than forcing them to rely on their husband's word – i.e. she was giving these women space to enact their agency about what they felt was 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behaviour.

As required by the ethics committee, prior to commencing each of the interviews, I gave each participant an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendices One and Two). I asked each person to read the information and if they were happy to continue to participate then I asked them to sign the consent form. I countersigned in their presence that I had provided them with information about the research project and had given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. This was also an opportunity for participants to ask any questions about the project.

Analysing the Interview Data

Once I had completed and captured the interviews on tape I had them professionally transcribed by a University approved transcriber, that is, someone who had signed a confidentiality statement and who had frequently been employed by researchers at the University to transcribe sensitive data. Using a qualitative data analysis software package, *QSR* (or *NUD*ist*) I began the process of analysing the data. *NUD*ist* allows for continual re-evaluation and so patterns, themes and ideas are incrementally built up by the process of coding specific paragraphs and phrases. Some of the key themes and ideas that came out of the data were, for example, 'religion and schooling' and 'the impact of racism'. Many of the initial themes came directly from my list of interview prompts, I had ensured these themes would appear by asking relevant questions. The remaining themes were drawn from a closer reading of the actual interview transcripts.

Once I had selected and coded key passages I was able to perform further close readings of these sections of text in order to begin developing analyses and responses to the data. From these close readings I began to structure chapters around major themes such as 'narratives of racism' and 'identity'. When writing up my analyses and responses to the data I revisited the literature and made connections between theory and the stories told by the participants. I also drew connections between the women's experiences and the data generated by the media analysis.

Interview Participant Biographies

While all of my participants met the same criteria as Muslim, female, aged between 18 and 30 years old, lived in Australia for at least five years and South Australia for two years, with good English language skills, their backgrounds still varied quite significantly. Some of the women were

married, others single; some had children while others did not; some were students while other women worked. They came from a range of ethnic backgrounds and communities. Not all the women wore hijab although all expressed a commitment to wearing it. Below is a brief biography of each woman who participated in the study, accurate as at the time of interviewing (August to December 2003).

Barakah

Barakah is twenty-six years old of Anglo-Saxon/Celtic background and is a native speaker of English. She was born in and spent most of her life in Sydney, New South Wales, with her parents who became Muslims a number of years before her birth (she is the eldest of six children). Barakah has always worn a hijab having begun doing so while attending an Islamic primary school⁴⁵. She moved to South Australia after marrying a (Muslim) South Australian man and they have lived in Adelaide for the past two years where Barakah works as a teacher.

Ellen

Ellen is a twenty-one year old Indigenous woman of mixed Asian and Aboriginal heritage from the Northern Territory. She is a native speaker of English and has lived in South Australia since she was a small child when her family moved to Adelaide from Darwin. Ellen was raised as a devout Catholic but became disillusioned with the faith during her teenage years. After a few years of searching for answers to many questions Ellen realised that she was a Muslim. With the assistance of a long-time female friend who was Muslim, Ellen formalised her commitment to Islam by declaring the Shahada⁴⁶ in front of witnesses. Her family (with whom she still lives) have remained Catholic and, after initial misgivings about Ellen's conversion to Islam, have largely come to accept and support her decision. However Ellen does not yet wear hijab (although she dearly wants to) because her family is not prepared for her to take this step and she does not wish to alienate them from her religious commitment.

⁴⁵ Wearing hijab is not mandatory before the age of puberty (the onset of menstruation is considered the end of childhood and the start of adulthood) but many young girls start wearing it in the years before puberty because they and their parents believe that it makes the transition from childhood to adulthood less traumatic and abrupt.

⁴⁶ The shahada is the declaration 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet and Messenger'.

Hanna

Hanna is twenty-six years old and was born in Lebanon to Lebanese parents and Arabic is her first language. She migrated to Australia when she was three years old and has lived here for most of her life (with occasional periods spent in Lebanon). She works as a teacher and is married to a Muslim man and they have a young son. Hanna has never worn hijab but frequently expresses the wish to begin doing so because she feels guilty about not fulfilling a religious injunction. There are a variety of reasons why she has not felt able to carry out her desire.

Kulthum

Kulthum is a twenty-one year old who began wearing hijab when she was in her early teens. She lives in a country town on the outskirts of Adelaide but commutes to Adelaide on a daily basis to attend university. Kulthum's parents migrated from Turkey but Kulthum was born in Australia and has always lived here. Despite this she identifies herself as Turkish, calls Turkey 'home' and is bilingual in both English and Turkish. Kulthum is single and is studying to be a teacher.

Latifa

Latifa was born in China to Uzbek parents and is twenty-two years old. Her first language was Uzbek but learnt English as a young child when her family migrated to Australia. Latifa is the only woman in her family to wear hijab and only began doing so when she left her parents' house to be married, as they refused to let her wear hijab while she lived under their roof as an unmarried daughter. They are still unhappy about her choice to wear hijab but realise that she is now fully independent and can dress as she pleases. Her (Muslim) husband was not involved in her decision but fully supports her choice. Latifa is an exhibited artist and jeweller and is currently studying a Masters of Journalism.

Mariyah

Mariyah was born a Muslim in Afghanistan twenty-seven years ago. She and her family came to Australia as refugees during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan when Mariyah was young. It was on her arrival to Australia that Mariyah learnt English. She identifies as both Afghan and Australian. Mariyah is studying International Studies at university and has worn her hijab since her mid-teens. She is married to a Muslim man and has a seven year old daughter.

Naima

Naima is Mariyah's eighteen year old younger sister. She was an infant when their family came to Australia and has lived here ever since. She is bilingual in both Farsi and English and identifies as both Afghan and Australian. Naima has worn a hijab since primary school and is currently studying in the Sciences at university. Currently single, she lives with her parents, and siblings in Adelaide.

Omayma

Omayma was born a Muslim in Eritrea and is twenty-three years old. She and her large family migrated to Australia as refugees fleeing the Eritrean civil war six years ago. Omayma identifies as Australian and is a fluent speaker of English. She is studying Information Technology at university after having attending three years of high school in Australia. Currently engaged to be married, Omayma wears hijab, and has been a Muslim all her life.

Sherene

Sherene is twenty years old and is studying accounting. She does not wear hijab and although she would like to do so, she is afraid of racism particularly with regard to job opportunities. Sherene is Australian born to Muslim Lebanese parents and identifies as both Lebanese and Australian. She is bilingual in both Arabic and English. Sherene used to live in the same country town as her best friend, Kulthum, but moved to Adelaide with her family when she began university. Her family still owns their house in the country where they spend a significant amount of time as their community networks are strongly located in the town.

Zakiyah

Zakiyah is twenty-four years old and was born in Australia to an Anglo-Saxon/Celtic mother. Her mother became a Muslim a number of years after she divorced her Muslim husband. Zakiyah and her siblings were raised as Muslims by their single mother. She is a native speaker of English.

Zakiyah is a lawyer who began wearing hijab in her late teens with the support of her mother who also wears hijab. Zakiyah is also a qualified journalist although she has not pursued a career in this field, preferring to re-train as a lawyer instead. Currently single, Zakiyah lives with her mother in Adelaide when she is not travelling.

Focus Group Participant Biographies

Amina

Amina is single, twenty-three years old and is studying Information Technology at university. She also works for a major international telecommunications company and has worn hijab all her life. Amina was born in Afghanistan to a Muslim family who migrated to Australia following the Soviet occupation of their country. She is bilingual in both Farsi, and English, having learnt English soon after her arrival in Australia as a small child. She identifies as both Afghan and Australian. Amina's long friendship with Ellen was instrumental in helping Ellen in her journey to become a Muslim.

Fauzia

Fauzia was born in Australia and is of mixed Arab and Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage. English is her native language and she identifies as Australian. Fauzia is currently studying a Law degree at university. She is nineteen years old and is currently single. She was born and raised as a Muslim and has worn hijab all her life.

Mariyah

See biography above.

Naima

See biography above.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the methodological dilemmas arising in relation to the interviews. It has argued that the important contributions made by feminist standpoint qualitative research is crucial

to understanding complex issues of how participants negotiate identity and power relations as members of a subjugated 'minority' group.

This chapter has argued for the importance of research into the experiences of Muslim women with strong faith based identities in ways that do not automatically construct these identities as 'deficit' or problematic as such experiences have been neglected in international research and are particularly scarce in Australia.

The methodological issues relating to the media analysis and the interviewees' responses to particular media representations are explained in the following chapters: Chapters Four, Five and Six where these issues are addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Representing 'Bad' Muslims

This thesis argues that the news media, the print media in particular, has a significant influence in shaping attitudes and opinions on a range of issues in the public sphere. This chapter reviews the work of cultural and media studies theoreticians such as Teun van Dijk and Stuart Hall with regard to arguments that the media plays a particularly powerful role in the development of agendas and ideas about race, racism and minority groups. This chapter argues that the persistently negative representations of minority groups leads directly to the (re)production of racist discourses and practices. A number of powerful examples are provided, including the recommendations of the Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which draw strong links between the media and portrayals and lived experiences of racism. The chapter then provides examples from the literature that argues that persistent negative portrayals and representations of Muslims aid in the creation and perpetuation of religious racism.

The chapter then moves into a discussion of the specific methods and methodology used in the media analysis that forms the body of the chapter. It also provides details of the two newspapers selected as the data source for the analysis. This chapter and the following chapter deal with a number of key representations of Muslims in the two newspapers: Muslims in relation to terrorism and as terrorists, Muslim women as violent and as oppressed, Islam as backward and barbaric, and Muslim men as violent and misogynist. They also consider a minor category of representations: those that are 'positive'.

Media, Influence and the (Re)production of Racism

This section argues that the media in general, and the print news media in particular, is highly influential in setting agendas and shaping public opinion on a range of issues. Of particular importance to this thesis are arguments that link the media's influence to the perpetuation and (re)production of racism. Writing about the influence of newspapers in this process, media and

racism theorist van Dijk argues that:

Specific newspapers do have specific effects on their readers, but because of other information sources [...] this influence may be mitigated and diversified. However, the media as a whole define the internal structure, the points of relevance, and especially the ideological boundaries of social representations. They provide the ready-made models, that is, the facts and opinions, that people use partly in *what* to think, but more important which they also use in devising *how* to think about ethnic affairs. (van Dijk 1991:244 emphasis in original)

For van Dijk, newspapers are instrumental in constructing not only representations but also the discourses that surround these representations. Similarly, in their highly influential work on race, media and crime, *Policing the Crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order*, Hall and his co-authors state that:

The media define for the majority of the population *what* significant events are taking place, but also, they offer powerful interpretations of *how* to understand these events. Implicit in those interpretations are orientations towards the events and the people or groups involved in them (Hall, Critcher et al. 1978:57 emphasis in original).

Hall et al continue on to argue that when people of oppressed minority groups are represented in the news, the 'interpretations and orientations' are marked by negativity and racism. van Dijk argues that the media in general or more specifically, the daily press, are instrumental in the 'reproduction of racism in western (or westernised) societies' (1991:4). He argues that 'minorities continue to be associated with a restricted number of stereotypical topics [...] whereas other topics, such as those in the realm of politics, social affairs, and culture are under-reported' (1991:245). He also argues that minorities are predominantly presented negatively in the media and that these meanings are conveyed through the repetitious use of negatively-loaded terms or 'by the use of rhetorical devices such as alliteration, parallelism, and metaphor' (1991:246), that is, when minorities appear in the news media, more often than not, they appear in a negative or stereotypical representation. Even when there are positive stories available they are rarely considered newsworthy. This insistence on negative representations is a key part of the reproduction of racism. As Bradley Gorham (1999) argues, media texts can perpetuate and reinforce racism through the use of stereotypes, word association and negative language. He argues that, by continually using negative language and stereotypes, 'the media can maintain unjust, harmful, and dominating understandings of race [and religion] by influencing the way individuals interpret media texts' (1999:244). In particular, the focus on negativity and racist stereotypes is a function of news production processes including selection and framing of reports

and news values (Allan 1999). News values such as an emphasis on conflict and negativity, and the preference for simple stories that are organised around binary oppositions are factors that contribute to the perpetuation of racist representations. The primarily Anglo-Saxon/Celtic profile of news personnel and the social and cultural context they operate within are also important factors.

As van Dijk's work, and that of others, argues, a number of processes facilitate the reproduction and perpetuation of racism in society. Reproduction requires not only ideology but practice. As van Dijk states 'text and talk play a crucial role in the acquisition, uses, confirmation, legitimation, and change of the ideological system that supports the [...] dominance of the white group' (1991:250). The media offers both ideology and strategies which assist in the reproduction of hegemony and racism. More strongly, he states that 'racist ideologies are not innate, but learned. A large part of this social learning process operates through formal education and the mass media' (1991:253)⁴⁷.

Drawing on his interviews and surveys of newspaper readers in the Netherlands van Dijk puts it that:

the reproduction of racism by the Press is largely effective, not so much because all readers always adopt the opinions of the Press, which they often do and sometimes do not, but rather because the Press manages to manufacture an ethnic consensus in which the very latitude of opinions and attitudes is quite strictly contained. They not only set the agenda for public discussion (what people should think *about*) but, more important, they strongly suggest *how* the readers should think and talk about ethnic affairs (van Dijk 1991:246 emphasis in original).

Other studies such as Mark Pearson's and Jeffrey Brand's influential research into the Australian media industry and its audience conducted for the Australian Broadcasting Authority argues that in terms of what is deemed newsworthy across the industry, newspapers are considered the most influential of all media forms both in terms of public opinion and industry agenda (Pearson & Brand 2001:8). The second part of this study which investigates audiences' use of news media,

⁴⁷ See also Hatcher and Troyna 1993; Rizvi 1993; Roman 1993; Connolly and Troyna 1998; Soudien 1998; Shain 2000; Suleiman 2001; Aveling 2002; Imtoul 2002; Johnson 2002; McLeod and Yates 2003.

through surveys and interviews with a wide spectrum of Australians, supports overseas and historical literature by arguing that in the Australian context, the media is highly influential in setting opinions and agendas about numerous issues (Brand, Archbold & Rane 2001:9). Thus these studies effectively link the Australian news media to a broader context as provided by van Dijk, Hall and others.

A number of other recent studies and reports recognise the role the media plays in forming and reinforcing public opinion on controversial issues, particularly relating to 'race', racism, violence and 'law and order'⁴⁸. A number of commentators perceive the media to be implicated in incidents of racism and particularly, incidents of racist violence. In 1968 in the United States, the Kerner Commission was set up to inquire into racialised violent urban unrest. Part of this analysis dealt with the role of the news media in shaping public opinion and reproducing racism. The Commission's report stated that:

Along with the country as a whole, the Press has for too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective (p389 as cited in Campbell 1995:4)

In Australia, in 1992 the National Royal Commission into the deaths of Aboriginal people in police custody argued that the media was implicated in these deaths because 'how the media presents a particular group in the community is, of course, very important as to how that group is seen by the general public' (Eggerking, Plater et al. 1992:20). To date, Indigenous people have frequently been presented as drunken, brawling law breakers who are a threat to orderly white society and therefore deserved to be arrested and held in custody (Eggerking, Plater et al. 1992:20-21; Mickler 1998:58-60).

⁴⁸ See for example Eggerking, Plater et. al. 1992; Jakubowicz, Goodall et al 1994; Shohat & Stam 1994; Ward 1995; Lester 1996; Mickler 1998; Gorham 1999; Fiske 2000; Husband 2000; Szuchewycz 2000; Shain 2003; Gale 2004.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (also known as the 'Black Deaths in Custody Inquiry') made two specific recommendations relating to media portrayals of Indigenous people:

207. That institutions providing journalism courses be requested to:

- Ensure that courses contain a significant component relating to Aboriginal affairs thereby reflecting the social context in which journalists work; and
- Consider, in consultation with media industry and media unions, the creation of specific units of study dedicated to Aboriginal affairs and the reporting thereof.

208. That, in view of the fact that many Aboriginal people throughout Australia express disappointment in the portrayal of Aboriginal people by the media, the media industry and media unions should encourage formal and informal contact with Aboriginal organisations, including Aboriginal media organisations where available. The purpose of such contact should be the creation of a better understanding, on all sides, of issues relating to media treatment of Aboriginal affairs.

(www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/national/vol5/)

Implicit in these two recommendations are criticisms of the news media as not recognising the racism inherent in news reporting practices (such as framing and news values), the racism embedded within Australian institutions (including the media, Governments and the police) and a failure to conceptualise the possibility of positive stories about Aboriginal people.

To illustrate this, another section of the Black Deaths in Custody Inquiry looked at the underlying issues of these deaths in the Western Australian context. It makes a powerful argument about the way in which Aboriginal youth were constructed as violent and criminal in the WA news media. Particularly the role of the major daily newspapers which fuelled a public 'panic' over 'rising crime rates' and 'increasing' lawlessness amongst Aboriginal people. The report stated that such negative portrayals are of 'utmost concern'. Section 18.3 'Media and Knowledge about Aboriginal People' argued that: 'the media ... has been identified as the single most influential source for

people living in the state capital, where the majority of the population reside'. Furthermore, it points out that:

Negative stories and images about Aboriginal people in the news media, that is, ones which involved criminal offences, civil disturbances and alcohol use, reinforce negative views. This was seen as contributing to ignorance about, and prejudice toward, Aboriginal people in general, and providing fuel for hard-core racist ideas and activities

(www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/regional/wa_underlying/)⁴⁹.

This report also acknowledges that racist stereotypes are not necessarily the views of the individual journalist but more often reflect a racist media framework, industry and institutionalised racism.

Similarly, media complicity and culpability was addressed by Guy Berger in his reflections on the South African Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Media Racism and the role that the media played in perpetuating racism during the apartheid era (2001). He writes that the 'Commission concluded that the South African media was indeed guilty of racism' (2001:72) and that this had bolstered not only racist attitudes amongst the South African population, but also helped to maintain institutions and representations based on racism.

These were also issues addressed by the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board report *Race for the Headlines* (2003) which argued that the media, particularly talkback radio and the major daily newspapers, played a crucial role in the construction of marginalised 'others' (such as refugees, Muslims and Aboriginal people) as problematic, and as fuelling racist attitudes and practices in the wider community.

These academic studies and quasi-judicial reports amount to a compelling case for the causal link between media reporting and the reinforcement and circulation of racist attitudes to minority groups. As the following chapter section demonstrates the media similarly perpetuates and expresses religious racism.

Media and Religious Racism

A further body of literature links media discourses and practices of racism with negative treatment and attitudes towards Muslims⁵⁰. A number of these studies argue that the racism and negativity

⁴⁹ See also (Mickler 1998; Haebich 2000).

are conveyed to audiences through a combination of carefully selected images, specific use of language and other textual strategies. Shain (2003) argues that the British media is implicated in the racist violence that has occurred against Asians and Muslims over a number of years. She particularly identifies the use of inflammatory language, including constant word associations and negative naming as one of the most common ways in which the news media (print and television) perpetuate and reproduce racism against these groups. Some examples of this include using the word 'riot' to describe altercations involving Muslim youth, as well as the use of negatively laden terms such as 'fundamentalist', 'terrorist/ism', 'jihad', 'holy war', 'fanatic', 'radicals' and 'militants'. Many of these studies make the argument that, regardless of what the news story entails, if one or more of the principal actors can be associated with Islam in any way, the story will become one about Muslims. Thus, a wide range of stories can be encompassed by the same frame. For instance, a story about domestic violence, a story about a refugee on a hunger strike, a story about a bombing in Iraq, a story about girls wearing hijabs to school, and a story about young men throwing stones at a police station in northern England, can all be framed as stories of Muslim 'extremists', 'fundamentalist Islam', 'fanatics' who also support 'holy war' and 'jihad'. While this type of framing not only ignores the intricacies and complexities of the individual story, it also perpetuates common negative representations with little opportunity for alternative readings.

In their comparative research shortly after September 11 into the (re)production of racism towards Muslims on electronic messageboards and US television, Patrick Martin and Sean Phelan conducted an analysis of word associations and negative naming in the context of an online messageboard. They argue that racism towards Islam/Muslims is more obvious and virulent in this form of media because it is 'less bound ... by television's obligation to frame events in official, and perhaps somewhat euphemized terms' (Martin and Phelan 2002:267). They argue that, while the discourses evident on the messageboard are more overtly racist and hostile, they are simply a less guarded and more colloquial expression of the discourses available in more mainstream media forms such as television and the print media. They also argue that the initial response of the news media to the September 11 attacks set up a discursive space in which such overt racism was not simply a likelihood but 'inevitable' (2002:268).

⁵⁰ See Wakim 1992; Jackson 1996; Brasted 1997; Said 1997; Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998; Najjar 2000; Shaheen 2000; Abbas 2001; Brasted 2001; Suleiman 2001; Akram 2002; Martin & Phelan 2002; Ismael & Measor 2003; Muscati 2003; NSW Anti-Discrimination Board 2003; Peek 2003; Turner 2003; Kampmark 2003a; Cohen 2004; Lygo 2004; Manning 2004.

As Jack Shaheen argues, negative representations of Muslims have very real impacts both on public policy and public opinion. As a result 'there is a dangerous and cumulative effect when these ... images remain unchallenged' (2003:6). He argues that images used in the media can have a powerful influence on the behaviours and attitudes of audiences. In particular the repetition of negative images of Muslims (and Arabs) have caused people to enact racist violence when they might 'otherwise never have thought to do so' and he cites instances where 'decades of stereotyping' led to instances where 'mere encounters with a person who looks like a Muslim, or a person praying, have prompted bias and violence' (2003:6). Gema Martin-Munoz writes that:

the media not only constitutes almost the sole source of information for the images and attitudes that they create. They also perpetuate historically inherited stereotypes and cultural imaginaries that form part of the national collective memory bank (Martin-Munoz 2002:1).

These examples demonstrate the enormous power media institutions have over the way in which minorities are represented.

In Australia, the argument that the media is culpable in Muslims' experiences of racism is even stronger. Kevin Dunn's research into Australian's attitudes to 'minority groups' showed that, as a result of 'recent geopolitical events, media representations of Muslims, and an accumulating heritage of western antipathy to Islam', there was 'a lot of stated concern regarding Muslim Australians' (Dunn 2003:3). Indeed, his study showed that Muslim Australians were the minority group that respondents most commonly believed 'did not fit' into Australian society (623 out of 746 total respondents held this belief – 83.5 percent). Muslims were also the people who Dunn's respondents were most concerned about marrying a close relative (only 46% were not at all concerned about intermarriage with a Muslim as compared with 70.5 percent of respondents who were not at all concerned about a close relative's intermarriage with an Aboriginal person (2003:3), the group causing the second most concern). Given that just 1.4 percent of the Australian population is Muslim, most Australians (and therefore most of Dunn's respondents) gain most 'familiarity' with Islam and Muslims through their representation in the mainstream media. The Australian media therefore, must carry a significant amount of responsibility for the negative experiences of Australian Muslims. The remaining sections of this chapter provide concrete evidence of the overwhelmingly negative representation of Muslims in the South Australian print media.

Background to media analysis

Methods and Methodology

This media analysis was conducted during the period of June 1, 2003 to July 31, 2003. This was because I began the interviews in August and I wished to have a record of any incidents or media stories that may have influenced the way the interviewees responded to certain questions. I also felt that given the time constraints of completing the PhD I needed to choose two months of media coverage at a time that suited my overall timetable. There was no evidence that the two months of coverage I collected were in any way unusual and, in fact, given that I had informally collected images and stories prior to the two months which were similar to those representations collected during the two months, indicates that the representations collected during the two month period discussed in this chapter were fairly typical of representations of Muslims in the Australian print media⁵¹.

During this time I collected daily copies of the national broadsheet newspaper, the *Australian* (including the *Weekend Australian* editions), and the local tabloid newspaper, the *Advertiser*. These dailies were chosen because they are the most commonly available newspapers with the highest circulation rates (and therefore readership rates) amongst South Australians⁵². Both the *Australian* and the *Advertiser* are owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Limited company. However, they cater to significantly different readership profiles as the *Australian* is produced from Sydney and is distributed nationally whereas the *Advertiser* is produced in Adelaide and distributed throughout South Australia. The *Australian* claims to be the nation's 'foremost agenda-setting newspaper' with an interest in the 'big issues' facing Australia (*The Australian* 2004). It boasts a weekday readership of 459000 with its average reader being highly educated, in a high socio-economic grouping, interested in arts, culture, finance and industry as well as local and international politics (*The Australian* 2004). The journalists and columnists who write for the *Australian* come from a wide range of positions on the political spectrum, from right to left, and consequently the articles reflect this range of opinion.

⁵¹ In retrospect the data collection period was in fact quieter than some periods that followed. For instance, the period July to September 2005 was particularly heated with almost daily stories about Muslim 'terrorists' and the 'threat' of local Muslim minority communities in the wake of the London transport system suicide bombings. Two other bouts of intense media interest and debate occurred in October 2005 (further suicide bombings in Bali coincided with the anniversary of the original Bali bombings), and November 2005 when a number of Muslim men in Sydney and Melbourne were arrested and charged with 'terrorism'. However, sadly these are merely a few recent examples of intense media discussion as there were many other moments since July 2003 where negative media discourses about Muslims dominated the news. Had I included all of the possible examples available, this thesis would never have been completed.

⁵² I am aware that as both are owned by News Ltd. they may not reflect variations in news coverage of certain issues by other Australian newspapers, such as the Fairfax owned *Age* or *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The *Advertiser* has a much bigger circulation than the *Australian*⁵³, but is mainly limited to a local South Australian audience. It is read by 580 000 people each weekday and most of these are in the Adelaide (capital and largest city of South Australia) metropolitan area (*The Advertiser* 2004). Although the *Advertiser* used to be a broadsheet newspaper, its current format as a tabloid targets a lower socio-economic target audience than the *Australian* and focuses heavily on South Australian issues, sport and popular entertainment. Writing for a tabloid newspaper, the journalists and columnists often utilise a populist approach when discussing significant issues (Bignell 2002). They specifically invite audience identification via constructions of us:them binaries which enhance notions that the newspaper is more 'right-wing' or conservative than it would otherwise seem.

In order to analyse and discuss media representations of, and discourse relating to, Islam and Muslims, and the way in which these impact upon the lives of young South Australian Muslim women, it was important to collect concrete examples. Once I had collected the newspapers for each Monday to Saturday that fell within the requisite time frame, I then selected any pages which contained an article, or articles, which directly referred to Islam and/or Muslims⁵⁴. I also selected any page which contained a visual image depicting Muslims or an aspect of Islam, whether it was accompanied by a relevant article or not, because I felt that the power of images to construct meaning and representation could be analysed without reference to any text; that is, images do not necessarily require accompanying relevant text in order to be usefully analysed. In total I selected 179 articles/images, 53 of which came from the *Advertiser* and 126 came from the *Australian* or the *Weekend Australian* (see Appendix Five for a full list of articles selected). The analysis of these articles/images form the basis of this chapter. In any analysis of media representations there are usually a range of readings available. These readings can differ markedly depending on the subject position of the analyst. I have analysed these articles/images from a particular subject position, as a young Muslim woman PhD student. Although I may not present dominant or hegemonic readings of the representations entailed in them, I offer a disruptive and challenging perspective (Thwaites,

⁵³ Sparks argues that tabloid newspapers 'usually have much larger circulations than the more serious titles' which hints at the localised news focus and populist tone of the tabloid press (Sparks 2000:6).

⁵⁴ I did not select every single article that was part of a running story that involved Islam and/or Muslims because I felt that this was unnecessary and would not add anything to the analysis. For example, I selected articles about the violence in Palestine and Israel which specifically mentioned Islam/Muslims but did not select the many that simply described a bombing, shooting or discussions about peace negotiations with no mention of Islam/Muslims even though it is understood that this is an integral part of the situation. Similarly I did not select the stories about the Bali bomb trials which had no mention of the bombers' Muslim identity or religious connections. There is academic precedent for these decisions in Manning's research (Manning 2004:4).

Davis & Mules 2002:92). However, in many instances I also discuss the hegemonic or dominant reading which I then link to the representation's potential to foster or perpetuate racism.

As this chapter deals with a snapshot of time, June and July of 2003, the stories that I analyse may have developed quite significantly since their appearance in those two months. In most instances I have not furthered my analysis to include the development of the stories beyond the two month period because my concern was with how Muslims, Islam and Muslim women in particular were presented in the print media just prior to conducting the interviews. The news events which were the vehicle for these representations were of less importance than the underlying discourses. As other research shows, the specifics of particular news events make little difference to the overall representation of Muslims/Islam (Wakim 1992; Brasted 1997; Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998; Poole 2000b; Akram 2002; Lygo 2004; Manning 2004). As Iain Lygo writes in the conclusion to *News Overboard*, 'Finishing *News Overboard* has been difficult. It seems every week there is another example of the ... media demonising Islam ... By November 2003 I had drawn a line in the sand' (Lygo 2004:190). In writing this thesis, I too needed to 'draw a line in the sand'. As a result I may have omitted discussing some very powerful examples of media representations of Muslims including ones of subsequent events and debates that caused distress and/or offence to my participants (such as the 'hijab in schools' debate, in the wake of the London bombings discussions of whether Muslims can be Australian, the arrest of Australian 'terror cells' in Sydney and Melbourne). However these debates and representations took place after my interviews were completed and as such could not influence my participants' responses. They may be the focus of future research.

News and the Data Collection Period

The news media, and more specifically the print media, in Australia during the months of June and July, 2003 was preoccupied with four significant continuing stories – the American led occupation of Iraq (in which Australian troops participated); the trial of those accused (and later found guilty) of bombing two nightclubs in Bali in which many Australians died in October, 2002; the struggle of families of Australian men accused of involvement in 'terrorism' and who were being held without trial in US custody at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to gain legal access to their relatives (and legal representation for their detained relatives); as well as the political battle between Simon Crean and his challenger Kim Beazley for the leadership of the federal Australian Labor Party. Of these major

ongoing stories, Islam and Muslims were mentioned repeatedly in all but the Labor leadership story. When combined with a myriad other 'minor' stories that arose during these two months, it can be argued that Muslims were a minority group disproportionately represented in both newspapers.

Terror, terrorism, terrorists

(An) Introduction to 'terrorism'

'Terrorism' is a highly contested term with both 'loose' layperson or popular understandings and carefully constructed academic definitions. It is a term loaded with cultural values and judgements. Pippa Norris, Montague Kern and Marion Just define terrorism as 'the systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals' (Norris, Kern & Just 2003:6). However, they, like David Whittaker (Whittaker 2003) recognise that, frequently, terrorism is a term bandied about to delegitimize the actions of one's enemies without reference to this definition. This indiscriminate use of language disguises a political and moral judgement made about the perpetrators of a violent action. Thus it can be that one armed group can 'be regarded as "terrorists" or alternatively as "liberation movements" [or] "dissidents"' (Norris, Kern & Just 2003:6) or 'freedom fighters' depending on whether or not their actions or cause is deemed to be legitimate (Whittaker 2003).

Norris, Kern and Just argue that one of the ways news events are frequently simplified, commodified, structured and prioritised for public consumption is through the use of 'news frames'. These are understood to be the 'interpretive structure journalists use to set particular events within their broader context' (2003:10). These news frames usually reflect dominant cultural understandings of issues and therefore allow for the use of stereotypes, 'stock phrases and iconic images' (2003:11). News frames are particularly important for the presentation of news stories about terrorism and Islam. Using key words such as 'Muslim extremists', 'Islamic fundamentalist', 'terror', 'bomb', 'deadly', 'blast', a wide range of discrete news events can easily be slotted into a news frame about terrorism and Muslims.

It is therefore a telling observation that out of the 179 articles and images collected that relate to Islam and Muslims, 153 refer to terror, terrorism or terrorists. This is an overwhelming connection. These articles spanned a wide range of events and issues as the headlines from some of these

articles show: 'Terror plot to kill Gutnick' (Egan June 5, 2003:1), 'Deadly revenge of the "black widows"' (Campbell July 7, 2003:11), 'On trial eve, Samudra says sorry - for Muslim deaths' (Chulov June 2, 2003:11), 'Islamic blast at West goes off half-cocked' (Editor July 19-20, 2003:6), and, 'Blown-up mosque "a bomb factory"' (McGrory July 4, 2003:7). Each of the 153 articles referred to was framed in terms of terrorism and Islam/Muslims.

The Bali bombing trial

On October 12, 2002 two bombs exploded in the nightclub district of Kuta Beach in Bali, Indonesia. One bomb had targeted the Sari Club and another had been directed at Paddy's Bar which was next door. Both premises catered for mainly Australian and New Zealand patrons, many of whom were sportspeople on end-of-season trips. In total 202 people were killed and many more were seriously injured, primarily as a result of burns they sustained when the buildings caught alight.

Soon after the bombings a joint police operation between Australia and Indonesia led to the arrests of a number of Indonesian men who were accused of plotting, organising and carrying out the bombings. They were allegedly part of an organization Jemaah Islamiah (JI) which had previously been accused of acts of 'terrorism' in Indonesia and which was accused of having links to Al-Qa'ida⁵⁵. The trial of the defendants began on June 2, 2003 and much newsprint was devoted to the trial coverage.

The very first article collected in the two month period was from the *Australian* on June 2, page eleven. Just below the banner announcing the Worldwide section was the headline 'On trial eve, Samudra says sorry - for Muslim deaths' (Chulov June 2, 2003:11). The article spanned the width of the broadsheet and was accompanied by a colour photograph of one of the defendants, Imam Samudra, flanked by two uniformed guards (see below Figure 1). Samudra was dressed in black with an Islamic prayer hat in the colours commonly associated with Islam and Muslims, green and white. The photo of Samudra shows him scowling and is captioned with the word 'Menacing' in bold black type, and, 'Samudra takes a walk' in normal print. As the photo is located on the

⁵⁵ Al-Qa'ida is an armed organization lead by Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri was the leader of an armed group, Egyptian Islamic Jihad which later merged with Al-Qa'ida after he formed a partnership with its leader Osama bin Laden (Wikipedia 2004a). Because this word is a transliteration of an Arabic word into English there are a variety of ways of spelling it. I have chosen to use the double capitalised Al-Qa'ida which is a viable alternative to al-Qa'ida, Al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda. Because each of these other spellings are also viable options I will not mark them 'sic' where they appear in a quotation

extreme left of the page it is the first item the reader's eye is drawn towards after the headline⁵⁶. Directly above the photograph is a banner advertising a story on page fourteen which reads 'BLOODIED HANDS why China can't face the awful truth'. The words 'BLOODIED HANDS' appear above the head of Samudra and at a first glance at the page appear to be referring to him. It is only on closer reading that it becomes evident that they refer to another story. However the positioning of this banner read in the context of the photograph and the article implies Samudra's murderousness and links him to violent killings.

Thus, within a few seconds of scanning the page Samudra is immediately identified as a Muslim, a man who admits involvement in the deaths of others but who is only sorry for killing other Muslims (ruthless, calculating, fanatical), and frightening (both in his physical mien and his actions). The opening paragraph reinforces this representation:

MENACING, proud and unrepentant to all except his Muslim victims, the alleged mastermind of the Bali bombings will this morning face trial for the mass murders he has confessed to ordering (Chulov June 2, 2003:11).

The *Australian's* representation of Samudra as a) Muslim, b) evil and irrational, and, c) contemptuous of the charges and the suffering of the victims, is a representation that was applied to the other defendants in the trial and was also one which the *Advertiser* adopted. However there were differences in the ways that each newspaper (re)presented the trial and the accused. One such difference was the virulence with which the *Advertiser* described the defendant(s) and their actions. More disturbing was the way in which the defendants were positioned in regards to Islam and Islamic practices, linking Islam with a disregard for, or pride in, taking life.

⁵⁶ As English is a language written and read from left to right a reader's eyes first look at the extreme upper left of the page or article and then scans diagonally to the extreme lower right as described by the Gutenberg Diagram (Priestley 1991).

NOTE: This image is included on page 88 in the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 1 – Imam Samudra as seen in the *Australian*

NOTE: This image is included on page 88 in the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 2 – Another image of Imam Samudra as seen in the *Australian*

Cindy Wockner's writing style in the *Advertiser* is a populist address to the reader which presumes that the reader shares her repugnance and contempt not only for Samudra and his actions, but also his religion. This rhetorical style invites the readership to accept and take up the author's attitude and is a writing style favoured by journalists of "popular" tabloids' (Bignell 2002:89) because they 'connote familiarity, camaraderie, and entertainingness as opposed to the connotations of authority, formality, and seriousness which are present in the discourses of "quality" newspapers' (Bignell 2002:89). As the *Australian* is, in many respects, a "quality" newspaper' (Bignell 2002:89) it is less commonly associated with such populist writing than is the *Advertiser*⁵⁷.

On June 3, Wockner in the *Advertiser* described Imam Samudra as:

ARROGANT, and indifferent, and with the swagger of a man proud of taking 202 innocent lives ... (and who) pierced the air with his index finger and began his terrorism trial yesterday with rousing chants of 'Allah-u-Akbar' and 'Takbir' (Wockner June 3, 2003:12).

In contrast to Wockner's description, the only adjectives used in relation to Samudra in the *Australian's* page one article were 'defiant' and 'mastermind' (Chulov June 3, 2003:1). Even the accompanying photographs were significantly different with a small, head and shoulders colour shot of Samudra sitting in the dock in the *Australian* (see Figure 2) (Chulov June 3, 2003:1), while a large, full body black and white photograph of a shouting Samudra being restrained by armed officials accompanied Wockner's article (see Figure 3) (Wockner June 3, 2003:12). However in both photographs Samudra's traditional clothing was emphasised as evidence of his 'otherness' to the

⁵⁷ It is important to note here that, although the *Australian* is frequently identified as a broadsheet or 'quality' newspaper and the *Advertiser* as a tabloid, there is an argument in the field of media and cultural studies that the distinction between these types of newspapers are not as clearly defined as many think. Colin Sparks' and John Tulloch's edited book *Tabloid Tales* maps this fluidity (Sparks and Tulloch 2000). Sparks writes that the fluidity in newspaper styles has often been conceptualised as 'tabloidization' whereby:

the quality broadsheet press has changed its news agenda to one closer to that of the tabloids, that it has increased the amount of visual material, shortened its articles, and shifted the balance of editorial copy away from hard news reporting toward soft news, features, and columns (Sparks 2000:7).

Therefore, many of the articles from the *Australian* could be analysed as having much in common with a more tabloid style of journalism despite its broadsheet status.

'west'. The *Australian's* photo was captioned '**Dozed off: Samudra, in white**' (Chulov June 3, 2003:1), which drew attention to his stark white traditional shirt and prayer hat. Renee Nowytarger's photo in the *Advertiser* juxtaposed an irrational and out-of-control looking Samudra in traditional clothes flanked by the armed officials who were dressed in more 'western' style uniform and who embodied control, confidence and rationality.

The effect of Wockner's article (Wockner June 3, 2003:12) is to firmly establish in the minds of *Advertiser* readers that Samudra is first and foremost a Muslim, acting under Islamic codes and is contemptuous of individuals and institutions that do not share his worldview (Islam). Whether this is correct or not is a moot point – this is how those accused of the bombings are presented to South Australians. This representation has the effect of connecting all Muslims, and, all Muslim men who wear traditional clothing to this atrocity, or at least to the potential for committing terrorist acts.

NOTE: This image is included on page 90 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 3 – Imam Samudra as seen in the *Advertiser*

Such representations of the Bali bombers as being Muslim, evil, irrational and cruel continued unabated throughout the two months as shown by the following headlines: 'Witnesses wipe smile

off Amrozi's face' (Powell June 17, 2003:2), 'Picture paints words of hatred' (Powell and Nahdar June 27, 2003:2), 'Bombers spell out evil plans' (Powell July 5-6, 2003:2), 'Terrorist networks still haunt the region' (Powell July 16, 2003:6), and, 'Bali bomber confronts death sentence and flag' (Chulov July 29, 2003:7).

Terrorism and Australia part 1: David Hicks

Another of the major stories which ran in both newspapers throughout June and July and which utilised the news frame of terrorism and Islam was that of David Hicks, a South Australian Muslim captured in Afghanistan by the Americans in 2001 and held without trial at the USA military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. During the first weeks of the data collection period, David Hicks' father, Terry Hicks, was trying to gain legal representation for, and access to, his son who was accused of 'terrorism' after being arrested in Afghanistan where he was allegedly fighting with the Taliban. At the time David Hicks allegedly joined the Taliban this was not an illegal action under Australian law because the Taliban were only fighting a civil war against the Northern Alliance. Fighting with the Taliban only became an offence after the USA accused them of providing shelter to Al-Qa'ida at the end of 2001 (after Al-Qa'ida was accused of carrying out the attacks on the USA of September 11).

The first of the articles of the data collection period that related to David Hicks appeared on June 9 in both newspapers. On page six of the *Australian*, amongst stories about federal politics, was a headline stating "'Try this for size", caged father urges PM' above a black and white photograph of Terry Hicks standing inside a metal cage similar in size to that in which his son was being detained (DiGirolamo June 9, 2003:6). The caption of the photo read '**Challenge:** Mr Hicks in his cage in Adelaide'. The article described Mr Hicks' attempts to meet with Prime Minister John Howard to discuss his son's position and the lack of Australian consular support for a citizen. As Mr Howard's Liberal Party was holding its national convention in Mr Hicks' hometown, Adelaide, he had taken the opportunity to publicly invite the Prime Minister to a meeting. He was unsuccessful in this goal but did gain some publicity by his actions, aided perhaps by the striking photograph. This article does not offer any discussion of the alleged actions of David Hicks and has a sympathetic tone for his father's anguish. However, David Hicks' assumed guilt as a terrorist was reinforced by a small article included under the same headline in a special coloured box which talks about another

Australian Muslim, Jack Thomas (nicknamed in this article 'Jihad'), who wished to have a discussion with the Australian Federal Police (AFP) about his alleged links to Al-Qa'ida.

The *Advertiser* ran the same story on the same day but under the headline of 'Father in a cage for son – but wonders if politicians care' (Riches June 9, 2003:9) and with a distinctly less sympathetic tone than the *Australian's* article. Terry Hicks' bid to gain the Prime Minister's attention was twice labelled 'a stunt' – a harsh and sneering word with negative overtones as compared to an alternative, more neutral descriptor, 'actions' or 'bid', or, the politically active 'protest'. Sam Riches conveyed the sense that Mr Howard and other Liberal politicians attending the convention were almost as afraid of Terry Hicks as they were of his son David; 'Amid a *heavy police presence, the father of suspected Taliban fighter* [...] carried the 2m x 2m cage up [to] where the Australian Liberal Party Convention was being held' (emphasis added), and, 'politicians were more *comfortable* staring out windows at the stunt than being *confronted* by Hicks' supporters' (emphasis added) (Riches June 9, 2003:9). This tone implied that by supporting his son, Terry Hicks had become tainted by David's Muslim and 'terrorist' representations.

The article took up most of page nine and was dominated by a large black and white photograph of Terry Hicks in the cage with his arms raised in a position similar to the 'surrender' gesture, hands leaning against the bars of the cage he is in (see Figure 4). The expression on his face is one of pain, tiredness and distress, but in keeping with the unsympathetic tone of the article, the caption merely describes him as '**Frustrated**' (Riches June 9, 2003:9). It was as though the newspaper feared that showing sympathy or empathy with a distressed and desperate father was tantamount to condoning the alleged actions of his son – a person they were intent on demonising⁵⁸. This story appeared on the same page as an article describing the impact of terrorism on tourist numbers to Kangaroo Island (KI – a popular tourist destination in South Australia). Reading this article and its headline 'SARS, terrorism taking toll on KI' in conjunction with the Hicks article compounds the available reading of David Hicks as a terrorist and a potential threat to his home state of South Australia, and reduces the likelihood of readers sympathising with him.

The photograph that accompanied the *Australian's* version of this story was taken from a greater distance away from the cage than the *Advertiser's* photograph. This has the effect of showing Terry

⁵⁸ An alternative reading of this article is possible, but unlikely, given the inclusion of the small photograph of a smiling David Hicks. This photograph may invite some readers to feel sympathy for David Hicks and his father. But the tone of the article does not encourage this.

Hicks in a much smaller, diminished and more pitiful position, in which he is clearly dominated by the bars on the cage, whereas the *Advertiser* photograph is a much closer shot taken so that Terry Hicks is looming in the frame of the photo. In the *Australian's* photograph it is not clear that Terry Hicks is inside a cage, he may simply be standing on the opposite side of a metal grille and which therefore provides a reading in which Terry Hicks becomes a threatening or menacing figure restrained only by the metal bars he is holding. Another key difference between the two images is that the *Australian's* photograph shows other members of the protest group holding signs on either side of the cage. This shows that Terry Hicks was not acting alone and had the support of other Australians who believe that David Hicks is not being treated appropriately. This reading is not available in the *Advertiser's* photograph because only Terry Hicks is visible in the photo and which suggests that no-one else supports Terry's efforts on behalf of his 'terrorist' son.

NOTE: This image is included on page 93 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 4 – Terry Hicks in a cage

The story of David Hicks continued into July but the focus shifted to his legal position and what future treatment he might be expected to receive at the hands of his captors. The *Australian* opened the speculations about David Hicks' bleak future with the front page headline on July 5-6 stating 'Hicks may face death penalty' (DiGirolamo & Eccleston July 5-6, 2003:1). The *Advertiser* followed suit but did not dwell on the potential for the death sentence, focussing instead on the trial he would face as a 'Taliban fighter': 'Hicks to face a military tribunal' (Starick & Salter July 5, 2003:9). The *Australian* announced with alarm on July 7 that 'US free to tap into Hicks legal calls' (DiGirolamo July 7, 2003:3) and thus his lawyers would have to 'waive their right of confidentiality

with their client'. This story was not reported in the *Advertiser*. While these articles were ostensibly about raising concerns about his treatment they maintained a representation of David Hicks as a terrorist *and* a Muslim.

On July 9 the *Australian* devoted yet another front page to the Hicks story. This time the headline was 'Hicks scorns Howard's al-Qa'ida link to son' (Williams & Eccleston July 9, 2003:1) above a large colour photograph of Terry Hicks standing under the arches of a Pakistani monument (see Figure 5). The caption to the photo: '**Following in his son's footsteps:** Mr Hicks outside Baradari, a century-old monument in Lahore, Pakistan' (Williams & Eccleston July 9, 2003:1), was a clever double entendre which suggested that not only had Terry Hicks retraced his son's physical journey from 'a brown brick house in Adelaide's working-class north to the back streets of Lahore', but also his journey from a working-class battler to 'Muslim terrorist'. This was compounded by Terry Hicks' shock at, and rejection of, Prime Minister John Howard's claims that David Hicks had 'admitted' he trained with Al-Qa'ida. Prime Minister Howard is placed in the position of knowledge, authority and trustworthiness which means that his truth-claims are given more credibility than those of Terry Hicks. Terry Hicks' assertions that his son is innocent are delegitimated in this article by his proximity to his 'terrorist' son. He is presented as being blinded by his fatherly love for David – a proximity and love which draws Terry Hicks into a net of suspicion.

At the very bottom of this page was a coloured banner advertising an Indonesian and Indian rug display and the advertising image used was a tapestry reminiscent of orientalist artworks. The placement of this advertisement directly beneath the article about Terry and David Hicks formed an interesting connection. Two of the ways in which 'westerners' have traditionally sought to 'understand' the other are through art and travel. Terry Hicks' journey to Pakistan is evidence of the use of travel in this process while the 'eastern' artworks advertised as being on display to the public was an example of how art is similarly used and how certain (desirable) aspects of the 'east' are commodified for 'western' consumption.

NOTE: This image is included on page 95 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 5 – Terry Hicks in Pakistan

On the same day the *Australian* ran a feature editorial by Roy Eccleston entitled 'Khaki justice in the dock' (Eccleston July 9, 2003:9) in which he pondered the (un)likelihood of David Hicks receiving a fair trial if he faced an American military court. This was an article in which the choice of photographic images reflected the overall position of the article: at the top of the page and taking up the whole width of the article was a large photo-montage of a smiling David Hicks overlaid against a digitally-blurred shot of two guards escorting a prisoner behind a chain-link fence at Guantanamo Bay. In the centre of the article was a very small grainy photograph of David Hicks holding a gun and captioned "**Enemy combatant**": Hicks' (Eccleston July 9, 2003:9). The accompanying text presents David Hicks as a 'soldier of misfortune' (Eccleston July 9, 2003:9) who, although probably guilty of taking up arms against America, was now receiving a disproportionately raw deal at the hands of the US administration. The use of the 'smiling David' image carries in it a message of possible sympathy but this message is overwhelmed by the negative connotations of the accompanying text. However the use of this phrase 'soldier of misfortune' plays upon the readers' concept of the mercenary (often called soldiers of fortune) and so raises questions about David Hicks' involvement in combat (as a possible mercenary) and thus also casts aspersions on his commitment to his faith.

July 10 saw the *Advertiser* take an alternative approach to the David Hicks story. Rather than merely writing up an article explaining the intricacies of the situation, the *Advertiser* devoted an

entire page (with the exception of a large advertisement) to a series of questions and answers on the topic (Coorey July 10, 2003b:27), and a small article, once again discussing the possible punishments Hicks faced if found guilty in court (Coorey July 10, 2003a:27). In total 19 questions were asked and answered, albeit in an extremely brief manner (see Figure 6). For example:

Q: What is a military commission?

A: A wartime military tribunal used to try alleged war criminals.

Q: Can the accused pick his own legal team?

A: Yes. He can select another military lawyer and can have a civilian attorney who must be a US citizen (Coorey July 10, 2003a:27).

This question-and-answer format is a common newspaper device used to simplify complex stories, particularly in tabloid newspapers (Bignell 2002), which results in reducing a story to a few phrases. This also has the effect of limiting the range of available readings of the story. While this simple format may cater to the newspaper's target readership (The Advertiser 2004) it does little to contribute to in-depth reader knowledge and understanding. What it does do, however, is reinforce the representation of David Hicks as an 'enemy combatant' who is guilty of *something* and is irrefutably connected to Islam.

NOTE: This image is included on page 97 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 6 – Questions and Answers about David Hicks

From the beginning of the data collection period right up until its final day, July 31, there was almost one article per day per newspaper relating to David Hicks. With headlines such as 'Hicks faces life even if cleared' (AAP July 10, 2003:2), 'Al-Qa'ida gave Hicks six months of training' (Kerin July 22, 2003:1), 'My son was never taught about terror' (Coorey July 29, 2003:12), 'Fair trial and national security twin concerns' (Downer July 29, 2003:12) and, 'No holds barred in Hicks fight' (Dalton July 30, 2003:7), most of the articles dealt with the fairness (or otherwise) of David Hicks' legal position, accusations of 'terrorism' and denials by Hicks supporters, and, speculations about future treatment/punishment. In almost every article David Hicks was referred to as a 'terror suspect', a 'Taliban fighter', or an 'al-Qa'ida' trainee. Many of the articles from the Adelaide based *Advertiser* also mentioned that he came from Adelaide. The combination of consistently labelling David Hicks as a terrorist (even when the word 'alleged' was used) who converted to Islam in Adelaide had the effect of assuring his guilt in the eyes of the readers, but also, that the Muslim community of Adelaide (and South Australia more broadly) were deemed complicit in his perceived guilt. Each Muslim South Australian was considered suspect by having commonalities with David Hicks; i.e. a common place of worship, a common South Australian connection, and possible links of friendship and of having recruited him to a form of Islam that supported terrorism⁵⁹. It may be argued that David Hicks' Adelaide origins were the very reason behind the *Advertiser's* stern stance in articles relating to this issue as compared with the *Australian's* approach.

It may also be argued that the overall tone of the *Advertiser's* reporting of the David Hicks saga was a direct result of its status as a tabloid newspaper which employs news values that increase readership and audience appeal by sensationalising conflict between 'us' and 'them' and inviting audience identification with the 'us' as presented by the newspaper (Allan 1999). The fear that arises from the story of David Hicks is that somehow the son of a 'good', Anglo-Saxon/Celtic, nominally Christian, patriotic Australian, working-class battler family ('us') became 'contaminated' by Islam ('them') which directly led to his current position as a prisoner accused of terrorism. In this way readers who identify as Anglo-Saxon/Celtic, patriotic Australians, or as battlers, are invited to

⁵⁹ Long-term *Advertiser* readers would be aware that soon after David Hicks was captured in December 2001 the newspaper ran a number of stories on his journey from working-class Salisbury lad through conversion to alleged terrorist in Afghanistan. On December 13, 2001 one of the articles focused on Gilles Plains Mosque as the place where David Hicks 'declared his faith in Allah' and included a photograph of worshippers inside the mosque (Duffy December 13, 2001:5). The article, which was the first of a number to take up this focus, discussed the possible influences David Hicks may have come under while at the mosque – implying that others at the mosque knew of his alleged interest in 'terrorism'.

be fearful that Islam could contaminate their own family and they may then find themselves in a similar situation to the Hicks family.

The David Hicks story is a complex one in terms of analysis. It is not simply a representation of a Muslim as a terrorist. The partial focus on Terry Hicks' efforts on behalf of his son is a representation of the 'good Aussie battler' from a working-class suburb who is doing the 'right thing' by his son regardless of David's guilt or innocence and is thus the embodiment of what are popularly believed to be 'Australian characteristics'. Terry Hicks' actions are arguably shown to be the epitome of 'good old-fashioned family values' (as represented by the small 'family album' style photographs that occasionally accompanied articles) as well as loyalty to a 'mate' in need. It may also be argued that Terry Hicks' actions are the focus of many newspaper articles because of a deep concern among many readers (of both newspapers) that David Hicks' human rights are not being respected by Australia's ally, the United States⁶⁰. Interestingly, some articles which referred to Terry Hicks treated him with the same suspicion and hostility as they did his son. He was considered tainted by his continual support for a man seen to be guilty of terrorism. Thus, actions which were sometimes lauded as a virtue (support for a child, support for the 'underdog', voicing opposition to US policies) could be read in a more sinister light in other representations.

Terrorism and Australia part 2: Al-Qa'ida, JI and Joe Gutnick

The *Advertiser* responded in a more sensationalist manner to the Bali bomb trials and the David Hicks saga than the *Australian*, but the reverse was true when the story alleging an Al-Qa'ida plot to kill prominent Melbourne businessman and orthodox rabbi, Joe Gutnick, was run on June 5, 2003. This may be because Mr Gutnick is a Melbournian with national significance given his wealth and financial position as a mining magnate and saviour of the Melbourne Football Club and thus it could be expected that a story concerning him would feature more widely in a national newspaper than in a local South Australian paper where he is a figure of limited local significance.

The *Australian* devoted most of the front page of June 5 to this story which included a large close-up colour shot of Mr Gutnick's face as he appears to be looking anxiously over his shoulder (see Figure 7), a smaller photo of Mr Gutnick with the former Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin

⁶⁰ Although I did not include letters to the editor as 'articles' because they are the views of readers and do not reflect the ideas or attitude of the newspapers, both newspapers contained a significant number of letters in which readers expressed their concerns on this issue.

Netanyahu, a headline proclaiming 'Terror plot to kill Gutnick' (Egan June 5, 2003:1) and an underlined surheading stating 'Revealed: pro-Israel mining leader was al-Qa'ida target'. The caption to the photographs read '**Surprised and frightened:** Mr Gutnick in Melbourne yesterday, and below, with Mr Netanyahu in Israel'. The article explained that after recent raids by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) on certain houses in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, documents outlining an assassination attempt on Mr Gutnick's life were found. Key members of Al-Qa'ida were alleged to have approved the plot which, the paper reported, included plans to blow up a number of buildings connected to Gutnick such as his company offices, a synagogue and his family home.

NOTE: This image is included on page 100 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 7 – Joe Gutnick on the front page of the *Australian*

The article hypothesises that Al-Qa'ida sanctioned the plot in retaliation against Mr Gutnick's political and financial associations with Israel which included large donations to the 1996 election campaign of Benjamin Netanyahu and the financing of Israeli settlements in Hebron. Throughout this article the *Australian* created an overwhelming climate of fear in the reader's mind by repeatedly using words and phrases such as 'I was frightened', 'panic buttons', 'under threat', 'it frightened me' (Egan June 5, 2003:1). The use of Mr Gutnick's (understandably distressed comments) such as 'I was surprised and I was frightened ... It's a horrific thought that someone would have such intentions on Australian soil. Barbarism and terrorism', 'He was going to blow up the whole area', and, 'I want the facts to be known, and I think it is important that Australians know there are such people in this country', further created the impression that readers should also be

feeling afraid (Egan June 5, 2003:1). Afraid of whom? Afraid of all the faceless, unnamed Muslims in Australian capital cities embodied in the mysterious Al Qa'ida plotters. The message of this article is also that if such a terrifying ordeal can happen to someone as wealthy and as powerful as Mr Gutnick, it can also happen to you, the (non-Muslim Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Australian) reader.

The *Advertiser* referred to the breaking story on the same day with a short article on page five, headlined 'Al- Qaida wanted to kill Gutnick' (*The Advertiser* June 5, 2003:5). There was no photograph and the wording of the story did not contain the sensationalist language that the *Australian* article did and the story's location on page 5 suggests that it was not as high a priority as for the *Australian* which placed in on page 1. However the links to unnamed Australian Muslims with suspected links to JI and Al-Qa'ida were once again made. Interestingly this article did not explain why Mr Gutnick's Jewish identity and his financial and political links to Israel were believed to make him a target for these individuals. It was assumed that *Advertiser* readers would make a connection that any Islamic organization automatically is an enemy of orthodox Jews, rabbis in particular, and ergo an Australian orthodox rabbi is an enemy to/of Australian Islamic organizations. As the only description of Rabbi Gutnick's potential attackers were 'suspected members of Jemaah Islamiah ... in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth' (*The Advertiser* June 5, 2003:5), readers were alerted to the alleged existence of this terrorist group in three major Australian cities and thus a connection was again made between ordinary Australian Muslims and potential terrorists.

There were a number of follow-up articles to this story on June 6 (Morton June 6, 2003:7) in the *Advertiser*, as well as in the *Australian* (Egan June 6, 2003b:4; June 6, 2003a:1; Stewart and Crawford June 6, 2003:4) which expanded on the theme that Australian Muslims should be feared en masse. Colleen Egan's (Egan June 6, 2003a:1) front page exclusive story, 'Fear stalked Gutnick before killer's plot exposed', in the *Australian* began with the description of a terrified Joe Gutnick standing on the steps of a Victorian courtroom in mid-2001⁶¹. He was stricken with fear because 'A bus ... full of Muslims' approached him making him feel 'quite perturbed at the time because there was a whole bus of them' (Egan June 6, 2003a:1). The description of a bus load of Muslims is reminiscent of Ghassan Hage's (1998:123-130) comments on racist fears of large numbers of the Other invading and threatening one's space (1998:91-94). Hage argues that many people with a

⁶¹ This article utilised the news value of continuity by using a small picture of the front page photograph from the previous day showing Mr Gutnick looking worried.

claim to governmental Australianness⁶² are 'tolerant' of small numbers of the Other but extremely fearful when they perceive that there are 'too many of them'. Thus, one or two Muslims are acceptable but a 'bus load' is something to be afraid of.

In the article Mr Gutnick alleged that the bus load of Muslims approached him because 'the head of the Muslim community here wanted to give me a Koran (sic) but he couldn't get to me because of the security guards that I had'⁶³ (Egan June 6, 2003a:1). So frightened was Mr Gutnick that he reported the incident to the police who dismissed it as 'a harmless stunt'. Then comes arguably the most important paragraph in the article:

Mr Gutnick had every reason to be scared. He did not know it then, and neither did the police, but one of his fellow Australians was planning to blow him and his loved ones to smithereens (Egan June 6, 2003a:1).

Although the *Australian* may have sympathised with his resentment of the proselytising attempts by the Muslims in the bus, it seems an overreaction to publish this story on the front of a national paper and I would argue that the decision to report the story in this way not only maximises the sensational impact but also has the effect of scaring readers⁶⁴. The front page position of this story may also be a result of the wide range of news values that this story contains: unambiguity, negativity, meaningfulness, consonance, cultural proximity, reference to elite persons, personalisation and unexpectedness (Thwaites, Davis et al. 2002:103) but the sensationalised and continued reporting of Muslims as a potential threat also increases its news value.

The Muslims in Egan's article are not given the dignity of an identity (individual or collective), rather, they are a nightmarish faceless mass of potential killers. There was no independent verification of this story whatsoever despite Mr Gutnick liberally quoting the AFP. The unnamed and untitled 'head of the Muslim community' (Egan June 6, 2003a:1) was not given an opportunity to clear his name or explain his alleged actions. Rather, the article emphasised the potential danger of all Muslims, including the Imam, by stating that, despite the harmlessness of this

⁶² Hage uses this term to describe those people who have the social capital that allows them to feel that they have some sort of control over the public appearance of Australian society. These people are often vocal in debates about migration, crime, and multiculturalism. They are usually white middle-class Anglo-Celtic and nominally Christian.

⁶³ This anecdote may also resonate with readers on account of the 'suicide bombings' of buses in Israel given the emphasis placed on Mr Gutnick's Jewishness and the Muslimness of the people in the bus.

⁶⁴ Only in a follow up article on page 4 (Egan June 6, 2003b) did a brief possible explanation of Mr Gutnick's fear appear. He claims that political confrontations between himself and a Palestinian security service chief, Jabril Rajoub, led him to fear for his life. However, the newspaper did not provide any evidence that there were ever any links between Mr Rajoub and Australian Muslims. It may also be argued that because Mr Gutnick believed that his family were in danger of being killed, that his fear was real and reasonable. It is not his fear of death that I critique as unreasonable, it is his fear that all Australian Muslims are potential murderers that I argue is unfounded.

incident, 'Mr Gutnick had every reason to be scared [because] a fellow Australian [presumably Muslim] was planning to blow him [...] to smithereens' (Egan June 6, 2003a:1). The reader thus makes the connection between the bus incident and the plan to kill Mr Gutnick.

The representation of Australian Muslims as a threat to Australia's Jewish communities was further strengthened by an article on page four (Stewart and Crawford June 6, 2003) headlined 'We are high terror targets, say Jews'. This article outlined the fears that members of Australia's Jewish community are potential targets for attacks. Without explicitly naming Muslims as the cause of the fear it is clear who the article refers to given statements such as:

we are living in a different world today and terrorism is coming closer to home [and] given *where that threat emanates from*, the Jewish community and prominent Jews are likely to be at higher risk of being targeted [...] because in the *demonology of these terrorist organizations*, Jews assume the same kind of paramount place they would have in [...] Nazi ideology (Stewart and Crawford June 6, 2003:4 emphasis added).

Linking Nazi ideology to the ideology of 'terrorist organisations' is a dangerous one to make in an influential newspaper such as the *Australian* because the majority of readers would understand that the groups referred to are ostensibly Islamic groups. Therefore Islam is equated with Nazism and is expected to be treated as such – with fear, horror and loathing. This article is yet another reinforcement of the message to be afraid of Muslims.

The representation of Jews in these articles is interesting because it was not long ago that Jews were ostracised from the Australian establishment, particularly in Mr Gutnick's home of Melbourne. Jews, particularly Orthodox Jews, have largely been seen as an unwelcome Other in Australia and so it is striking that Mr Gutnick (and through him, his community) are accepted as 'us' and thus worthy of 'our' full support and empathy. Perhaps this representation does not, unfortunately, mark a change in anti-Semitic attitudes, but is instead a phenomenon directly linked to specific aspects of Mr Gutnick's life and business interests that mark him as 'different' to other Australian Orthodox Jews.

Joe Gutnick is best known among the general public, not for his business credentials or his status as a rabbi, but for his involvement with the Australian Rules (Aussie Rules) Football team, the Melbourne Football Club (the Demons) (see Figure 8). The Demons were struggling financially when Mr Gutnick became the president and he invested almost \$2 million as well as instituted

tough changes such as sacking the coach (Wikipedia 2004b). It may be argued that through his very public involvement in Aussie Rules Mr Gutnick was able to gain a measure of acceptance in mainstream (Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Christian) Australia (see Hage 1998) that would otherwise not be accorded to an Orthodox Jewish rabbi. Because Mr Gutnick made his Jewishness a prominent part of his public identity¹ this acceptance may also have been extended towards fellow Orthodox Jews. Mr Gutnick's links to the Demons was emphasised by the *Advertiser* with the inclusion of a special report on his involvement in its article on June 6. Also accompanying this article was the black and white photograph showing Mr Gutnick and Demons supporters.

NOTE: This image is included on page 104 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 8 – Joe Gutnick with Demons supporters in the *Advertiser*

Terrorism and Australia part 3: Being Alert and Alarmed

During the two months of data collection there were a number of stories that suggested that Muslim terrorists were about to attack Australia, or that Muslim terrorists had recently been identified as living and working in Australia secretly preparing for future attacks. In the analysis of media representations of Muslims-as-terrorists these stories provided an additional news value to the framing of stories about terrorism– proximity While the David Hicks' story dealt with an alleged terrorist from Australia, the proximity was lessened because he was in detention in Cuba and had never been accused of carrying out terror

¹ Aussie Rules fans will recall that Rabbi Gutnick refused to attend games involving the Demons that were scheduled for the Sabbath. This resulted in much discussion of his faith in the media and amongst football fans.

related activities on home soil or against Australian targets abroad. Similarly, although the Bali bombings affected a great many Australians, the actual attacks did not take place in Australia and so, again, the proximity was lessened. The story about Joe Gutnick and the alleged assassination plot, however, brought with it a fear that ‘terrorists’ were operating in Australia. This was the first of many stories in both the *Australian* and the *Advertiser* that raised the idea of terrorists living, working and lurking in Australian suburbia.

On June 10 the *Australian* ran two stories about alleged terrorists living and working in Sydney (Egan June 10, 2003:6; Perry June 10, 2003:6). Louise Perry’s article headlined ‘JI thwarted in mosque control bid’ (Perry June 10, 2003:6) outlined allegations that two men (twin brothers Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman Ayub) were JI operatives trying to turn a suburban mosque into a ‘base from where it could plan terror attacks, raise funds and train members’. In this story, not only were specifically named Muslim individuals seen to be a threat to national security, but so too were the shadowy Muslims who allegedly donated funds and ‘trained’ as JI members. Suburban mosques were also brought under suspicion as the site of the supposed activities. This article also mentions, in a specially boxed section, the fears that another Sydney man, Bilal Khazal, was an associate of Osama bin Laden. This was accompanied by the news that Khazal had worked as a baggage handler at Sydney’s international terminal just prior to the 2000 Olympic Games, and that he has been ‘under surveillance since September 11’.

On June 11 the *Australian* ran a story at the top of the front page entitled ‘Second airport terror link’ (Perry June 11, 2003:1) which was a continuation of the previous day’s story on terrorists in Sydney. This story alleged that another Sydney Muslim was a member of the outlawed Indonesian group Laskar Jihad and that he was also connected to the Sydney airport – as a shuttle bus driver. This article was followed on page 2 by an article in which Bilal Khazal (the former baggage handler accused of links to Osama bin Laden) denied he was a terrorist (Karvelas June 11, 2003:2). This article also included comments from the head of Australia’s Muslim community Sheik Taj el-din Al-Hilaly, that supported Mr Khazal because ‘there is no evidence to say he is [a terrorist] this is alarmist’ (Karvelas June 11, 2003:2). In the context of the article and the broader context of how the story had developed over the days, Sheikh Al-Hilaly’s comments read as tacit support for a man who was presented by the paper as an unreconstructed terrorist and ‘bad’ man despite the legal niceties in using the word ‘allegedly’. In effect Sheikh Al-Hilaly is represented as suspicious

too, and because he is 'head of Australia's Muslim community', all Muslims in Australia therefore become tainted with the same dubiousness.

These articles reinforce representations of Muslims as terrorists and, because the individuals named in the articles live in Australia, this brings the threat closer to the readers' lives. The continual emphasis on the named individuals' religion casts suspicion and doubt upon all Muslims, particularly those who work in airports or who attend a mosque. Rather than creating a new representation, these articles simply brought a popular representation and placed it in a local context, thus increasing its potency.

Conclusion

After a review of the literature which demonstrates the impact of the media on ideas and practices of (religious) racism this chapter has focused on representations of Muslim as terrorists, stories in which Muslim men are usually the central actors. The chapter argued that the news media, in particular newspapers, is complicit, if not culpable, in the creation and perpetuation of racist discourses and practices. By setting the boundaries of public discussion as well as the content of the discussion, the news media is highly influential in setting the terms of public thought and debate on issues relating to race, racism and minority groups. This influence is particularly effective when minority groups can be linked to violence, civil unrest or 'inappropriate behaviour'. Using a number of powerful examples the persistent representations of minority groups are directly linked to lived experiences of racism. This chapter argued that this is of special relevance for Muslim communities and Muslim individuals given the long-standing and overwhelming persistence and repetition of negative representations of Muslims and Islam in the print news media. Current manifestations of this persistence and overwhelming negativity are seen in the representations of Muslims-as-terrorists.

The discussion of the representations of terrorism in this chapter emphasised the ways in which the media utilises divisive discourses about Muslims which increase both a sense of impending societal crisis, and a deepening of the 'us' and 'them' divide⁶⁶. News stories which were framed as

⁶⁶ While outside the scope of this thesis, an analysis of the ways in which so-called 'terrorists' utilise the media would add to an understanding of the ways in which the 'us' and 'them' divide is constructed, and perpetuated. Indeed, such an analysis would also be useful in examining the intricate nexus between the media and these organisations particularly with regards to the ways in which they rely on one another to achieve their separate agendas.

'terrorism' stories utilised sensationalised textual strategies and frequently created the notion that all Muslims in Australia were terrorists or potential terrorists. The following chapter continues the themes of media representation and religious racism but looks at examples of the specific representation of Muslim women. It also examines how discourses about Muslims are presented in non-news sections of the newspapers and examines the few 'positive' representations of Muslims in the print media.

CHAPTER FIVE

Representing Muslim Women and Representations of Muslims in the non-News Sections

Although this thesis focuses on the experiences and representations of Muslim women, only a small number of newspaper articles specifically referring to Muslim women were published during the data collection period (only 11 out of the 179 articles and images collected). However, the few representations that did occur were largely either a continuation of the familiar orientalist stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman, or a continuation of the representation of Islam and Muslims as violent and threatening. Many of these representations came in the form of images rather than news stories (see Appendix Five). This chapter maps the representations of Muslim women that appeared in the news sections of the *Advertiser* and the *Australian* during June and July 2003. It also analyses the representations of Muslims or Islam that occurred in the non-news sections of these newspapers, such as book reviews and special features. This chapter ends with a discussion of the few representations that can be categorised as 'positive' representations.

Women Warriors

One representation of Muslim women that was quite unusual during the data collection period (albeit a more frequent image in ongoing reporting and becoming more popular in other forms of media (Shaheen 2000)) was that of the violent, threatening (or potentially threatening) and/or armed woman. The first instance of this representation was an image accompanying a story about the rising tensions between Iran and Western opponents to Iran's nuclear programme in the *Weekend Australian* (Editor June 21-22, 2003:1) – the story itself bears no relevance to my analysis however as Islam and Muslims are not mentioned at all. The colour photograph however was significant (see Figure 8). It appeared on the front of the Editor liftout taking up almost the whole page, while the story appeared on page seven. The dramatic photograph is of a large group of women in black dresses, black-and-white checked hijabs, long black cloaks with hoods that are secured around their foreheads with green headbands. They are all wearing identical green headbands with a Persian

NOTE: This image is included on page 109 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 9 – Iranian women warriors

slogan written across them. The women are wearing white cotton gloves and carrying large assault rifles. Sprouting out of the barrel of each gun is a white rosebud. The headline for the article is written across the black area made by the women's dresses; 'BOXED IN West, opposition gang up on Iran regime p7' (Editor June 21-22, 2003:1).

This is an ambivalent image and for non-Iranian readers it is unclear whether it is supposed to be of supporters of the Iranian government, or of opposition protesters. The point is moot because of the impact of the image. For the first time in the two month period, Muslim women are being represented, rather than simply as an object of pity or empathy, as an active threat (brandishing guns), a representation that was previously reserved for Muslim men. Because it is such an ambivalent image there are a range of possible meanings to choose from⁶⁷. It could be that these women are members of an official military organisation (state army or militant group) at a funeral for a fallen comrade and are 'presenting arms' as a tributary salute. Alternatively they may be protesting against violence and the placing of a white rosebud (a symbol of peace, purity and femininity) in the barrel of their guns (a symbol of violent masculinity, death and destruction) is an attempt to subvert the concept that military violence is a solution to any issue⁶⁸. The lack of a caption or attribution of the image leaves it open to interpretation, so that it is a powerful and disturbing image that extends western constructions of Muslim women as an enigma.

That the headline 'BOXED IN' appears beneath a group of women completely covered in long, loose robes implies that not only is the Iranian government feeling trapped by its opponents, but these women also feel trapped, hemmed in and oppressed by their clothing, their religion and their culture. This aspect of the representation in this image is not an isolated one.

On July 7 the *Australian* ran a story about two female 'suicide bombers' who detonated their explosives at a rock concert in Russia (Campbell July 7, 2003:11). The headline, 'Deadly revenge of the "black widows"', referred to Russian concerns with the increasing numbers of Chechen Muslim women carrying out armed attacks. Matthew Campbell writes that 'their emergence was an ominous break with the patriarchal Chechen tradition' and argues that according to 'Russian

⁶⁷ Although this image is an ambivalent one to most of the *Australian's* readers, an Iranian colleague told me, in private communication, that in an Iranian context it is clear and unambiguous that these women are members of one of the all-women army divisions of the official state Iranian army. They are dressed in official uniform.

⁶⁸ This same Iranian colleague also explained that, within an Iranian context, the white rosebud is also understood to be a symbol of womanhood, peace and purity but is closely associated with the post-revolution women's equality movement (supported by the Ayatollah) which led directly to the establishment of such institutions as women-only military divisions. Hence, the white rosebud in an Iranian context has quite different meanings to at least one of its meanings in the 'west'.

officials' this 'break with tradition' is the result of the increasing influence of 'Arab terrorists who have taken control of the Chechen rebels' war of independence'. However, Campbell also states that some 'observers say it is the brutality of Moscow's counterinsurgency campaign in Chechnya that has pushed women, traditionally keepers of the home rather than warriors, into the conflict' (Campbell July 7, 2003:11).

The description of these women as 'black widows' is evocative of the lethally poisonous species of spider the Black Widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*) which is popularly known because 'the female is the deadlier of the species' (the female often kills and eats the male spider after mating). This epithet has led to a long cultural association between female killers and the Black Widow spider. As a result of stereotypical ideas about women's 'natural' tendency to nurture rather than harm, women who kill others (for whatever reason) are often seen as going against their 'nature' and defying their womanhood. Consequently when a woman kills she is particularly dangerous because violence is seen as such an anathema to femininity. The representation of the Chechen bombers as 'unnatural' women plays upon these gender constructions, however, the Chechens who are fighting Russian rule are also represented as particularly desperate and dangerous because it appears they are encouraging women to cross the 'normal' gender boundaries.

This article is based upon the existing assumption that Chechen (Muslim) women are always, and only, concerned with domestic tasks at the behest of their domineering 'patriarchal' menfolk, and that is what makes their role in the war against Russia so startling. Rather than the assumptions and expectations of domesticity being clearly those of the Chechen men, the assumptions are Campbell's own. Rather than the article being mostly concerned with the details of the bombing at the concert it is more concerned with the phenomenon of women warriors. Although this particular article does not state explicitly that the Chechen women were Muslims it does contain an anecdote describing the blowing up of a military personnel carrier en route from Russia to Chechnya in which a 'Chechen woman shrieked "Allahu Akbar" (God is great)' (Campbell July 7, 2003:11). Noting the 'Arab terrorist groups' who had taken control of the Chechen rebels is a further implication of Islam – based upon previous and long-standing assumptions of armed Arab groups. Indeed, the Chechen situation is often conflated to a generic discourse of 'Islamic terrorists' which demonstrates that differences of geography, politics, histories and local permutations of Islam are frequently 'smoothed out' to produce a homogenous 'Islamic terrorism' which can then easily be mobilised in a wide range of instances and localities (see also Norris, Kern & Just 2003).

If Campbell refrained from explicitly blaming Muslims and Islam for the bombings (Campbell July 7, 2003:11), Barry York, writing in the same newspaper, was not so circumspect (York July 7, 2003:9). In an opinion piece on July 7, the same day as Campbell's article, York writes that 'reports from Moscow, where at least 18 young people were killed and more than 50 injured at a rock concert at the weekend, suggest that Islamic extremists from Chechnya were behind the outrage' (York July 7, 2003:9). In a vicious attack on Islam, which he calls 'Islamofascism', York accuses Muslims of despising the 'modern world' and in particular rock music. According to York it was this hatred of rock music that motivated the women to detonate the explosion at the concert in Russia⁶⁹ and not politics. York also argues that although rock music sometimes contains misogynist lyrics 'this is nothing compared to the patriarchal control of women exercised in fundamentalist Islamic societies' and thus he applauds the overthrowing of the Taliban in Afghanistan because 'music is being performed and heard once more' (York July 7, 2003:9). York believes that people such as the Chechen women bombers are motivated because 'Islamofascists find personal freedom anathema, and prefer dogma to progress' (York July 7, 2003:9) and are therefore committed to destroying rock music.

On July 31 the *Australian* ran a story entitled 'Voice of Saddam honours his "martyr" sons' (Philp July 31, 2003:7) which appeared shortly after the deposed leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, lost his two sons and political heirs in an American bombing raid. Accompanying the story was a large colour photograph of a graffitied wall in Baghdad (see Figure 10). To the far left of the graffiti is a woman walking towards the right of the photograph who appears to be accompanied by a child who is almost completely obscured by her body. She is dressed in a long black robe that covers her head and body and her head appears to be turned towards the graffiti almost as if she is reading it. The caption to the photograph reads '**Resistance call:** An Iraqi woman walks past Arabic graffiti reading "Struggle with your souls and money, don't sit still", in central Baghdad' (Philp July 31, 2003:7). The article itself is not included in this analysis as it discusses the alleged reaction of Saddam Hussein and ordinary Iraqis to the news of the deaths and makes no mention of the photograph.

⁶⁹ York writes that Russia is seen as one of the Western countries where 'capitalism is more powerful than God. Which is one of the reasons why the West is so much better off than places where God/Allah rules' (York July 7, 2003:9).

NOTE: This image is included on page 113 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 10 – Iraqi woman reading graffiti

The photograph analysed in conjunction with the caption implies that the woman is taking notice of the graffiti and is somehow a potential threat to the American troops and their allies, including Australia. That she is walking across the frame of the photograph conveys a sense of purpose which, combined with the message on the wall, her facelessness and her obviously Islamic identity, is menacing. Although she is not represented as carrying out violence, she is positioned as a figure of latent violence that could erupt at any moment possibly even in retaliation for the deaths of Saddam Hussein's sons.

Non-news Representations

Representations of Muslims were not confined to the obvious 'political' or 'foreign' news spaces. In the following sections I discuss the representations of Muslims and Islam that occur in non-news sections of the newspapers such as the financial sections, book reviews and special profiles. Some of these representations were the most offensive and blatant examples of racism and negativity to be found in either newspaper and consequently this chapter includes an arguably disproportionate amount of space to the analysis of these representations. Traditionally news analysis pays less attention to these sections of the newspaper which are governed by different writing and editorial conventions. However, the role such writing plays in adding to publicly available meanings and representations of Islam means it is imperative that it, too, be examined.

***Osama*: A Review of Oppression**

The tale of the oppressed Muslim woman was the theme in the *Australian's* review of the Afghani/Pakistani film *Osama*, of July 23 by Mary Colbert and entitled 'Driven by extremes' (Colbert July 23, 2003:13). Directed by an Afghan exiled to Pakistan during the rule of the Taliban, Siddiq Barmak, Colbert tells us that the film is 'an emotionally compelling drama about the terror and misogyny of the Taliban's rule' (Colbert July 23, 2003:13). 'Terror and misogyny' – the two highly charged words often associated with Islam and Muslims. It is based upon the true story of how a young girl who disguised herself as a boy in order to attend school and also earn a living. The film however, is fiction because, as Colbert tells us, Barmak was unable to speak to the real girl. In the film, eventually Osama's disguise is discovered and 'the Taliban sentence her to execution by stoning'. However in a terrible plot complication Osama is not stoned to death but forced to become

the 'fourth wife of (an) old mullah. To Osama this is a fate worse than death' (Colbert July 23, 2003:13). Thus ideas about negative Islamic attitudes towards, and treatment of, women as well as notions of Islamic barbarity in punishment, are reinforced⁷⁰.

While it is unclear what the director's agenda is in making a film which is ostensibly about a 'real girl' and her difficult life, but which in reality, contains all the stereotypes of Muslims and Islam, this is not the main issue at stake here. Rather it is that Colbert does not critically engage with the film at all and instead reinforces popular representations of Muslim girls and women as oppressed and down-trodden – even their attempts at resistance are destroyed. Part of this lack of critical engagement is evidenced by Colbert's liberal use of quotations from the director such as:

I used the young girl as the conduit for the storytelling and *as a symbol* of all those who lost their identity and rights; *for the pervasive fear, the widespread misogyny, injustice and religious extremism* that is carried on her young shoulders (Colbert July 23, 2003:13 emphasis added).

The representation of Muslim women and Islam in this article is almost formulaic in its conformity to popular stereotypes. Not only is Osama oppressed by men and her religion, she is almost killed by being stoned, forced to marry a very old man against her wishes, and perpetually afraid. The men in the film treat women and children hatefully, they are ignorant, they are zealots who stone children, and who force children to marry old men. And of course Islam is the motivating factor for all these injustices.

The significance of this example is that, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), Jack Shaheen (2000) and Nancy Jackson (1996) argue, religious racism against Muslims is perpetuated through the use of popular culture and entertainment as well as in the news media. Indeed, Shaheen's work specifically deals with film and television portrayals of Muslims (and Arabs) and he argues through the use of numerous examples that some common representations of Muslims are of 'bearded mullahs' who behave hatefully towards women who are frequently portrayed as 'subservient' and 'enslaved beings ... [who] follow several paces behind abusive sheikhs, their heads lowered' (Shaheen 2000:2). These are representations which were evident in Barmak's film and reiterated in Colbert's review⁷¹. In this example there is a clear nexus between the two forms of media in that

⁷⁰ Barmak won a 2003 Cannes film festival award for this film.

⁷¹ I acknowledge that the film is specifically about a harsh version of Islam practised by the Taliban regime which does not reflect general and more popular Islamic attitudes to women, however, the film and its reporting serves to perpetuate negative stereotypes circulating about both Muslims and Islam.

Barmak's film is an example of the use of entertainment to convey a message about Islam and Muslims that conforms to popular stereotypes while Colbert's review is presented in the news media and reinforces these representations by promoting Barmak's film.

Book Reviews

In the *Weekend Australian* Books liftout on June 7-8 there were two large book reviews relating to Islam and Muslims. This edition of the newspaper came at the end of the week which had 'broken' the story about Joe Gutnick and the start of the Bali Bombing trial of Imam Samudra, and as a result these book reviews conformed to the news values of continuity and negativity. Any effects they may have had in regard to fuelling negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims may not have been deliberate but were definitely cumulative.

The first book review was by Greg Sheridan of Bernard Lewis' book *The Crisis of Islam* (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). The liftout containing this book review is a weekly section⁷² which addresses an educated, literate readership group who likes to read a range of literature, both fiction and non-fiction (*The Australian* 2004). The reviews are often written by journalists from the *Australian* who are well-known and well-respected for their knowledge and 'expertise' in a certain field. Greg Sheridan has been a foreign affairs journalist for many years. He has spent a significant amount of time in Asia and is considered the 'leading foreign affairs analyst in Australian journalism' (*The Australian* 2003). In his opinion pieces he often takes a conservative approach to issues and has long been a strong advocate of neo-liberal policies in relation to globalisation, free trade, Australia's engagement with Asia and Australia's alliance with the USA (ABC 2002).

Sheridan's review began with a large headline proclaimed 'Behind the HATE' with the word 'hate' written in a much larger orange font while the preceding part of the headline was in standard large black font. The sub heading stated that 'Bernard Lewis offers a scholar's guide to why many Muslims see the West as the enemy' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). However, the reviewer's personal opinions are more clearly evident in this piece than those of the author, as discussed below.

⁷² At the time of writing this statement was correct, since then, the Liftout has subsequently been discontinued and reincorporated into the Review section of the newspaper.

Sheridan likes Lewis' writing style because 'he doesn't coat everything with a layer of saccharine political correctness. He is a cool scholar and not the least emotive, and he doesn't flinch from telling the truth' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). This statement contains a number of interesting elements and raises a number of questions; what exactly does Sheridan mean by 'political correctness' and why does he praise Lewis for not using it? And, most importantly, what is the 'truth' that Sheridan is so delighted that Lewis 'doesn't flinch from telling'? The opening sentence of the next paragraph tells us: 'And the truth is that Islam from day one contained a strong element of militancy and the direct infusion of religion into the state and political realm' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). The 'political correctness' that Sheridan reviles is one that he (and others) claim is enforced by multiculturalism and other 'soft-Left' welfare state style policies and social practices that 'inhibit' or prevent them from 'telling the truth' about ethnic/racial/religious minorities, Indigenous issues or social policy. In this particular example, his truth is that Muslims (and Islam) are violent, threatening and power hungry.

Sheridan lauds Lewis as 'honestly describ(ing) the concept of jihad, as having from its earliest days, a militant, war-making aspect'. Here, Sheridan is writing from within a unitary thinking world view in which only one truthful definition of the term exists and that any alternative is untrue. He furthers this argument by deriding alternative definitions of 'jihad' as 'a call to holiness, to struggle to lead an inwardly decent life' as the ridiculous assertions of 'Western friends of Islam' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). That is, the assertions of 'Muslim-sympathisers' whose loyalties are clearly dubious in his estimation.

Sheridan continues into a discussion of 'fundamentalism' despite making it clear that it is 'a term with which Lewis has problems but which we need to use anyway'. He extrapolates from Lewis' arguments that 'fundamentalism is a crisis of modernisation, in many ways an inevitable part of modernisation' and that this hostility to 'modernisation' by Muslims leads to 'hostility to the West, including Australia' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). Thus he equates Islam with backwardness

and life in the West with success and triumphant modernity. He states that one has to come to a:

melancholy conclusion (that) this psyche, and these causes, took a long time, more than a millennium, to build. They won't be changed easily or quickly. Nonetheless, Lewis is also surely right to think that the more successful Arab societies become, the more likely they are to change their minds about the West (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11).

While incorrectly equating 'Arab societies' with Islam and Muslims, Sheridan nonetheless essentialises Muslims as having one 'psyche' which is backward, anti-modern, anti-progress, anti-freedom and anti-'the west'.

The tone of this review is aptly reflected in the accompanying photograph and caption (see Figure 11). The photograph is quite large and shows a towering wall of brown stucco with a very large door in the centre. The door is open, and the doorway appears as a black rectangle in the centre of the photograph. To the left of the doorway stand two men in the ankle-length white robes common to Saudi Arabia with red and white checked headdresses fastened with a black headband. They are chatting as they walk towards the viewer and one man is smiling. To the right of the photograph and slightly to the front of the men stand a group of four women dressed in long black robes which cover them from head to toe, including their faces. From their body stances they appear to be having a conversation. One woman's red dress shows beneath her black overgarment. Another woman is difficult to distinguish because she is silhouetted against the black of the open doorway. To the far right of the photograph and to the front of the women a little boy in denim overalls and a white t-shirt sits upon a pile of rocks. He is facing the viewer. Above his head in white writing so that it stands out against the brown of the wall is the quotation from the article; 'Fundamentalism is a crisis of modernisation, in many ways an inevitable part of modernisation'. The caption is placed to the upper right of the photograph; '**Anti-modern:** Is Islam trapped in the past?' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11).

NOTE: This image is included on page 119 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 11 – Photograph accompanying Sheridan’s book review

In the context of the page the people in the photograph signify Islam and all Muslims. Their appearances add credence to the contention that they are 'trapped in the past'. Thus these people embody 'backwardness', 'fundamentalism' and Islam. The reader of this review is therefore able to put a 'face' to the heinousness catalogued by Sheridan, and would do well to remember that Muslims are hostile to, and therefore a threat to, 'the West, including Australia' (Sheridan June 7-8, 2003:10-11). The representation of the women in the photograph is a good example of common representations of Muslim women in Western media; they are covered completely in black including their faces, are accorded no individuality or scope beyond the domestic – it is no coincidence that the child in the photograph is sitting near the women rather than near the men. The women are stationary, stagnating, stuck, and while the men are also represented as 'backward' at least they are moving, making progress, in motion, going forward. The woman who is difficult to distinguish from the darkened doorway is symbolic of the Western view that Muslim women are viewed through the lens of Islam as insignificant, blending in with the domestic décor, trapped by the 'darkness' of Islam and Muslim societal expectations. The women's clothing, particularly their veils are presented as being indicative of their backwardness and uncivilised state as well as 'proof' of Islam's inferiority. The child is wearing 'western' clothes, blue overalls and a t-shirt, and is therefore representative of the future of Islam, a future that has escaped the 'traditions' of the present.

The number of women in the photograph is also significant. Four women are shown in this photograph which is suggestive of the maximum number of wives a Muslim man is permitted (but not encouraged) to marry. In keeping with Orientalist ideas of the harem and the stereotype of Muslim men's sexual profligacy, it is fitting that there is twice the number of women than men shown in the photograph (Shaheen 2000). The choice of the photograph, headlines and page layout is evidence of the *Australian's* editorial stance on issues broadly relating to Islam and Muslims.

The second of the book reviews was of Barnaby Rogerson's *The Prophet Mohammed: A Biography* which appeared on the same page but below the larger review by Greg Sheridan. This review was headlined 'A different kind of superhero' and the introductory subheading stated that the 'history of the great prophet falls short'. To the far right of the article a quotation from the body had been written in a large bold font; 'Mohammed's personal habits are set out in detail, from his

simplicity of dress to his love of women' (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11). This review was written by Peter Rodgers, described in the by-line as 'a former diplomat and journalist with wide experience of the Islamic world' (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11). In fact Rodgers was the former Australian ambassador to Israel (Rodgers 2003) who, as a journalist, writes mostly on issues relating to Israel, which has never been considered part of the 'Islamic world'.

I would argue that certain comments in this review in regards to the prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and other 'great prophets' are offensive to Muslims because of the insinuations in the remarks. For example, Rodgers refers to Rogerson's discussion of the Prophet's (SAWS) personal relationships in the following terms:

The latter poses challenges for a gushing biographer, not so much because the Prophet eventually had 11 wives but because of a particular episode in which he became entranced with the wife of his adopted son, Zayd⁷³. Zayd generously offered to divorce his wife but Mohammed would not approve. Fortuitously, a revelation came upon the Prophet giving him the privilege "granted to no other believer" of what Rogerson terms "sexual carte blanche" and his former daughter-in-law.

Rogerson observes that in modern Western eyes this episode is often the point at which personal sympathy for Mohammed falters. He explains it away by arguing that the revelation can be interpreted "as showing the intimate concern of God for his Prophet (sic)" and adding that, compared to some of the other great prophets, Mohammed's marital behaviour was "quite modest" (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11).

The implication of this passage is that the Prophet (SAWS) was a false prophet (and a hypocrite) who, although doing a great deal of good for his society, manufactured divine revelations in order to satisfy his selfish, incestuous sexual desires. This is an absolutely horrific insinuation to any Muslim and is only made worse, not better, by the assurance that compared to the licentiousness of other prophets Muhammad (SAWS) behaved fairly modestly. Muslims pay great respect to all the 'great prophets' such as Adam (AS)⁷⁴, Dawood (King David) (AS), Ibrahim (Abraham) (AS) and Sulaiman (King Solomon) (AS), and believe that it is blasphemous to cast aspersions upon their character with tales of immodesty or dishonesty. While I am aware that this chapter is concerned

⁷³ Muslims pay great respect to the family, friends and associates of the Prophet (SAWS) by offering a respectful salutation whenever one of their names are mentioned or written. In keeping with the gendered nature of Arabic the salutation for men is Radiallahu Anhu (RA) and for women it is Radiallahu Anha (RA) which means 'May Allah be pleased with him/her'.

⁷⁴ Whenever the name of a prophet or messenger other than Muhammad (SAWS) is mentioned, written or read by a Muslim, the respectful salutation of Alaihi Sallam (AS) is made which means 'Peace be upon him'.

with analysing the representations of Muslims and Islam, I feel that an alternative (Islamic) reading of this 'episode' is necessary and so I have included this as a footnote below⁷⁵.

The inclusion of this tale in this review is no coincidence. One of the most oft repeated and believed representations of Muslims is that of the oversexed man and the hordes of submissive, sexually desirable women who are able to be swapped, married and divorced at a whim without their consent (see also Shohat & Stam (1994); Said (1995); Bullock (2002); Martin-Munoz (2002)). This tale also reads intertextually up the page to the photograph accompanying the Sheridan review, reinforcing the connotation of polygamy embodied in the presence of the four women.

In one paragraph Rodgers discusses claims made by Rogerson that:

the ease with which food is shared and hospitality offered remains one of the "most conspicuous differences" between a traditional Muslim society and the Western world. All "the grace and generosity belongs with Islam, all the cold-heartedness with the West" (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11).

Rodgers is scathing of this claim and responds by asking 'without wishing offence to anyone, how often, we might ask, does one drop in for a drink in traditional Muslim societies?' While he may have a valid point that Rogerson's argument is facile and overgeneralised, his own argument goes beyond facile and into more dangerous realms despite his lame preface 'without wishing offence'. While it is uncommon (but not unknown) for one to 'drop in for (an alcoholic) drink' at a Muslim household, it is certainly very common for friends, colleagues, acquaintances etc to 'drop in for a drink' if that drink is tea, coffee, soft-drink or other non-alcoholic beverage. For a person who claims 'wide experiences of the Islamic world', Rodgers ought to be aware of this. However, the effect of Rodgers' scorn is to suggest/imply that 'traditional' Muslims are incapable of offering true hospitality and generosity because they do not share alcoholic drinks with those they invite into

⁷⁵ Prior to receiving the prophethood the Prophet (SAWS) had an adopted son called Zayd (RA) who subsequently became one of the first people to accept the message of Islam. Adoption was a common practice among the tribes of Arabia at the time for a variety of reasons and adopted children were indistinguishable from biological children in the social order. Shortly before this particular story occurred, Allah revealed to the Prophet (SAWS) that adoption was forbidden because it creates confusion in genealogical identification and could result in biological siblings unknowingly committing incest. Adoption was also forbidden because certain tribes had used it to disinherit their biological children in favour of a person with 'more desirable characteristics' (eg a chief might adopt a young warrior who would be an asset to his fighting force, or an artisan might adopt someone more skilled in their trade than their biological child and who would then inherit the workshop over the biological child). It was still strongly encouraged that people take orphans (or unwanted children) into their homes to be raised in exactly the same way as their biological children however Islam strongly stipulated that the child be told of their biological origins (if known) without prevarication or deceit. When Zayd (RA) divorced his wife Zaynab bint Jahsh (RA), the Prophet (SAWS), was married to her in a verse from the Quran (Al Ahzab 33:37) in which it is also pointed out that an 'adopted' child can never become one's biological child and therefore it is not incestuous to marry their divorced spouse as it would be if they were a biological child. Because Zaynab (RA) was the Prophet's (SAWS) cousin, their marriage also demonstrated that marriage between cousins was acceptable in Islam (Stowasser 1994:87-89).

their homes. In this passage 'the West' is given linguistic precedent over Islam when Rodgers describes it as a 'Western world', while Islam is merely a subordinate 'society'. A 'world' is clearly larger, more powerful, more advanced, more civilised, more progressive and more enlightened than a 'society'.

Rodgers tells us that 'early in the book Rogerson warns of the dangers of "overly devout" converts' (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11). What these dangers are, Rodgers does not tell us but he recounts the self-confessedly amusing story that appears in Rogerson's book of 'the quandary of a Turkish acquaintance who laments that since his once adorable German girlfriend became a Muslim mother it was "like living with the Imam"' (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11). What Rodgers finds so amusing about this story is unclear. What is clear, however, is that he believes that for a Muslim woman to be simultaneously a devout mother *and* 'adorable' is mutually exclusive. Imams are clearly something to be scorned, derided and afraid of, as are 'converts'. Rodgers' suspicions and dislike of 'converts' is made more evident in his concluding paragraph in which he states: 'Rogerson is not a convert. The fact that he sounds like one neither helps his story nor the understanding it might have furthered' (Rodgers June 7-8, 2003:10-11).

This review is less an analysis of Barnaby Rogerson's book than it is a vehicle for Peter Rodgers to send a message to his readers about Islam. Despite a few occasional comments in support of certain aspects of Islam ('Islam's attractive egalitarianism'), his overall message is as obvious as it is dangerous and wrong: if Western women become Muslim they will lose their sexual attractiveness and become chattels of Muslim men who are following what Rogerson calls 'the "sexual carte blanche" of Mohammed' (sic), Muslims should be considered strange people because they do not drink alcohol (and are therefore rendered unable to offer genuine friendship to other human beings), and 'we' should continue to be 'suspicious of the third great "religion of the Book"'.

In the same edition of the *Weekend Australian*, June 7-8, the Editor liftout contained a brief review of books worth reading (Editor June 7-8, 2003:11). Of the five books suggested, four dealt with Islam and terrorism, and the fifth book discussed the impact terrorism has on Muslim nations such as Palestine. The titles suggested were *An Anatomy of Terror*, Andrew Sinclair (2003), *Why Terrorism Works*, Alan M. Dershowitz (2003), *When the Bulbul stopped singing: A Diary of Ramallah Under Seige*, Raja Shehadeh (2003), *Islam and Terror: What the Quran really Teaches*, Mark A. Gabriel (2003), and, *The Terrorism Reader*, David Whittaker (2003). These books were

presented as providing an insight 'behind the news'. Without providing in-depth analysis of the content of these books, their inclusion in the liftout merely reinforces the connection between Islam and terrorism.

The only relevant book review to appear in the *Advertiser* was that on June 14 by Samela Harris writing about Norma Khouri and her book *Forbidden Love* (Harris June 14, 2003:3). In her article headlined 'The evil men do', Harris did not strictly conform to the structure of other book reviews; instead she combined author biography and a promotion of Khouri's speaking tour with a description of the book's storyline. The headline does not refer simply to all men but specifically to Muslim Arab men because Harris tells about Khouri's quest to end 'the "honour killings" of women by their families in strict Arab countries' (Harris June 14, 2003:3) by writing the story of her Muslim friend Dalia's death at the hands of her family after they found out about her love affair with a Christian man, an affair that Khouri actively facilitated (and thus became a potential victim herself). Harris describes Khouri as feeling afraid of being a 'target for extremists ... (but she) is not a Muslim, however' (Harris June 14, 2003:3). Here Harris clearly portrays 'extremists' as always being Muslim – one of a number of stereotypical assumptions to be included in this article. Despite making it clear that honour killings are carried out by people following a number of faiths, there is a slippage between 'Arab' and 'Muslim' which acts as a conflation of the two:

Her father is one of the people from whom Norma Khouri had to escape in Jordan. Under the ancient Arab code of 'honour killing', Christian or not, he was entitled and very much tempted to murder his only daughter for the shame she had brought upon his family (Harris June 14, 2003:3),

and, 'She is ... travelling the country talking about the plight of women in Jordan and other Islamic countries' (Harris June 14, 2003:3). The first quotation implies that, as a Christian man, Norma Khouri's father was acting uncharacteristically in wanting to murder his daughter. Had he been a Muslim I doubt very much whether this qualifier would have been included – after all, following popular representation, Muslim men are *supposed* to be violent and controlling where their daughter's sexuality is involved. It is no coincidence then that Harris describes Khouri as concerned with the 'plight of women in ... Islamic countries', despite having earlier stated that honour killing was an 'Arab code' (Harris June 14, 2003:3). This slippage between Arab and Muslim/Islamic again demonstrates how deep-seated are stereotypes of Muslims (Shaheen 2000; Whitlock 2004).

Without wishing to demean or reduce the horror of Dalia's death, the representation of Dalia, by Harris and by the publishers of Khouri's book, demonstrates the popularity of the idea of Muslim women as dressed in black with their face covered, oppressed and victimised, and, of Muslim men as violent and misogynist. The front cover of Khouri's book (which is inset above the headline of Harris' article) shows a woman in a black hijab but who is holding her scarf across her face so that only her kohl-lined eyes and part of one cheek is showing (see Figure 12). This type of book jacket photo-art depicting a generic 'veiled woman' is a popular one whenever the book content includes Muslim women, violence, and misogyny¹ as it reflects the image of a beautiful women who is trapped, oppressed and surrounded by blackness (of Islam). Harris emphasises the religious difference between Dalia and her lover, Michael, by stating 'Dalia was Muslim. Michael, the man with whom she fell in love, was a Christian' (Harris June 14, 2003) as if Dalia's religion was somehow significant. Given that Harris and Khouri claim that honour killing is an Arab custom and that no Arab girls, regardless of religion, are 'allowed out without fathers or brothers' (Harris June 14, 2003:3) it would not have made much of a difference what the religion of the two lovers had been. But Harris somehow felt the need to mention it. Whatever her reason for doing so, the impact is to reinforce ideas of Muslim male violence and surveillance, and female oppression.

NOTE: This image is included on page 125 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 12 - Cover of Khouri's novel as reviewed by Harris

¹ Books such as the *Princess* series by Jean Sasson, *My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story*, Latifa (2003), *Zoya's Story: An Afghan Woman's Struggle for Freedom*, Zoya with John Follain and Rita Cristofari (2002), *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq – one woman's survival under Saddam Hussein*, Jean Sasson (2003), *Price of Honor: Muslim women lift the veil of silence on the Islamic world*, Jan Goodwin (1995), *Voices behind the Veil: the world of Islam through the eyes of women*, Ergun Caner (ed) (2003), are just a few of hundreds of books with veiled women on the front cover (some covers are of women in burkhas while others feature the alluring and always heavily made-up eyes of the woman behind the veil). Tellingly, Jean Sasson's *Mayada* and Ergun Caner's *Voices Behind the Veil* have exactly the same photograph on the front cover.

A few months after having written this analysis, and almost exactly a year after Harris' book review in the *Advertiser*, Malcolm Knox, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, revealed that Norma Khouri's book was not a memoir, as she claimed, but a work of fiction (Whitlock 2004). As it transpired, Khouri had created both the entire story and her autobiographical persona – Dalia never existed and was therefore never murdered by her relatives, there was no illicit cross-religious love affair, and Norma Khouri was never forced to flee from Jordan for fear of her own death at the hands of her relatives. The book was labelled a 'hoax' and withdrawn from sale on July 26 2004. Literary critic Gillian Whitlock argues that 'a literary hoax is a definitive event; it brings to light the social, political and ethical investments of narrators, readers and publishers' (Whitlock 2004:165). In the light of Samela Harris' review (and the numerous articles on the book which appeared with headlines such as 'Killing of ALL honour' (*Sunday Tasmanian* 16/2/03), 'Paying the deadly price of love' (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 1/2/03), 'A Friendship Sundered by Muslim Code of Honour' (*New York Times* 1/2/03), 'Crusade to stop callous "honour" murders of daughters' (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 11/1/03)), this particular literary hoax raised issues not only about 'honour' killings but also the alacrity with which a book that reiterated notions of Muslims as barbarous, misogynist and backward was accepted by the public: the book was in the list of top ten bestsellers for many months prior to its discrediting. Whitlock argues that this success 'benefited from a global post-September 11 demand for non-fiction "particularly books which perpetuate negative stereotypes about Islamic (sic) men"' (2004:167). As I argue, media images and portrayals of Muslims and Islam are powerful vehicles for the perpetuation of negativity; so too are books and book reviews, which 'circulate to shape public opinion, reinforce stereotypes and present plots "custom-made for our times"' (2004:167). Whitlock argues convincingly that 'it is the "custom made" nature of *Forbidden Love* that suggests this is the hoax that we had to have' (2004:167). Due to the overwhelming dominance of such negative representations, as presented in this chapter, 'this is the fake for which readers and publishers were ready' (2004:167).

The Executioner: A Tale of Barbarism

Representations of Muslims and Islam appeared in a variety of unexpected ways in both the *Australian* and the *Advertiser* during June and July, 2003. One such representation appeared in the lifestyle liftout section 'Weekend' in the *Advertiser*, July 26 (Ahmed July 26, 2003:3). This was a profile of a Saudi Arabian public executioner, Muhammad Saad al-Beshi by *Arab News* journalist,

Mahmoud Ahmed (the article was first published by *Arab News*). The headline proclaimed 'I sleep very well' and the subheading read, 'A sharp sword and total faith in the law. Saudi Arabia's top executioner reveals the essentials of his job' (Ahmed July 26, 2003:3). The article is little more than a voyeuristic and lurid series of details about how beheadings are conducted and how Mr al-Beshi feels about his job. The article takes up a full page (tabloid) and the top half is taken up with the headlines and two large colour photographs of Mr al-Beshi (see Figure 13). Interestingly this article is sourced from the *Arab News* which is not a common source for articles in the *Advertiser* and implies that the story was chosen for a set of reasons which are discussed below.

To the far left of the page Mr al-Beshi is shown sitting at a table with a glass of thick Saudi Arabian tea resting near his arm. He is not looking at the camera but appears to be speaking with someone outside the frame and to the lower right. He is dressed in traditional Saudi clothing which includes a loose white shirt and a red-and-white checked headdress secured by a black headband. To the right of the page is a photo of Mr al-Beshi with a sword raised above his head about to remove the head of a kneeling prisoner who has his hands tied behind his back. A crowd of men can be seen in the foreground and the background creating a large circle around the execution. All the crowd are dressed in traditional clothes with the exception of five soldiers/police who stand guard. Once again the traditional clothing worn by those represented in the photographs could be seen as evidence of their backwardness and uncivilised nature.

NOTE: This image is included on page 127 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 13 - Photograph of 'The Executioner'

Due to Mr al-Beshi's (and the prisoners') religion, the article is peppered with references to Islam and Islamic practices, thus reinforcing that the executions take place under Islamic jurisdiction. While this is an accurate representation, it is not the accuracy of the article's portrayal that drew my attention, rather, it is the effect on *Advertiser* readers. In a country without capital punishment (and where beheading was not the preferred method of killing even when capital punishment did occur) comments such as 'with one stroke of the sword I severed his head. It rolled metres away', and '[the sword is] a gift from the government. I look after it and [...] I make sure to clean it of blood stains [...] People are amazed how fast it can separate the head from the body' (Ahmed July 26, 2003:3), are almost certain to cause horror and repulsion, firstly with the concept of beheading and then secondly, with the religion that endorses such a practice.

There is nothing recent or newsworthy about the content: it does not appear as part of a debate about capital punishment practices; it does not appear as part of a 'travel and culture' section; and nor is Mr al-Beshi a person of consequence to South Australian readers. Perhaps then, it may be argued that, in light of all the stories of violence and mayhem attributed to Islam and Muslims in the preceding weeks, this story is presented as some kind of proof of the inherent violence of Islam and Muslims and in effect conforms to the news values of continuity, negativity and meaningfulness. Quotes chosen from Mr al-Beshi's interview read, to an Australian audience, as replete with the language of butchery or murder ('I severed his head', 'bloodstains', 'separate head from the body', 'sharp knife', 'cut from the joint'). These selected quotes reinforce the message that Islam and Muslims are barbaric, uncivilised and violent with no commitment to what a 'western' audience would understand to be human rights.

Rather than a chaotic tale of bombings and terror blamed on Muslims and denied by them, the narrator is calm and 'matter of fact' about his actions, and such representation adds to the sensational nature of the report. The enactor of the state and religious sanctioned violence repeatedly stresses the Islamic nature of his actions and the level of detail increases the sensation and horror for readers. Thus, one of the conclusions available to readers is that, if Islam can sanction public beheadings or amputations ('I use a special sharp knife instead of a sword [and] When I cut off a hand, I cut it from the joint' (Ahmed July 26, 2003:3)), then it can probably sanction actions such as the Bali bombings. The *Advertiser* has used the words and behaviour of a Muslim

untainted by accusations of terrorism to reinforce ideas of Muslims as violent and barbaric, and of Islam as a backward and vicious religion.

Positive Representations?

While the overwhelming representation of Muslims in both the *Australian* and the *Advertiser* during June and July 2003, can be described as negative, there were a few articles that presented Islam/Muslims in a different light. While these were positive in comparison to the representations already discussed, they were not articles that glowingly portrayed the Muslim community, or Islam as a way of life. Interestingly each of these articles appeared in the *Advertiser* and even more interesting was that there were no positive representations of Muslim men, or of Islam, only of Muslim women. It may be argued that this is because Muslim women are seen as less threatening than either Islam or Muslim men, and that this then allows for the occasional positive (or at least ambivalent) representation to occur (Ang 1996). It may also be that because the *Advertiser* is tabloid in format and caters for a local South Australian readership it places higher news value on 'human interest' stories with a local content than the *Australian* and 'human interest' stories are traditionally seen as 'soft' stories, or feminized stories, and frequently feature either women or 'women's issues' (Sparks and Tulloch 2000; Thwaites, Davis et al. 2002).

On July 17 Rebecca Jenkins wrote that 'Muslims and Arabs speak out on prejudice' (Jenkins July 17, 2003:28). This was an article that raised awareness of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) consultations with Muslim and Arab Australians on the issue of racism. The article was accompanied by a photograph of a Muslim woman wearing a hijab and whose face is reflected in the glass front of a tapestry of religious verses (see Figure 14). The article, including the photograph, take up only a quarter of the page and most of the page is devoted to an advertisement for the TXU electricity company featuring a dog lying at the entrance of a kennel ('We're excited by electricity even if you're not'). Reading the article in conjunction with the advertisement, perhaps this indicates the level of importance placed on this story especially given its location on page 28.

The woman, Arnesa Pleho, was quoted in the article describing the difficulties some Muslim women face in the community on a day-to-day basis – this is one of the two occasions during the two months in which a Muslim woman's voice was heard in either of the two newspapers (the other

occasion is discussed below). The tone of the article was sympathetic and encouraging of those women who were taking the opportunity to speak about their experiences. However, it may also be argued that the representation of Ms Pleho and other Muslim women in this article is simply a 'new angle' on the popular stereotype of Muslim women as suffering and in need of assistance. Instead of these women being seen as victims of Islam they are positioned as victims of the wider Australian community.

NOTE: This image is included on page 130 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 14 – Arnesa Pleho speaking about racism

A follow-up article appeared on July 21 entitled 'Education needed to stop prejudice' (Caruso July 21, 2003:8). This was a brief article that suggested that one solution to racism was education. The only voice heard in this article is that of the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Linda Matthews, who spoke about the importance of finding 'solutions'. Muslim women, who were ostensibly the focus of this article, were not given a voice¹.

The second instance where a Muslim woman was given a voice in an article was one entitled 'Women who make the world better' (Williams June 21, 2003:5). This was an article that announced the winners of the Women of Achievement Awards. It focused on the winner of the award for services to the multicultural community, an Iraqi refugee, Ferial Al Khil Khali. Ms Al Khil Khali is a volunteer with other refugee women, assisting them with language and providing sewing

¹ Two stories appeared in the *Australian* which touched upon Muslims and religious racism in Australia but neither of them focussed on the experiences of Muslim women (Karvelas July 31, 2003; Milligan July 31, 2003) (see Appendix Five).

lessons, as well as caring for her four children and her husband. The accompanying photograph shows Ms Al Khil Khali with three of her children and her husband (see Figure 15). She and her three daughters are wearing hijab.

NOTE: This image is included on page 132 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 15 – Ms Al Khil Khali with family

The representation of Ms Al Khil Khali was a positive one in that she was portrayed as an exceptional woman who overcame a series of obstacles in her life and still managed to assist others in need. Although her religious identity was only mentioned as the precipitating factor in having to become a refugee (her and her family's lives were under threat from the Iraqi government for their religion), it was nonetheless an unusually *ordinary* representation of a Muslim. In fact, this representation was the closest either newspaper came, throughout the two month data collection period, to representing a Muslim as a valuable member of society. This story also confirms popular ideas of Australia as the 'lucky country' in which migrants and refugees can build new and successful lives. It also invites readers to think well of themselves for being part of a nation that provides people with a new and better start to life.

However the positiveness of the representation was somewhat diminished by the carelessness taken in naming Ms Al Khil Khali and her family. In the caption to the photograph Ms Al Khil Khali was named as Ferial Al dKhil Khali and one of her daughters was named as Fatin. However, in the article they were referred to as Ferial Al Khil Khali and Fatan. While these mistakes may simply be the result of poor proofreading, they may also be seen as symptomatic of dismissive attitudes towards those of migrant (Non English Speaking) backgrounds and an unwillingness to accord them the same respect as Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Australians.

Continuing this representation, as well as representing Muslim women in a positive way, was the small article that appeared in the *Advertiser* on June 23 entitled 'Enjoying fruits of freedom' (Devlin June 23, 2003:12). This article discussed the opportunity that many Afghan women refugees had to attend school in Adelaide. The accompanying photograph shows two young women wearing hijabs and laughing with their older female teacher who is unveiled. They are standing in front of a whiteboard covered with Farsi writing. The article says that these learning opportunities are very important for Afghan refugee women because many of them were prevented from attending school during the reign of the Taliban. While the representation of the women is a happy one that shows them taking control of their lives it also draws upon other, less positive representations such as patriarchal Muslim men who deny women the opportunity to attend school. It also contains the representation of Australia as the lucky country because it is the place where these women have the opportunity to gain an education and some professional skills that will facilitate a prosperous future.

Conclusion

This chapter, together with Chapter Four, have demonstrated the critical significance of news reporting of racial, ethnic and religious minorities in constructing public attitudes, beliefs and racism towards these groups. Negative representations of Muslims, and specifically Muslim women, not only appear in the news sections of the newspapers as discussed in the previous chapter, but also in a number of the non-news sections, as discussed in this chapter. These negative representations increase the number, and effect, of racist stereotypes of Muslims in the media generally.

Furthermore, the chapters have found that reports about Islamic 'barbarity' (such as 'the Executioner's tale') or Islamic 'repression' of women are apparently more newsworthy in the context of broader public discussion and reporting of terrorism enacted by 'Islamic fundamentalists'. Such reports appear to 'prove' the inherent ferocity and weakness of Islam and the opposite compassion and superiority of Christian nations. This binary structures nearly all reporting of Muslims and Islam in the Australian media and plays a key role in the construction and reproduction of religious racism.

This chapter argued that the few stories about Muslims that were not categorically negative, could hardly be thought of as overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, in the context of a society in which racism is present, such apparently positive framings cannot guarantee that audiences will read them in such ways, or be receptive to the supportive connotations. However, their occasional presence is welcome relief to Muslim women who, as the next chapter will reveal, are 'fed up' with the limited, stereotyped and negative representations of their lives in the Australian print media.

CHAPTER SIX

In Their Own Words: Reflections on Media Representations

As was discussed in the previous two chapters, representations of Islam and Muslims are fairly common in the South Australian print media. These representations are frequently characterised by negativity and hostility which is conveyed through a repertoire of images and stereotypes such as 'terrorist', 'woman in black', 'barbaric Muslims' and 'unnatural women', terms that recurred in both the media analysis and the interviewees' reflections on it. This chapter discusses the intersections of these media representations and the lives and experiences of the Muslim women in my sample. Throughout the interviews the women repeatedly mentioned various representations of Muslims, Islam and particularly Muslim women that they have encountered throughout their lives. This chapter discusses the women's articulation of the major representations they recognise in the media and their response to some specific examples of recent representations of Muslim women that I chose for this purpose and which have appeared in the print media in recent years. To reinforce the opening claim of the previous chapter, that representations have material effects, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the specific impact media representations have had on the lives of the young Muslim women in South Australia in my sample.

Stereotypes and (mis)representations

Women in Black: Appearance and Oppression

One of the representations to appear in the media analysis that was also reflected in the life experiences of the women in Adelaide was the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman. The anger and frustration this representation engendered in the young women repeatedly came through in the interviews. Not a single woman refrained from speaking about it. In many cases the representation was linked to visual appearance. Amina, in the focus group, argued that:

In Australia we are treated first and foremost as a Muslim not as a woman [because of hijab]. So if people are rude to us they're rude to us because we're a Muslim not because we're a girl.

However, Fauzia disagreed:

No I actually disagree with that because [some] non-Muslims treat you differently because you're a Muslim *woman* because they treat Muslim men totally differently ... you totally get treated as a Muslim *and* as a woman.

Both women present valid arguments. On the one hand women who wear hijab, or who are clearly identifiable as Muslims, are frequently positioned as the 'public face' of Muslim communities (Rozario 1998). They become default representatives of Islam as many non-Muslims treat them as the embodiment of Islam and Muslim communities. In this sense Amina is correct when she argues that Muslim women are positioned as Muslims before they are positioned in a gendered way. However, Fauzia's argument is also valid in the sense that there is a difference in how Muslim men are positioned and how Muslim women are positioned – the former as violent and abusive, and the latter usually as oppressed, timid and submissive (although occasionally Muslim women were presented as a threat as discussed in the previous chapter). As a direct result of the overwhelming dominance of popular representations of Muslims, once a woman has been identified as a *Muslim* woman, these representations 'kick in' like an automated response: – thus a Muslim woman, ergo she is oppressed and submissive.

As Barakah suggested, 'visuals are very powerful on people especially when they associate (them) with a particular kind of person'. What this means is that when a person/people dresses in a certain manner and is simultaneously represented as having a certain type of character, it is likely that the characteristic (whether accurate or not) will become synonymous with the visual appearance and vice versa. Therefore, the hijab becomes a signifier for the character and situation of Muslim women (Franks 2001; Bullock 2002). It is a signifier which carries such a weight of cultural 'baggage' and stereotypic connotations that the hijab as signifier can often work to foreclose engagement and positive dialogue.

In the context of popular representations of Muslim women for those women who wear hijab, this means that they are always and forever linked to notions of female oppression regardless of the realities of their lives⁷⁸. In most non-Muslim societies, including Australia, the hijab is seen as a symbol of female oppression and as Bullock writes 'the mainstream, pop culture view [is that] Muslim women are completely and utterly subjugated by men, and the veil is a symbol of that' (2002:xv). This limited view of the role and positioning of Muslim women goes some way to

⁷⁸ See discussions in Mubarak 1996; Brasted 1997; Duval 1998; Kahf 1999; Franks 2000, 2001; Bullock 2002; Kopp 2002; Martin-Munoz 2002; Rasool 2002.

explaining why many non-Muslim Australians often express surprise at young Muslim women choosing to wear hijab. As they only read it as a symbol of oppression, they are at a loss to understand why educated young women with a high level of agency would choose to embrace it.

In reporting a story the popular media often selects the most dramatic visuals for their power and effect in emphasising a preferred construction. The 'image of the hijab serves journalists well – it is sensational, controversial, jingoistic, and exciting reading [it is] also something visible, a tangible symbol on which to hang these meanings, something that "pictures" well' (Bullock 2002:133). One of the most dramatic representations of the hijab is the black full-body and face covering⁷⁹ worn by some Muslim women (particularly in Saudi Arabia and Iran)⁸⁰. In these representations the 'hijab is linked to assertions about women's inferiority within Islam' (2002:127).

As the religious injunction, in either the Quran or the hadith (teachings of the Prophet (SAWS)), for women to cover does not refer specifically to covering the face⁸¹, the majority of Muslim women who cover do not do so. Nor do most Muslim women around the world wear a voluminous black head-to-toe covering as is popularised in representations of Muslim women. Rather they most often apply Islamic principles of modesty and propriety to the local styles of dress (or the style of dress of their ethnic homeland) (Kopp 2002). Therefore there are significant variations in the visual appearances of Muslim women. However, the reality of Muslim women's visual appearance has no bearing or influence on the popular representation of Muslim women as covered completely from head-to-toe in a black robe.

⁷⁹ In Iran and the subcontinent this covering is known as 'purdah' or 'chador', while in Afghanistan it is known as a 'burqa' and is often blue. In Arab countries it is divided into three parts, the body covering is known as an 'abaya', the head covering is still called a 'hijab' while the face covering is called 'niqab'. Because of this regional difference in terminology I will rely on plain-English descriptors unless describing a hijab.

⁸⁰ In popular understandings, the full body covering worn by some Muslim women is always black (with the recent exception of the Afghan style burqa which is usually pale blue) because most women who cover from head to toe do so in monochrome black. Consequently in any discussion of the full body covering there is an implicit assumption that it is black. This is true even in discussions amongst Muslim women.

⁸¹ There is a large amount of material (both academic and religious) that discusses the intricacies of veiling but I do not wish to enter into this debate as it was not something that the interviewees felt was significant to their lives. Each of the women believed that wearing loose and modest clothes in combination with a hijab was an Islamic requirement and the option to cover the face was a choice that individuals were free to make depending on their personal feelings. They each believed this whether or not they actually wore hijab themselves. For a more in depth discussion of the hijab debate see Franks 2000, 2001; Bullock 2002; Mernissi 1975; Yeganeh 1993; Badran 1995; Brenner 1996; El Saadawi 1997; Duval 1998; El Guindi 1999; Roald 2001; Shirazi 2001; Kopp 2002; Rasool 2002.

Utilising sensational images like putting the covered [faces] of Muslim women on the front cover of a book is going to make it sell, and (then) it's advertised more predominantly in the front of a book store. And when I sort of walk past it, I kind of feel like telling everyone 'That's not what we are like' [and] 'Hello I'm wearing white, I'm wearing blue, and I've got my face uncovered'. (Barakah)

Barakah's analysis of the use of 'veiled women' as a literary marketing strategy is supported by Whitlock's discussion of the Norma Khouri hoax (see Chapter Five) in which she argues that negative representations of Muslims, and particularly Muslim women, are placed on book covers which depict brown, kohl lined eyes of women veiled in black: 'the commodification of the veil [and] sad Muslim women peer fetchingly from behind the veil on numerous book jackets in these times' (Whitlock 2004:166). In her argument, the image of the veiled woman is a cynical 'hook' used to lure readers into spending money because the image evokes a whole raft of negative attitudes and ideas about Muslims and 'Islam's treatment of women'. Indeed, many of these books have a peritext which 'orients the narrative to a primary readership that is both gendered and Western' (2004:168), that is, they are marketed primarily to white western women who want to read often harrowing tales of misogyny and oppression towards Muslim women (Kolhatkar 2002; Whitlock 2004)⁸². However, as the women in this study argue, these popular representations bear little resemblance to their lived realities:

Whether it was in a movie or whether it was in a TV programme, a lot of times when you see them on TV they show you a Muslim woman covered from head to toe, no eyes, no nothing. That's not a true representation of a Muslim woman! No, it's just not accurate. (Hanna)

Hanna and Barakah adamantly refute the idea that it is accurate to portray all Muslim women (or even the majority) as being fully covered. They are not arguing that such a form of cover is oppressive – they are arguing that the misrepresentation is oppressive.

Latifa described her angry reaction to seeing a 'fashion shoot' in a glossy fashion magazine in which a male non-Muslim fashion designer had created a series of images of a woman dressed like a Muslim woman – covered from head-to-toe in black (evoking the stereotype of a covered Muslim woman) gradually removing parts of her covering until she was naked except for a small face

⁸² I would argue that these women *want* to read such texts partly as a result of voyeurism and a fascination with the exotic other but also because texts such as these reinforce a belief in 'western' superiority particularly in regards to gender equality and the rights of women. These texts allow 'western' women to feel morally superior and 'safe' in the knowledge that, because they do not experience such misogyny, they do not experience oppression or gender inequality.

covering and cap. The point that the designer was making was that Muslim women who cover 'lose their identity' (Latifa). As Latifa saw it, the designer not only misunderstood Muslim women's motivation to wear hijab (in part it is to avoid being portrayed as a naked sexual object in a glossy magazine) but he also failed to understand that even when women cover all of their body including their eyes:

they've got personality, they've got feelings, they've got thoughts, you know. Their main identity is there and anything above that is just superficial, it doesn't really matter, and so I really think that this fashion designer hasn't really got it. (Latifa)

This perceived loss of identity can be seen as one aspect of the supposed oppression of Muslim women. This type of representation exemplifies the ways in which Muslim women can be commodified in Australian mainstream media, even in instances in which certain fashion magazines purport to celebrate a 'diversity' of 'cultural traditions' and heritages in terms of what these can contribute to western fashion⁸³. Similar to Latifa's story, one of Weller et al's participants told a story in which she recalled reading about another non-Muslim male fashion designer who had created a series of designs incorporating a hijab into them in ways that were religiously offensive; 'it was so hypocritical when socially and politically [...] Muslim women are so excluded and devalued. But second, the scarf was matched with a shorter skirt which ultimately is offensive [and] bizarre' (Weller, Feldman et al. 2001:113). In March 2003 the Queensland Police Journal published 'joke' images of bikini clad 'veiled women' posing à la *Playboy* covergirls (see 'Journal angers Muslims' (Doneman 26 March, 2003:11) and 'Police journal 'jokes' offend' (12 March, 2003:12)).

⁸³ This narrative raises so many issues and invites a variety of readings/responses that are not discussed here. However, as this is Latifa's narrative, the focus is on her reading.

The sexualised treatment of hijab and Muslim women in these narratives⁸⁴ is reminiscent of colonial orientalist depictions of naked and semi-naked 'veiled' Muslim women such as the popular (pornographic) postcards of the 1800s (Bullock 2002:15). In these representations the refusal of Muslim women who wore hijab to be photographed or painted without their hijab on was a source of frustration for non-Muslims (particularly men) who wanted to see what lay beneath. This desire led to the development of an elaborate industry of fabrication to cater to these frustrated fantasies by creating studio images. Bullock describes how prostitutes from north Africa would pose for photographs in 'traditional' dress but in titillating poses or with parts of their clothing strategically removed (for example, she describes one postcard in which a woman has one breast exposed, another in which a woman wears full body covering but her nipples are visible through the sheer fabric, and another in which a group of women are shown naked from the waist up) (2002:14-17). By depicting Muslim women in this way the male gaze of the photographer⁸⁵ is asserting his will over the women who refuse his gaze by 'hiding' parts of their body from view. Thus the falsified image of the 'unveiled' or 'mis-veiled' woman can be interpreted as an act of revenge, an attempt to deal with, or punish, women who do not recognise or submit to the male 'right' to gaze on them⁸⁶. Bullock describes this process as 'symbolic revenge' (2002:17) this symbolic revenge via falsified images of Muslim women can take another form. While the orientalist male gaze expects to see all of a Muslim woman's body, the contemporary mainstream media often expects to gaze on a black fully veiled Muslim woman. This gaze does not expect to see all of her body, rather, it demands to see *none* of it. As the following narrative shows, where such an image is not available, the media

⁸⁴ Such sexualised narratives, although well documented in historical terms, are quite unusual in contemporary times when dominant portrayals of Muslim women have shifted from seductive, exotic, oriental temptresses to frigid, uptight, sexually unattractive domestic slaves (Kahf 1999; Bullock 2002). Indeed, in the focus group I conducted, the women argued that in interactions with non-Muslims, particularly men, they were seen as asexual or even gender-neutral. Amina said that for non-Muslim men 'I'm not a guy but I'm not a girl' which indicated that they perceived her as neither male nor female primarily because they did not see her as a potential sexual partner. In her book *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler (Butler 1990) uses Monique Wittig's argument that women who are not positioned or perceived as potential sexual partners by men are also not positioned as 'women' or as 'female'. She cites Wittig's argument that

A woman [...] only exists as a term that stabilizes and consolidates a binary and oppositional relation to a man; that relation, she argues, is heterosexuality. A lesbian she claims, in refusing heterosexuality is no longer defined in terms of that oppositional relation. Indeed, a lesbian, she maintains transcends the binary opposition between woman and man; a lesbian is neither a woman nor a man. But further, a lesbian has no sex; she is beyond the categories of sex [...] Indeed, the lesbian appears to be a third gender or [...] a category that radically problematizes both sex and gender as stable political categories of description (Butler 1990:112-113).

Thus, I would argue that in many contemporary personal interactions between Muslim women and non-Muslim men (and representations which reflect or imply these interactions), because the women are not positioned as sexual partners, they lose their gendered identity and become simply a representation or embodiment of Islam/Muslimness. Possibly this visual symbol of lack of sexual availability lies at the heart of some of the hostility directed towards Muslim women, as discussed below.

⁸⁵ Even where the actual photographer is not a man, they are operating with a patriarchal male gaze (see Bullock 2002:9-15).

⁸⁶ See also Mernissi (2001).

gaze attempts to create it, much as the colonial photographers created the images of Muslim women in the 1800s.

When I interviewed Zakiyah, she told me of a disturbing incident she'd had the previous day. To provide some context for this narrative it is useful to know that Zakiyah wears hijab but does not cover her face or restrict herself to wearing black clothing⁸⁷.

Zakiyah: Yesterday I was interviewed by the *Advertiser* and they took a photo of me for the article and asked me if I'd cover my face for it and I just said, 'no, I don't wear it like that and so I'm not going to cover my face'. It would be like asking a woman who doesn't wear a headscarf to put a headscarf on! So I said to them 'it's just because it's sensational, more people pick it up and go wow, but if I look like a smiling happy Muslim woman well that doesn't fit in with the stereotype, you don't want to see someone happy and someone laughing, you want to see the Muslim as what they typically represent us to be which is the oppressed Muslim women with the thing over her face or she could have a gun in her hand, that would be alright, but someone who's sitting in her house smiling with the hijab, well that's not what you want, and that's what really annoys me about the media'.

Alia: What was the photographer's response when you made that comment?

Zakiyah: He agreed, he went 'yeah I'm really sorry I asked you'. He goes 'I'm really sorry I asked you but I had to because they'll ask me when I go back to the office why I didn't [if I hadn't]' and I sort of went 'well yeah, you know, it's ...' "

Alia: So where do you think this is coming from? Is this directive coming from who – the editors?

Zakiyah: Well yeah, he told me that he was advised to get a picture of me with everything covered – you know be covering my face except my eyes – so he was asked to do that because I think that they know that that's going to fit in with what they want, what people want to see in the media, people want to see that, they pick up [the paper], and say 'ooh, you've got that poor oppressed Muslim woman, we'd better read that article', but if it's someone happy and smiling with a scarf on her head well that doesn't fit the narrative that's usually in the media about Muslims, and it's not a sensational image. So yes, it's directives from the media because they know that's what they want, they want the sensational, what people are going to read and what's going to capture people.

Alia: So did you contact them for this story or did they contact you?

⁸⁷ This story does not jeopardise Zakiyah's anonymity as the incident referred to occurred outside the two month data collection period. I also have not included the headline or significant details from the article in order to further protect her identity.

Zakiyah: No they contacted me. They said that they tried to contact other people but I think they definitely wanted someone who wore a headscarf in the picture, because again, it's the representation of a Muslim woman with the headscarf and it was about wearing headscarf and the abuse that you get or the discrimination that you get from the community and stuff, so yeah.

This story clearly implicates the *Advertiser*, but more importantly, the general media culture, in actively continuing a negative representation of Muslim women⁸⁸. While the news values of continuity (running stories followed up over a series of days), consonance (if the story has a similar profile to one previously run it has a greater chance of appearing in print because it fits the media's expectations of a particular event), simplicity, unambiguity (if the story can be framed as having a clear meaning it is more likely to run), and, availability of images (as well as the reliance on stereotypes as a way of communicating issues economically), are important to the swift production and circulation of newspapers, this has the undeniable and unfortunate result of continuing racist and negative stereotypes even when this may not be the intention of the newspaper (Allan 1999; Bignell 2002; Thwaites, Davis et al. 2002). What is also disturbing in this narrative is the apparent lack of critical awareness on the part of individual journalists and newspaper photographers about the role they play in the perpetuation of certain representations, and how this impacts on the lives of individuals (Shaheen 2000; Meneghini 2004).

Zakiyah's experience adds weight to the argument that media practices have very real consequences⁸⁹. By being asked to 'pretend' by the photographer, I would argue that this was not simply a question of asking Zakiyah to put on a different coloured hijab (black)⁹⁰ and to wrap a piece of fabric over her face. Rather it was the culmination and implementation of years of racist conditioning and indicative of the lack of awareness or concern with the impact of media practices on audiences in relation to Muslim women (and other 'minority' groups). It was also an attempt to create a more sensationalised and dramatic image that could be seen to heighten the 'entertainment' value of the story over its 'information' role and thus sell more newspapers. Indeed,

⁸⁸ To compound their racist positioning of Zakiyah, the *Advertiser* did not use the photograph they took of her in her everyday hijab smiling for the camera. This implies that the newspaper was not willing to negotiate an alternative representation of a Muslim woman, that is, not wearing black full body and face coverings because they only consider the extremes of otherness as newsworthy.

⁸⁹ Joe Wakim, tells a similar story in *Caravanserai* (Deen 2003:213) in which he relates how an Australian commercial television station during the Gulf War asked him to invite Muslim and Arab women to participate in a TV forum discussing the war. He tells how they requested he ensure that a proportion of the Muslim women wear a hijab and that ideal hijab-wearing Muslim women would be ones who wore a black full face and body cover.

⁹⁰ Although this is not evident in the above excerpt, in further discussions Zakiyah told me that the newspaper specifically requested that she be wearing black.

Rodney Tiffen argues that the images that sell the most newspapers are 'dramatic, shocking and eye-catching' and that the most 'sensational stories are given priority' (Tiffen 1989:65-67 cited in Kabir (2004). A photograph of Zakiyah fully covered in black would increase the newsworthiness of the accompanying story as compared to the image of her in an 'everyday' hijab⁹¹.

This narrative also strongly conveys the connection between the image of a woman covered in black and the representation of her as an oppressed person. Not only are Muslim women perceived to be oppressed by wearing hijab but part of this representation is that women who wear hijab are being kept in an uncivilised and 'backward' state. This representation came through in certain media representations of veiled women (see previous chapter). As Ellen described it, the attitude of certain non-Muslims, and particularly the media, is that 'if you wear a scarf you're not modern ... and you're not going to make it, you're not going to be successful. But if you don't wear a scarf well then you can be a Muslim and be successful at the same time!'. Hanna agreed with this assessment when she said 'I feel that [Muslim women who wear scarves] are always looked down on and always made to be seen to be very inferior to others, particularly other women who are non-Muslim'.

For Sherene, the choice to not wear hijab has meant that often she is asked why her family hasn't forced her to wear hijab. Her best friend, Kulthum, does wear hijab and often the questions are asked when the two women are together. The assumption, especially in Australia, seems to be that no woman would *choose* to wear hijab because it is so 'oppressive' and a 'denial of self-expression' (or consumerism) that is equated with freedom in western capitalist societies. Given that Muslims are usually seen to be non-English speaking migrants and given the long history of pathologising the migrant family (Shain 2003:4-10) the reason that is attributed to the choice to

⁹¹ Tuhiwai Smith tells a similar story about a photographer attending a Maori gathering at a local *marae* (cultural centre) and being visibly disappointed at the sight of Maori dressed in tracksuits rather than 'authentic Native dress'. The photographer was so disappointed that they left without taking any photos (1999:72).

wear hijab is family pressure. In Bullock's Canadian study, she argues that:

When Canadians tell Muslim women they are 'free' here and should take off their headscarves, they are expressing the conventional wisdom that the 'veil' is oppressive because it is imposed. Even when it is understood that the women are covering not because of a state-imposed law, the assumption remains that the women have been brainwashed by their families/culture into believing in *hijab*, and that they have not had the mental wherewithal to question their customs (Bullock 2002:66 emphasis in original).

It is this same attitude which motivates non-Muslim Australians to question Sherene about her non-covering.

The overwhelmingly dominant representation of Muslim women that the interviewees encounter is one of oppression and subordination:

As I said it's usually like, Muslim women represented as if we're oppressed, subordinated women who don't have many rights and that sort of stuff. The oppressed Muslim woman that doesn't leave the house, the oppressed Muslim women sort of image and so it's "oh wow you're allowed out?!!" and you know, the 'not without my daughter syndrome'⁹² sort of thing, and yeah, it's hard because you continually have to justify yourself, who you are and what your religion says, to everybody all the time. (Zakiyah)

Deeply held attitudes such as those that position Muslim women as oppressed are difficult for the women to overcome despite living lives that, in many ways, contradict such representations. It is this contradiction that made Barakah ask 'where do I fit in if you're making the claim (that all Muslim women are oppressed)?' Such a contradiction means that many of the women feel marginalised from dominant society when it creates an external oppression rather than the internal one that others imagine the women to experience.

Violent/Sexualised Men and Submissive Women: Muslim Gender Relations?

Throughout the interviews the young women spoke repeatedly of being positioned as not only oppressed, but submissive, and as being the victims of abuse perpetrated by violent Muslim men

⁹² In 1991 Betty Mahmoody and William Hoffer published the story of Betty's escape to her native USA from her abusive Muslim Iranian husband with their small daughter. The book was entitled *Not Without my Daughter* and quickly became a bestseller and subsequently became a movie. This book did more than any other piece of writing or media production in recent years to cement western ideas about oppressed Muslim women (and children) and abusive Muslim husbands. It is still a very popular novel and appears to have sparked an entire genre that focuses on these representations. For example if you search Amazon.com for *Not Without my Daughter* the search engine will ask you if you would be interested in purchasing a range of books that deal with these representations. Most of the books feature heavily veiled women on the front covers – some with their eyes showing and some with even their eyes covered.

who were also positioned as highly sexualised (and that this rampant sexuality negatively influenced their interactions with women), again bearing out the impact of media representations on widespread assumptions about Muslims.

Ellen experienced this positioning shortly after becoming a Muslim when she discovered that one of her friends, Christina, had been making disparaging remarks about her conversion. When a mutual friend, Agnes, told Christina that Ellen had become a Muslim, Christina had responded by saying 'Why would she want to do that? Oh I know – it's because she wants to get with a Muslim guy' (Ellen). This comment angered Ellen so much so that she broke off her friendship with Christina. Not only had she disparaged Ellen's religion but she had also cast aspersions on Ellen's *commitment* to Islam and her *motivation* for becoming Muslim by suggesting it was for worldly gain rather than spiritual fulfilment.

However, further comments by Christina and others implied that Ellen had become a Muslim because she was somehow tricked or coerced into Islam by a Muslim man whose motivation was nefarious and sexual. Such implications are indicative of the representation of the over-sexed manipulative Muslim male who uses sex to trap unsuspecting non-Muslim girls (the popular representation usually positions these girls as young, beautiful and blonde⁹³) into becoming Muslims (whereupon they are immediately reduced into submissive and oppressed Muslim women, or, they escape à la *Not Without my Daughter*). Ellen elaborated on this representation when she spoke about the way many non-Muslim Australians approach the issue of her conversion.

They'll be like 'Are you going to get married soon?' – stuff like that and it's just, and they're like 'Why did you convert?' and I always say, 'because my friend who's a *girl* is a Muslim and I learnt about Islam from her'. Because I know that the next question that they're going to ask is something to do with a guy. A lot of people think that a girl would only become a Muslim for a guy! (Ellen)

and

⁹³ Perhaps this is because young beautiful blonde women are the embodiment of white Anglo-Celtic images of purity and femininity (Warner 1994:371-381). A spoof version of this stereotype appears in the SBS television show *Pizza* in the person of Habib, a Muslim Arab Australian who 'chases the chicks' with his best friend, Lebanese Australian Rocky who is even more sexually promiscuous than Habib. The women they chase are invariably blonde and very busty. The stereotype is subverted by its humour and its 'larger than life'ness but also by the fact that Habib is in a longterm on-again/off-again relationship with the extremely overweight Greek Australian Toula Krapanopolous who he eventually marries because she gets pregnant (and because she is in a girl gang and not someone to 'mess with'). The wedding episode sends up 'ethnic' weddings but also deals with inter-religious marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women. In the *Pizza* version of inter-religious marriage, the bride and groom are happy but both their families are not. They are married jointly by a mufti and a Greek Orthodox priest who end up in a brawl as do many of the guests. In this spoof it is difficult to imagine Toula becoming slim, blonde or submissive (<http://www20.sbs.com.au/pizza/index.php>).

Yeah, I have had some people ask me questions when I tell them that I'm converted. They ask me questions like 'Why did you do it?' and 'Don't you think that Islam's sexist?' and they want to know why I don't wear hijab and stuff like that. (Ellen)

On the one hand Ellen is positioned as having become a Muslim not out of choice but out of a misguided sense of marital/sexual advantage, and on the other hand, is positioned as foolish for having accepted a religion which will treat her as a second-class citizen. The common understandings underlying attitudes, such as these, towards Islam and Islamic gender relations are that Islam is inherently sexist and patriarchal (Said 1995; Kahf 1999; Abbas 2001; Bullock 2002; Martin-Munoz 2002; Khalema and Wannas-Jones 2003). For many non-Muslims making the further leap to the understanding that Islam is inherently violent and oppressive to women is a small step, given the long tradition of orientalist representations of Islam and Muslim societies.

When I spoke to Latifa about the ways in which Muslim men and women are stereotyped, she said that she adamantly refuted such positioning.

Latifa: Well – I'm a Muslim, I'm also a woman, but I don't see myself in that representation. Some people ask me "Does your husband treat you well?" once they find out that I'm married, and I say 'I've got the best husband!' I say that you know! But it all depends on the individual, that's what I say, that perception that they have of all Muslim men being like that (violent and domineering) ...

Alia: It's a stereotype?

Latifa: It's a definite stereotype, just like Muslim women being weak and diminutive, that's the same with Muslim men being overly aggressive and you know, pumped with testosterone and 'I'm the man and you're my wife so you must obey me' and so forth! I've never ever experienced any beating in my family, my dad has never laid a hand on us, and he's always respected my mum and my dad's a Muslim man. My husband he would never hit me and nor would [any] of the men in my family ... Saying that all Muslim men are that way, is just like saying, just like the same problem that they have in America with how they portray the young black man as the, you know, 'he's going to mug you' and so forth. So it's just wrong!

Latifa's final analogy in which she draws links between the popular representations of young black men in North America as violent criminals and popular representations of Muslim men as perpetrators of domestic violence is a powerful one (see Lygo (2004), Manning (2004), Poynting, Noble and Tabar (1999), Razack (1998), New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board (2003)).

Latifa's recounting of the way non-Muslims question her about the state of her marriage is echoed in Bullock's Canadian study (2002) and Franks' British study (2001). Muslim women in these studies speak of their frustrations at having their husbands constantly viewed with suspicion of being abusive and themselves as not having the intelligence to recognise their abused situation (or do something about it). This brings to mind feminist critiques of colonial attitudes to the colonised female subject – as an object in need of rescue from the colonised male (see especially Spivak (1988)). These women were seen as lacking the intelligence to either recognise the abuse or stop it and therefore it was up to the 'enlightened' white colonial superiors to 'save' them⁹⁴ (Lazreg 1988; Mernissi 2001; Bullock 2002; Kolhatkar 2002).

When Zakiyah, Hanna or Barakah are confronted by non-Muslim Australians who believe in the representation of the violent Muslim man and the submissive and oppressed Muslim woman, they calmly discuss with them the statistics relating to domestic violence across the Australian community. While none of them shy away from the fact that some Muslim men *do* abuse their wives and children they make it clear that this is a problem that *all* communities need to address because it is not a characteristic restricted to any one particular group of people. The young women also make it clear that Islam in no way condones or permits domestic violence and that such abuse is contrary to the principles underpinning an Islamic marriage. As Barakah said:

It comes down to, acknowledging, okay, sometimes it does happen but that's across the board for every community. And it all comes down to personal choice and family upbringing and even people who've been through a violent family can choose to bring up their family in a good way.

She also suggested that in Australia there was room for young Muslim women of particular cultural backgrounds to reject the patriarchal assumptions and expectations of their ethnic culture in favour of a more Islamic relationship between the genders. Her understanding of a 'more Islamic relationship' is one which emphasises the notions that both men and women are equal before God, that the marriage is a partnership in which each person respects the other's independence and intelligence, in which there is mutual agreement and consultation on important decisions affecting the marriage, in which both partners feel safe, loved and respected by the other (Franks 2001).

⁹⁴ Ironically this same critique is levelled at many white 'western' feminists by Muslim women who argue that their desire to 'rescue' Muslim women is a reinscription of familiar colonial discourses (Bullock 2002; Kolhatkar 2002). Kolhatkar's analysis of the (white, American) feminist campaign to 'save' Afghan women from the burqa injunctions of the Taliban makes this argument clearly.

Obviously though, within this understanding of Islamic relationships there is room for a myriad of varieties of actual relationship types or interpretations of the concept, as is demonstrated by the lives of the participants in Franks' (2001) study of Muslim (and Christian) women's experiences of religiously founded marriages.

In Barakah's experience many young Muslim women in Australia are standing up for their Islamic rights as women despite what their parents thought. This is particularly evident when these young women begin organising and contracting their marriages⁹⁵:

For example maybe if you go to a friend's house and their father shouts 'bring me tea' and they just sit there [waiting for their wife or daughter to act] but I think a lot of my friends and I, people my age growing up in Australia, would never stand for that from a husband, they'd be like 'Hey you do the washing up too and you change the baby's nappy too, alright' – before we even agree to get married, you know, it's like part of the contract! I think a lot more Australian Muslim girls are more assertive and even when they do marry an 'import'⁹⁶ you know there's going to be a lot more equality in the family.

Barakah's experiences present a vastly different set of gender relations between Muslim men and women in Australia to the one presented by popular stereotypes. In Barakah's experience, which was echoed by Latifa, Naima and Omayma, these young Muslim women do not feel oppressed by the men in their families. Rather, these women feel so empowered that, on the occasions where they have observed abusive family relations in their communities, they take measures to ensure that similar situations do not arise in their own lives into the future⁹⁷. A young woman demanding and ensuring that her Islamic rights be protected in her marriage contract does not add much

⁹⁵ Islamic marriages must be voluntary and consented to by both parties i.e., the man and the woman. Each party must sign a contract of marriage in which details such as divorce settlement and dowry (paid by the man to the woman) are stipulated. Each party is also able to include clauses that deal with other aspects of the marriage such as family living arrangements, division of domestic labour, custody arrangements should a divorce occur, division of financial responsibility or commitment etc. The marriage contract is a legally binding document under Islamic law. In Australia it is considered to be a pre-nuptial agreement and taken into consideration by the Family Law Court when a divorce takes place (for further details regarding the intersections of Islamic Family Law and the Australian Family Law Act see Hussain (2001)).

⁹⁶ As many Australian Muslims are of migrant, non-English speaking backgrounds, there is a tendency for young people to return to their family's ethnic homeland in search of a marriage partner. These people usually come to Australia on a spousal visa rather than their Australian spouse going to live overseas. Amongst Muslims these spouses are affectionately known as 'imports'. Marrying a person from another country, even when the partners share a common ethnic heritage, can lead to differences of opinion on a range of issues partly as a result of the two individuals growing up in very different social environments.

⁹⁷ This study did not set out to pursue the participants' experiences of, or observations of, gender inequity or domestic violence or oppression except where this impacted on whether or not the young women believed that the stereotype of 'oppressed Muslim woman' was accurate. As their comments indicate, the young women did not believe this was an accurate representation of all Muslim women, nor the representation of all Muslim men and families as oppressive to be accurate. Rather, they acknowledge that in certain isolated instances they had observed practices in some Muslim families that they disagreed with or which they judged to be violent or restrictive but that these did not characterise *all* Muslim family relations, and indeed, were the exception. A number of the women indicated that domestic violence and family based oppression was an unfortunate part of *all* communities, not simply Muslim communities, but that in their experience all Muslim communities were incorrectly labeled as violent and abusive with regards to gender relations.

credence to her positioning as a submissive and oppressed person⁹⁸. The participants in Bullock's (2002) and Franks' (2001) studies also spoke about the ways they protected their personal rights around the marriage process (such as carefully designing a marriage contract that is as 'watertight' as possible) and as a wife (for instance, taking legal action to enforce the details of the marriage contract) and similarly refuted the positioning of all Muslim women as victims of domestic abuse.

However, it must be acknowledged that the degree of agency and autonomy of the participants in my study may be partly due to their backgrounds. The women in this study are all highly articulate as well as religiously knowledgeable (and committed to their religion), factors which increase their opportunity to confidently exert their agency and ensure that their rights are protected. It may be that certain Muslim women without either the same religious knowledge or confidence and articulation which comes through education are not as empowered to avoid abusive situations. A North American study into the perceptions and expectations of 'arranged' marriages by young second generation Pakistani (Muslim) women (Zaidi & Shuraydi 2002) found that a variety of factors influenced the young women's abilities to negotiate successfully a marriage contract that suited their own needs. Some of these factors included the degree of commitment to and knowledge of religion (described in this study as 'culture'), family structure, level of education and potential financial independence that arises from education.

The following section discusses further the women's sense that their lives do not correlate to the dominant media representations of Muslim women. Using the women's analyses of five media images it demonstrates the impact that specific representations have on the women in the study as well as elucidating the inaccuracies embedded in the media representations as compared to the women's lived experiences.

Disparity between media representations and self-perception

Media representations discussed in the interviews

In order to discuss the various representations of Muslim women in the media I selected five articles/images that portrayed particular representations and asked the interviewees to respond to them. The articles/images were selected from either the *Advertiser* or the *Australian* over a period

⁹⁸ Deen's interviewees express similar thoughts and beliefs on the topic of marriage. She too argues that often the realities of Muslim marriages in Australia do not correlate to the horror and depravity of the stereotypes (Deen 2003:246).

of three years (from late 2001 to early 2003) and were presented to the interviewees in an order chosen at random, but presented then to the participants in the same order at each interview. The images were chosen to reflect certain representations, those being 'terrorist', 'oppressed' and veiled woman, 'assimilated' or 'liberated' former Muslim and 'normal' Muslim woman. The representations are discussed in this chapter in order from 'bad' to 'good' Muslim women.

The first article/image came from the *Advertiser* and was entitled 'Eyes of Terror on Australia' (AAP October 29, 2002:19). Accompanying this article was a large black and white artwork by Peter MacMullin (an artist and cartoonist for the *Advertiser*) which depicted a person (presumably a woman) wearing an Afghan-style burqa (see Figure 16). Instead of the usual rectangle (or elongated hexagon) of mesh over the eyes MacMullin manipulated the image so that it looks like a map of Australia.

NOTE: This image is included on page 150 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 16 – Peter MacMullin's artwork and the accompanying headline

I selected this article primarily because of the combined effect of the image and the headline. Initially I thought of presenting the interviewees with the image only but realised that it was placed in context by the headline (and the article which raised the possibility that JI was planning to 'take over' Australia and set up an Islamic state)⁹⁹.

This article/image positioned Muslim women clearly as terrorists and as an imminent threat to Australia. The juxtaposition of the words 'Eyes of terror on Australia' next to the image of a heavily veiled woman (representing in this instance, terror and terrorism) who has Australia directly and literally in front of her eyes means that the reader is to understand that Muslims, including Muslim women, are dangerous to 'our' way of life and should therefore be treated with suspicion and wariness. Also the fact that the reader cannot see her eyes may add to the impression that she is untrustworthy, given the dominant white Australian cultural belief that direct eye contact signifies trust and honesty, and a lack of eye contact is equated to shiftiness, untrustworthiness or immaturity.

When I discussed this image with its creator, Peter MacMullin, he appeared more concerned about defending himself from possible criticism of the use of an Afghan burqa in an article that was ostensibly about Indonesian (and other South East Asian) Muslims than in discussing possible stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists. He mentioned that he had received criticism from readers of the *Advertiser* for this artwork but justified his work to himself, and his concerned editor, by saying that he was aware of the sartorial inaccuracy but he was simply 'making a point'¹⁰⁰. Although he did not elaborate on what his 'point' was, I would argue that it was that Muslims are a threat to Australia's security and that they are plotting to 'take over' and 'force' all Australians to become Muslims too.

When Barakah saw the headline 'Eyes of Terror on Australia' (AAP October 29, 2002: 19) and its accompanying image (see figure number whatever) she burst into laughter. When I asked her to explain her laughter, Barakah said that she found the lengths that the illustrator and headline writer had gone to in order to 'sensationalise the idea that "Muslims are out to get us"' (Barakah) very amusing. This was a very different response to Ellen's anger at this representation. For her, the

⁹⁹ Because I was seeking responses to visual images I removed the body of the articles and asked the interviewees to comment on the photographs, headlines and captions. This was partly because there was inadequate time in the interviews for interviewees to read and reflect on the full articles. As has been argued, images are often used to convey complex issues in a swift and condensed manner.

¹⁰⁰ Personal correspondence with Peter MacMullin, May 28, 2003.

idea that 'Muslims have their sights set on Australia' (Ellen) and are all terrorists is one designed to engender fear of Muslims in the hearts of readers and this made her angry because it is so different to her experiences of what Australian Muslims are like. Zakiyah shared her anger but provided more of an analysis in which she highlighted the contradictory elements of the image:

it's interesting the ... positioning of the Muslim women as the terrorist, the eyes of terror and the aggressor and what 'we' should be scared of and in the same respect she's not even able to be seen, like, she's the oppressed, she's the silent, she's the subjugated. So it's interesting for me to see that now we, as Muslim women, represent both the oppressed, silenced, subjugated and we also represent the terror, the evil, the person that's going to come and destroy you. I just think that obviously there's a whole racist attitude in the way that they've made this [gesturing] into the Australian map, it's just further perpetuating the problems stemming from how people see Muslims, particularly Muslims in Australia because the image's particularly targeting Australia. (Zakiyah)

Zakiyah's comments astutely identify the ambivalent position that the 'veiled' Muslim woman has come to occupy in the Australian media. She's represented as oppressed and subordinated and simultaneously as a potentially violent threat (see also Bullock 2002:35-36) writing about Canadian examples).

Another image that interviewees were asked to respond to came from the *Advertiser's* Education liftout just two weeks after the attacks on America on September 11, 2001 (Lennon September 25, 2001:37). Under a large heading of 'Newspapers in Education' was a black and white photograph spanning the width of the page (see Figure 17). The photograph shows a face covered in black chiffon (or similar material) that obscures the features of the person wearing the unidentifiable covering (it is unclear whether this is a mask or a purdah style hijab) and it is unclear whether the person is male or female despite their eyes being visible. The person is clearly frowning and the photograph is an extreme close up shot so that their long, black eyelashes and thick eyebrows are visible as is an unidentifiable reflection in the person's black eyes. The skin around the eyes is dark – perhaps a deep olive tone.

The headline 'Extreme measures' and the subheading 'The atrocities committed in America this month raise many questions about the nature of terrorism' are written across the lower half of the black face covering in white lettering. Below the photograph is a series of questions and answers designed to explain the events of September 11 and also to explain what terrorism is and how it

While it is not clear that this representation directly refers to Muslims, the combined effect of a headline that evokes word associations with 'Islamic extremists', a photograph of a person of Middle-Eastern appearance (dark eyes and hair, and olive skin) who is dressed in a black face covering which is evocative of both terrorists and Muslim women, and a subheading that draws attention to the attacks in America which were (and are) being attributed to Muslims, means that this representation is most likely to be read as a representation of Muslims, including Muslim women (given the gender ambiguity of the photograph). Despite the ambiguities of this representation this was the reading that was favoured by the interviewees, as is discussed below.

NOTE: This image is included on page 153 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 17 – Terrorist eyes in the Education liftout

The location of this representation in a customised resource for schoolchildren shows that negative representations of Muslims are not confined to mainstream news sections of the print media. The

context also masks the inherent racist ideology as well as demonstrating the pervasive and dangerous nature of such representations as South Australians are exposed to such negative positioning from a very young age, an exposure that can only contribute to the solidification of such attitudes, ideas and stereotypes within society.

While the image itself was seen in ambivalent terms because it was not clear whether the image was of a man in a mask or a woman in niqab, responses to the overall impact and implication of this representation were overwhelmingly angry and frustrated.

The women felt that once again a definite and undeniable link was being made between Islam and terrorism. For them the fact that this representation appeared in the Education liftout was evidence that newspapers felt 'that they can freely use the word terrorist and target it at any Muslim with no consequences' (Naima). Because material aimed at children is usually carefully vetted for inappropriate material, clearly then, constructing Muslims as terrorists is appropriate and 'an acceptable part of life' (Naima). This representation, despite its ambiguities, seemed to encapsulate a number of stereotypes and representations:

these evil eyes are looking out at the world and behind the covering there is just an unknown – an unknown evilness. It just perpetuates ideas of Muslims that you're hiding something when you cover your face, hiding your evil, and you're plotting against the west. Again, it just reiterates all those stereotypes of Muslims. (Zakiyah)

The third image I selected to discuss was published on the front page of the *Australian*. It was a large colour photograph that was accompanied by a story on page six (Rintoul October 18, 2001:1 & 6). The photograph shows the Prime Minister's wife, Janette Howard, speaking to a woman, Nazra Ibrahim, who is completely covered except for her eyes in a black hijab (see Figure 18). Mrs Howard is wearing a silky headscarf patterned in blue, yellow and white which is tied under her chin so that the front part of her hair is visible. The caption to the photograph reads 'STANDING quietly to one side of the pack gathered around the Prime Minister and the Imam, covered from the world in all but her eyes, Nazra Ibrahim whispers to Janette Howard about family and children. It is

four hours since John Howard has committed Australian troops to the war against terrorism' (Rintoul October 18, 2001:1 & 6). The accompanying article on page six was headlined 'Guarded eyes watch as PM reaches out' (Rintoul October 18, 2001:6) and repeated the photograph's caption as the introductory paragraph and then continues on to discuss Mr Howard's visit (accompanied by his wife) to a Melbourne mosque in an attempt to reassure Australian Muslims that the 'war on terror' did not mean a war on Islam or Muslims. Apart from the photograph and the caption and introductory paragraph, Nazra Ibrahim was not relevant to the story and did not receive further mention.

NOTE: This image is included on page 156 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 18 – Janette Howard and Nazra Ibrahim

The photograph of Janette Howard and Nazra Ibrahim inspired the most articulate and angry analyses of media representations of Muslim women by the women I interviewed. Kulthum felt that this photograph and its accompanying caption positioned Muslim women incorrectly as downtrodden women who ‘can’t speak up, are uneducated housewives with nothing to do’ (Kulthum). Only a very uneducated, naïve, or ignorant person would talk solely about their children while attending such a media event as Ms Ibrahim is alleged to be doing¹⁰¹.

Mariyah’s first response to this photograph was incredulous laughter and she asked ‘what does a Muslim woman covered have to with anything? Why are they using the image of a Muslim woman covering herself and wanting to express her beliefs as being symbolic of terror? It’s pathetic!’ (Mariyah). The comments of Kulthum and Mariyah were echoed by Barakah, Latifa and Naima. Ellen expanded on the women’s frustration at the way Ms Ibrahim (and by default, all Muslim women) is positioned in this image by highlighting the ludicrousness of the caption:

‘covered from the world in all but her eyes’ blah blah blah. That’s a bit derogatory – it’s like making a comment that you can’t see Janette Howard’s ear [laughing] and they didn’t write that. They just have to comment on the fact that Nazra Ibrahim’s covered up. Why can’t they just have the picture and say she talks to Janette Howard? But they just have to comment on her wearing the hijab! And it’s also stereotypical because they don’t really know what she was whispering about. They probably made it up because there’s that stereotype that Muslim women’s whole lives revolve around their families, their kids and their husband and they don’t think about anything outside that. (Ellen)

For Zakiyah, this representation was an embodiment of the difficult relationship between the Australian media and Muslim women. She described her frustration that images of women in *purdah* continued to be used to represent Muslim women despite the relatively small number of Australian Muslims who dress in this manner. She recognised the dramatic nature of these images but felt that, in using such photographs, the media was alienating, excluding and misrepresenting the majority of Australia’s Muslims and that this should be a cause for concern. She was deeply concerned that images such as these were teamed with demeaning, derogatory and patronising captions (such as the one discussed) in which it is clear that ‘they’d never bother to ask her why

¹⁰¹ If, indeed, Ms Ibrahim was speaking about her children to Mrs Howard then the placement of her photograph on the front page is even more unnecessary from a ‘news’ point of view and adds credence to the argument that this photograph was chosen for ‘ideological’ reasons.

she wears it or what it means to her – it's all about what “we” think she is’ (Zakiyah). She felt representations such as this one demonstrated that ‘there's no interaction between the Muslim woman and the media’ (Zakiyah).

This representation is arguably one of the most blatant examples of the Muslim-woman-as-oppressed-person representation to appear in the Australian print media in recent years. Coming at a sensitive time, when tensions between non-Muslims and Muslims around the world were at their highest (just a month after the events of September 11, 2001 and the day that Australia joined the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ against terrorism), this representation is not only highly offensive in its patronising tone but it can also be argued that it is irresponsible journalism because it denigrates the choices of Muslim women who veil (in whatever degree), it reinforces popular ideas of Muslims as alien and un-Australian, Muslim men as perpetrators of gender oppression and Muslim women as victims (Ms Ibrahim did not whisper about current events or the presence of the Prime Minister at her mosque, she whispered about ‘family and children’) and may inflame tensions in the community possibly resulting in attacks on Muslims. Furthermore, Mrs Howard is represented as being culturally sensitive in wearing a headscarf while talking to Ms Ibrahim while Ms Ibrahim is represented as ‘backward’ (by covering herself) and lacking ‘modern’ social graces such as the ability to discuss current issues as she is only able to speak about her personal domestic sphere.

While Ms Ibrahim is positioned as being so oppressed and subordinated that she cannot even speak at a ‘normal’ volume and is hiding herself from ‘all the world’ (Rintoul October 18, 2001:1 & 6), this representation does not address her very presence at the media event. As a number of the women suggested, if Nazra Ibrahim was so oppressed and with such a narrow domestic focus, then surely her presence at a public ‘meet-and-greet’ by the Prime Minister would raise some questions such as: Where were her children? Why wasn’t she under surveillance by her husband who (being oppressive) presumably would have objected to her posing for a photograph? Why did she attend the Prime Minister’s press conference and meeting with the Imam if she had no interest in issues other than her family and children? Why would she agree to be photographed and speak to the media if she wished to ‘[hide] from the world’?

This photograph also has a racialised aspect to it. Ms Ibrahim has brown skin while Mrs Howard is white. All the negativity of this representation is attributed to Ms Ibrahim (as the representative of Australian Muslims) while Mrs Howard is seen in a positive way (as the representative of non-

Muslim, particularly white Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Australians). Mrs Howard is wreathed in a white light that is most evident around her head in a halo-like aspect, highlighting her blonde hair and white skin. By contrast, Ms Ibrahim is very difficult to distinguish in the photograph, being in almost complete darkness that her black robes blend in with the black background and her dark skin. The only clearly visible part of Ms Ibrahim are her eyes which are emphasised in the caption and also later in the article on page six. The lighting in this image signifies the goodness, rightness, modernity, light, and purity of white non-Muslim Australians and the alien-ness, wrongness, evil, backwardness and fear-inducing-capability of Muslim Australians. This representation is reminiscent of traditional representations of people of colour (Shohat & Stam 1994; Dyer 1997; Razack 1998). While it may be argued that this representation is a result of Ms Ibrahim's skin colour, I would argue that the choice of her as a photographic subject emphasises the foreignness of her Muslim identity through her skin colour, in combination with her chosen style of veiling.

The next article/image also appeared in the *Advertiser* and was entitled 'The name's bin Laden and Osama doesn't approve' (Schlink May 24, 2003:56). This article contained a large full body colour photograph of a smiling Waffa bin Laden (Osama's niece) dressed in a white mini-dress and standing in front of wine glasses filled with alcohol (see Figure 19). The background to the photo shows men in suits and part of a woman's formal dress and this, in combination with Ms bin Laden's own dress and the setting of the wine glasses on the table, implies that she is at a social function. The caption reads '**REBEL:** Waffa bin Laden has rejected her Muslim heritage' (Schlink May 24, 2003:56).

NOTE: This image is included on page 160 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 18 – Osama’s niece Waffa bin Laden

The article, written in a triumphant and self-satisfied tone, discussed the way in which Waffa bin Laden has 'rejected her Muslim heritage and embraced a Western lifestyle' despite the condemnation of 'her father's clan' (Schlink May 24, 2003:56). It describes her as attending Britain's most fashionable parties with friends such as 'millionaire socialite Tim Jeffries, famed for his serial dalliances with strings of beautiful women' and favouring 'mini skirts and Versace finery eschewing traditional Muslim garb while smoking and drinking alcohol' and quotes her mother Carmen as describing these choices as 'Waffa's freedom' (Schlink May 24, 2003:56). Thus, in a few sentences, Waffa bin Laden is presented as having accepted everything that Islam rejects (casual relationships between men and women (both sexual and non-sexual), drinking alcohol, self-harm in the form of smoking, and wearing revealing clothing) and therefore rejecting everything that Islam promotes. The inclusion of Carmen bin Laden's description of this as 'freedom' plays on notions that Muslim women are oppressed, both by Islam and by men, and therefore, the only way for a 'Muslim' woman to become 'free' is to reject Islam and embrace 'western' consumerism.

Although the article makes it clear that Waffa bin Laden's choices have meant that she is now estranged from all her family, with the exception of her mother and two younger sisters, it also presents the 'benefits' that she has gained. The reader is told that Waffa 'now wants to become a pop singer [...] and has been told by music powerbrokers that she has the looks and voice to become a star' (Schlink May 24, 2003:56) and is currently working with Madonna's former producer. She is also a 'fixture on the British capital's A-list social scene' (albeit named as a 'bizarre' one) (Schlink May 24, 2003:56) as well as being friends with a millionaire whose name is often linked to those of beautiful women. These details are presented as being the reward for having rejected Islam and as evidence of 'progress' from fundamentalism to 'western' capitalism¹⁰².

Latifa was scornful of the *Advertiser's* judgement that this story was news or in some way worthy of the newspaper's attention. She was indifferent to Waffa's choices. As she said 'who cares, I mean that's her choice' (Latifa), but was angered that these choices were presented as positive in

¹⁰² Waffa has since posed for more provocative photographs than the one presented here, notably, a series of lingerie shots for the magazine GQ in early 2006.

comparison to the choices that other Muslim women, like herself, make:

Why would they put such a stupid article when there are so many other things they could write about, who cares about bin Laden's niece or whoever she is? I just think that they're just trying to stir up trouble. They're just trying to get people to say 'Oh look at her' you know 'she's young and liberated'. (Latifa)

Latifa also identified the contrast in representations between the 'Eyes of Terror' image (see Figure 16) and this representation. She made the observation that each is likely to be present in the minds of newspaper readers when they look at the opposite image. What Latifa is referring to is an absent presence. The oppressed, veiled Muslim woman will always be the absent presence in any representation of a 'free' Muslim woman (whether this is a positive image such as the swimming pool representation in Figure 20, or the representation of a woman who has rejected Islam and a Muslim identity). Similarly when representations of the oppressed and down-trodden Muslim woman are made, the absent presence is that of the 'free', 'liberated' and 'autonomous' white, middle class, heterosexual, 'western' woman. Consequently, in this representation of Waffa bin Laden as a woman newly freed from the shackles of her patriarchal family and oppressive religion the absent presence is that of the oppressed Muslim woman who cannot wear mini-dresses or go to British A-list parties with male millionaires. Similarly the image of Waffa bin Laden (or someone like her) is the absent presence in representations of subordinated veiled women because she represents what the veiled women are 'missing'. She represents their unfulfilled 'potential' from the point of view of the media hostile to Islam and Muslims.

Naima felt that this representation was funny, although at the same time it annoyed her, because 'it's so funny that people would go out of their way to make this an issue [laughing] and it's pretty sad¹⁰³ really!' (Naima). It annoyed her because the article so clearly tried to make Waffa bin Laden 'a hero' (Naima) for rejecting Islam. Zakiyah agreed with this assessment and said that 'it's quite interesting the way that they are able to subtly say "look when you reject Islam you are happy and free" but when you don't you are represented as an oppressed silenced evil person'. Ellen was repulsed by this representation because of its pejorative overtones. She felt that 'this is the story western people want to know' (Ellen) because it was so ironic that it was Osama bin Laden's own niece and indeed it may be argued that this story was only news *because* she is the niece of a

¹⁰³ Naima used 'sad' in its slang version which means pitiful/disgusting/pathetic and carries strong overtones of scorn and derision.

'terrorist' leader. She felt that many people would look at the image and think 'look...that's what all those women we liberated in Afghanistan could be like' (Ellen) and see it as a positive rather than 'kind of gross' (Ellen) as Ellen did¹⁰⁴. Essentially the interviewees all rejected this representation because they felt that it 'put down' or denigrated their choices to be committed to Islam and emphasised a particular white western world view as inherently desirable and inherently superior to an Islamic one.

The final article discussed was headlined 'Women and children first' (Treccasi January 25, 2003:5). It was published in the *Advertiser* article and has a surheadline of 'Pool agreement respects Muslim beliefs', and includes a large black and white photograph of four Muslim women and three children playing in and near a swimming pool (Treccasi January 25, 2003:5). The two women who are sitting on the edge of the pool kicking water into the air are wearing hijabs, laughing and holding a child between them (see Figure 20) while the two women in the water are not wearing hijab but have their bodies covered by t-shirts and the splashing water. Each of the women in the pool is holding a child and both of them are laughing. The article discusses the arrangements that one public swimming centre in Adelaide has made to ensure that males are banned from the pool at certain times during the week to allow Muslim women to attend swimming classes (which they would not do if males were present). The article applauds this agreement for its 'cultural' sensitivity and commitment to providing swimming classes to all sectors of the population.

While this initially appears to be a very positive image of Muslim women – they are laughing, playing and partaking in an activity that 'ordinary' Australians also love – there are alternative, ambivalent, readings of this article and image. It may be argued that this article represents the 'integrated' Muslims, those who, although they don't look like 'us', do some of the things that 'we' do (for example take their children to the swimming pool) and who are therefore seen as 'good' Muslims as opposed to the hordes of 'bad' Muslims in the world. This image/article can also be

¹⁰⁴ Ellen's observations are similar to those made by Kolhatkar (2002) in her analysis of representations of Afghan women and what motivates western women to 'save them'. On a similar note, the Australian Broadcasting Commission's (ABC) Foreign Correspondent programme screened a story about a group of western beauticians taking beauty products and practices to Kabul, Afghanistan. This was 'sold' as a way of empowering 'oppressed' Afghan women to become financially independent and to enjoy western 'freedoms' and pleasures (Foreign Correspondent 2003).

read as a representation of the 'special provisions' 'we' have to make for Muslims who have an alien belief system that is incompatible with 'our' way of life. This may be understood as either a 'good thing' done by kind, generous 'us', or as an affront to all the 'ordinary' Australians like 'us' who don't demand 'special treatment'¹⁰⁵ (see analysis of the hostile reaction to Muslim women's use of public pools in NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (2003)).

¹⁰⁵ The discourse of 'special treatment' is one which is also alluded to and often explicitly utilised in media representations of Indigeneity in Australia. Indigenous people are often seen as asking for, and receiving, 'special treatment' and benefits that 'ordinary' (read 'white') Australians are unable to access (Mickler 1998). This is also the discourse promoted by Pauline Hanson and the One Nation party (Hanson 1996).

NOTE: This image is included on page 165 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 19 – Muslim women at a swimming pool: positive representation

However, in comparison to dominant representations of Muslims, the very presence of smiling Muslim women who are clearly enjoying time with their children and who are not covered head-to-toe in black means that this article must, therefore, be viewed as a positive representation. The responses of the interviewees endorse this view. The image of Muslim women enjoying themselves at the swimming pool was welcomed as a positive one by the interviewees. Hanna felt that it was positive and memorable because it differed from the majority of representations of Muslim women and Muslims in Australia. Sherene agreed with this analysis but particularly liked the representation because it showed a diversity amongst the Muslim women (some are 'scarfed' and some are 'non scarfed', some are adults and some are children) yet there is an obvious harmony between all the women in the photograph. Sherene felt that this representation challenged the uniformity of the representations of Muslim women. Ellen also felt that it was good to see a representation of Muslim women who wear hijab having fun with Muslim women who don't wear hijab because this reflects the reality of her life. She also felt that it was a 'good thing' that Muslim girls were seen having fun because this directly counters ideas of Muslims as being austere and 'uptight' when the reality is that 'in Islam you can have fun and do things like swimming so long as there's no one of the opposite sex there' (Ellen).

Many of the women felt that this image was a positive one because it showed that Muslim women are 'just the same' (Hanna) as other Australians in the sense that they too enjoy 'socialising, playing with their children and having fun' (Hanna):

This is showing the community that Muslims are normal too, do you know what I mean? Like 'Oh they're one of us, they can go swimming too'. Muslim women have rights too, they're normal and they want to teach their kids how to swim as well. (Mariyah)

I think it's a good thing that they're showing that Muslim women are doing what other normal people are doing. I guess it's a positive thing. (Naima)

I think this is how we should be represented! Think this picture's really, really good ... it shows that we can be fun loving and we do look after our children and we do involve our children in the community – I mean they're taking them to swimming lessons, what more could you want?!! (Sherene)

Okay, as a representation I think it's good – mothers and children looking happy, Muslim women can be sporty ... and they can still have fun and muck around even with the scarf on! (Barakah)

While this is one reading of the representation available, I would argue that there is a danger in thinking within the frame of 'we're just the same' because it continues to privilege a hegemonic white western Christian paradigm and thus devalues the women's own worldviews. Such a reading does little to challenge the normativity and centring of hegemonic whiteness (with its inherent rejection of Islam). While this analysis challenges that made by the interviewees, it is not meant as a denigration of their views but, rather, it emphasises the power and persuasiveness of hegemonic and hierarchical thinking. It also demonstrates the range of ways an image can be interpreted depending on the concerns, skills and standpoint brought to a 'reading' of it. The women in my study were able to critique the discourse of assimilation present in the representation of Waffa bin Laden but were unable to identify it in the image of women at the swimming pool. This ability to critique assimilation discourses in one example but not the other is because in the Waffa bin Laden example assimilation is equated to a rejection of Islam and, for women who strongly identify with Islam, such a discourse is clear-cut and confronting. Whereas, in the swimming pool image, assimilation means that the women are doing 'similar things' and, because swimming per se does not contravene Islamic codes of behaviour, the image's assimilationist overtones are less obvious.

The women's response to this image responds also to the way an image of mothers and children signifies a common humanity and cross-cultural understandings. This is a widely used method of eliciting a sympathetic response to 'good mothers', and is important in this instance because the 'good mothers' are Muslim. Latifa felt that this image also resonates with audiences in the wake of recent Australian media depictions of 'bad mothers' (and also 'bad fathers') who were primarily also Muslim, throwing their children overboard into the ocean (as opposed to playing safely and happily in a public pool) in order to prevent or delay their detention by Australian immigration authorities¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ In October 2001, just prior to the Australian Federal election in November, a group of refugee asylum seekers began experiencing difficulty with their sinking ship (SIEV X). The Australian navy was nearby to pick up the people from the ship but during the operation many refugees ended up in the water from which naval personnel had to rescue them. The Federal Liberal government contacted the media and accused the mainly Muslim (from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan) refugees of throwing their children into the ocean. Photographs were released in which it appeared that children were struggling, alone, in the water until they were rescued by naval personnel. The Federal government created a media witch hunt which depicted the refugees as bad parents who deliberately put their small children into harm for their own advantage. Eventually it was revealed that this depiction was a government fabrication designed to reduce public sympathy for refugees who were being detained in harsh and unfavourable circumstances. The fabrication also occurred in order to boost the Liberal Party's chances of re-election (which did occur) by presenting itself as 'being tough on border protection' in order that Australia is not overrun by people so inhumane and so 'bad' that they deliberately harm and endanger their own children. The photographs were extremely small splices from a naval video in which it is clear that parents did not throw their children overboard and, indeed, ensured that they were wearing the few lifejackets available. The ensuing fiasco has become known as the 'Children Overboard Affair' (Overboard 2002).

Impact of media representations

The women I spoke to all had very strong opinions and attitudes about the representations of Muslims and Islam in the media. While they were able to provide articulate and insightful analyses of specific representations, they also told me about the impact that such representations had in their own lives.

The primary feeling that representations, such as those previously discussed, evoked was anger. The majority of the women spoke repeatedly about their anger towards the media and its treatment of Muslims. For Ellen, this anger was not simply a response to media representations per se, but because she felt that negative media representations impacted on the way non-Muslim Australians treated her. Zakiyah agreed with this but said that her anger was directed at the whole media industry rather than only at specific journalists or outlets. Zakiyah also felt that she tried not to let her anger affect her daily life. She did this by cultivating a 'thick skin' (Zakiyah) which allowed her to guard against the self-destructive effects of anger. Latifa and Barakah also said that they tried hard not to 'let it annoy me too much' (Latifa) because they did not want their anger to rule their lives.

Anger was also the primary response to media representations as expressed by Naima, Sherene, Omayma and Mariyah. While most of this anger was directed towards those in the news media, one of the interviewees said that negative reports or stories about Muslims made her angry with Muslims for not taking adequate measures to counteract these representations. This, however, was an isolated response¹⁰⁷. Often the emotion or response that accompanied anger was frustration. Many of the women were frustrated by their belief that no matter what measures Muslims took to counter negative representations, the media industry appears determined not to shift from its portrayals (perpetuating the stereotypical). As Barakah said, 'it's the powerlessness that gets to me the most'.

The anger and frustration at constantly being bombarded with images and stereotypes that negatively position Muslims/Islam has also resulted in significant emotional distress for some of the women. Kulthum said that she doesn't 'like watching the news anymore because I get too frustrated or I'll end up crying because of what I see and because I've got so little power to actually stop any of it'. Naima, too, avoided the news media as much as possible because of the distress it

¹⁰⁷ Although this was an isolated attitude within this study there are examples of young Muslims holding this attitude in studies in the United States (Peek 2003) and in Canada (Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998).

causes her. This anger and frustration was mirrored by the responses of Canadian Muslim women (Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998) as well as young New York Muslims who were interviewed regarding their experiences post-September 11, 2001 (Akram 2002). Similarly, the Australian HREOC consultation reported participants as having 'literally "switched off"' in relation to the media, quoting one participant as saying 'it makes me feel as if the whole world is against me. I don't want to switch on the news' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85).

However, despite all the negativity that media representations caused, the women were able to create spaces for laughter, which often erupted in the interviews in which the women commented on specific media representations. The women did not find the representations comic per se, but rather, they found them so 'ridiculous' (Barakah) that they became funny. This laughter was a strategy through which the women enacted their agency and resisted the subordinating implications of racist representations. Laughter as a strategy of resistance and emotional distancing is discussed in research into non-white Britons' experiences of racism in sport (Long 2000) and the experiences of young Muslim Australian women in a co-educational public school (Imtoul 2002).

The Muslim women interviewed in the Canadian study (Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998) argued that they would like to see Muslim women represented in the media in capacities other than as the embodiment of Islam or the Canadian Muslim community. As one participant put it:

Why can't someone come and ask me, like 'what is the best way to compost?'. You know, why can't we know about those things? Why can't we have an opinion about Free Trade?
(Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998:32)

The desire for Muslim women to be represented in ways that move beyond populist images and stereotypes was also strongly articulated by the women in this study. As in the Canadian research, a number of the women in this study described their attempts to engage with the media and directly challenge these entrenched attitudes towards Muslim women. They did this by 'writing letters to the editor' (Latifa) and taking part in television, radio and print media interviews. All these women said that their efforts, although not wasted, were insignificant in bringing about long-term change – an attitude which was mirrored by Jafri's participants (Jafri & Afghan Women's Organization 1998:39-45). The frustration that they experience has, for each interviewee, led to a sense of disillusionment and cynicism towards all sectors of the Australian and international media. This lack of trust does

not bode well for Zakiyah's, Latifa's and Mariyah's wish that Muslim women and the media in South Australian and Australia (and more broadly) can develop a more harmonious and understanding relationship in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of some common stereotypical representations of Muslim women in the media. A number of narratives from the interviewees were used to examine the interactions between the print media and Muslim women, as well as the implications of these interactions for the women in my study. There is a wide disparity between how the women perceive themselves and their lives, and how Muslim women are represented in the media. In particular these women's non-hegemonic or resistant readings of, and responses to, the bombardment of negative representations clearly supports arguments that such negative representations have serious and deleterious effects on the lives of Muslims.

Zakiyah's experience of being asked to dress in full covering together with the frustration experienced by other participants (expressed through letter-writing and participation in interviews) indicates the mainstream media is resistant to change. The continued reliance on stereotypical representations of Muslims suggests it has not applied the lessons available from the reports and studies of media reporting of Aboriginal Australians or other minority groups. This is discouraging for people, such as my participants, who hope for increased understanding and acceptance of their contributions to Australian society.

The following chapter looks at the ways in which other forms of religious racism have real impacts in the everyday experiences of the young Muslim women in my study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Narratives of Religious Racism, Impact and Resistance

This chapter focuses on a number of major themes that arose during the analysis of the interview material. It begins with a discussion of 'everyday' racism and the ways in which this impacts on the lives of the young women in this study. In particular, the first part of this chapter identifies some specific ways in which 'everyday' racism is manifested in their lives in areas such as the workplace, public places and schools. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of impact of persistent everyday racism on their sense of identity and daily practices and these young women's responses and resistance to religious racism.

'Everyday' Racism

The young women I spoke to offered a number of narratives of religious racism and how it has affected their lives. Many of these narratives were characterised by incidents of what has been termed 'everyday' racism (Essed 1991; Beagan 2003), that is, a low level but persistent racism which, when assessed as individual incidents, is often considered too 'minor' or insignificant to complain about, but which has significant and negative impact on individuals' sense of emotional wellbeing. This chapter provides a discussion of a number of experiences of everyday racism told to me by the women in this study. The incidents include events in public places, in the workplace, in bureaucratic and educational contexts. This thesis is not concerned with judging the legitimacy of the women's grievances or concerns, rather, it argues that the perception that religious racism has occurred evokes a range of responses for the women which include: annoyance, serious distress, to behaviour modification to avoid being in such situations again. Both the perception that religious racism has occurred, and the response this elicits, have a significant impact on the women. in the study.

Airports

During the interviews a number of women spoke about their experiences (and those of their families and friends) in Australian airports as being unpleasant and decidedly hostile. While they recognised the need for effective security measures and surveillance of airport users, they felt that,

as Muslims, they were often unnecessarily targeted for scrutiny by airport authorities, particularly, security staff. They narrated a number of instances in which it appears that airport staff singled out Muslim travellers for petty harassment and hostile treatment.

When my brother came back from Nigeria they (airport authorities) went through all his things. One of the children (in Nigeria) had drawn him a picture of a Muslim man wearing a turban and long robes and this was inside one of his books and the authorities wanted to confiscate this! He was like, 'Please don't, it's just a picture!' (Barakah)

The experience of having one's possessions intimately searched (and belongings possibly confiscated) by airport security is arguably an alarming one for anybody. However, for Muslims there is the added fear of being wrongly singled out as a security threat.

Since June 2002 when the Australian government introduced a series of 'anti-terrorism laws to create new offences in relation to terrorist acts and the financing and membership of terrorist organisations' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:67), Muslims have been particularly concerned at the potential for human rights and civil liberties abuses legitimised by these laws¹⁰⁸. Of particular concern are the powers of detention and interrogation of 'persons of interest' given to the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:68). Thus Muslims fear being wrongly singled out as a 'security threat' more than they would fear an incorrect accusation of being a drug runner as many other travellers would (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:67-69). For these reasons, for Muslims in Australia generally and for the women in my study in particular, airports are sites of emotional and psychological trauma and vulnerability.

I experienced this anxiety firsthand when, as a first time traveller to the UK in April 2005, I prepared to board the plane from Adelaide to Manchester airport. I know it was also a key anxiety for my family as they farewelled me – wondering if I'd make it to the conference okay. Ultimately I made the journey safely (and returned home safely) but it wasn't without its moments of fear and anxiety, particularly as I went through security checkpoints. Although I knew I had no suspicious items on my person or in my luggage, I was apprehensive about innocent belongings being misconstrued as

¹⁰⁸ In July 2005 a series of suicide bombings were carried out on the London transport system in which many people were injured and a number died. In the wake of this, the Australian government passed more stringent legislation in the *Anti Terrorism Act* (2005). Some of the new measures proposed included preventative detention including that of children between the ages of 16 and 18, the restriction of contact by a detained person with family members, and increased powers of police surveillance.

potential threats. As I approached the immigration entry desk at Manchester airport I was very anxious, terrified that I would be denied entry (despite knowing that all my documents were in order). The immigration official's hostile manner and interrogative tone did little to reassure me. She was suspicious about my claims to being a postgraduate student attending an academic conference, and even more suspicious about a young Muslim woman travelling alone, with no family to greet me at the airport, or provide me with accommodation in the UK. Clearly, I did not fit her idea of a Muslim woman. However, after tense minutes spent reiterating my situation, and just as I verged on tears, my passport was stamped, and I was allowed to pass.

Zakiyah and two Muslim friends, the woman in a hijab and her husband with a full beard, experienced considerable hostility when they found that their pram was too large to fit through the airport x-ray machine without being dismantled. While parents with prams experience embarrassment at the indifference of airport security staff to their plight, and the annoyance of other passengers who are also turning out their pockets, removing laptop computers from their bags and placing them in plastic containers for inspection, Zakiyah felt that there was an additional level of hostility and fear associated with this experience purely because they were Muslim. She also expressed her shock and anger at the rudeness the airport security staff had shown them. She said they made no attempt to assist them but had, instead, hovered around them making unhelpful comments such as 'That's too big, it won't fit' and telling them that the pram *must* go through the x-ray machine as if implying that they were trying to circumvent strict security protocols. As Zakiyah summarised her experience:

It's always a bit awkward at airports going through the machines and stuff. They'll take extra time to go through your things and check you (using the metal detector) a million times and there's always eyes on you because you've got a headscarf on or you're with a guy who has a full beard. It seems that they're making an extra effort to check everything because you're Muslim. There's also people looking at you and thinking, "Oh no you're on our flight". It's annoying, really annoying! They make things just that bit more difficult and their attitude is accusatory – as if we've done something wrong and they're not going to let us get away with it.

For these women (including myself), the behaviour of airport staff, although inappropriate, is difficult to challenge. They did not feel that they could complain to airport management or an equal opportunity organisation because the behaviour of the staff members was such that it could be

claimed that they were simply doing their jobs. As the participants in B. L. Beagan's (2003) study found, in situations such as these, it was often too much trouble to make a formal complaint because it was unlikely to be pursued as each incident seemed too trivial to result in either altered behaviour or recompense. As one participant in the HREOC report said:

I was subjected to searches for three hours. I was asked why I had spent time in Cairo, Dubai and Saudi Arabia. They read my diary from A-Z. They even removed the film from my camera. When I queried the treatment they said they were entitled to do it. When they let me go they didn't apologise or acknowledge the reason for this treatment. They realised I was a Muslim from my name. I decided never to travel again (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:69).

Beagan argues that, although women like Zakiyah may not pursue such incidents, there is a residual and 'cumulative impact' (Beagan 2003:853) of such racism that negatively impacts upon individuals and communities. She also argues that, in not pursuing a complaint in such instances, 'social relations of power and privilege, marginality and oppression' (Beagan 2003:853) are upheld, thus perpetuating conditions under which religious racism flourishes. Thus the current political and ideological climate of support for extreme or unprecedented measures may have longer term implications for a multicultural environment as culturally and religiously insensitive behaviour is increasingly accepted or taken-for-granted by many people as legitimate security measures.

Workplaces and Employment

Another narrative of racism in which the perpetrator was not challenged on their views was that told by Latifa. This narrative relates to employment and wearing the hijab, an issue mentioned by three of the women with whom I spoke.

I had a job interview with 'Fashion Store' (not its real name) and the lady asked me a few questions. I smiled and was myself and I think I did brilliantly at the interview but ... yeah ... she mentioned something about my hijab. She asked whether I'd be wearing it while I worked and she wondered whether that would be allowed in company policy. I brushed it off and said 'Oh well I wear a different one every day (every day means a daily occurrence, every day means every single day) and so I can fit in with the fashion trends'. She mentioned the hijab which was really unnecessary and I believe it's an illegal question to talk about race or religion but I didn't say anything about its illegality because I didn't know if it was illegal or if she was treading a fine line. (Latifa)

Latifa was not given a job at Fashion Store, but, because she couldn't be certain if this had any correlation to the interviewer's concerns about her hijab, she did not like to claim that this was, indeed, the reason. Latifa's experience confirms the premise of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) project *Isma – Listen* [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2003 #368] that Muslims who experience religious racism are unlikely to lodge a formal complaint even in situations where it appears likely that a successful outcome would be achieved. This was also reflected in studies of religious racism in the British context (Weller, Feldman et al. 2001; Spalek 2002a) and has parallels with the experiences of other minority groups such as Black and Native Americans, Black British and Indigenous Australians (Mickler 1998; Beagan 2003; England 2004).

For Latifa, her non-reporting of the incident was not because she was unaware that there were avenues through which to pursue a complaint, but because she felt unsure of whether the incident, although disturbing, was actually religious racism. For Latifa, her non-reporting of the incident was not because she was unaware that there were avenues through which to pursue a complaint, but because she felt unsure of whether the incident, although disturbing, was actually religious racism. The legislation does not explicitly define and protect against religious racism, making it difficult for those who, like Latifa, experience perceived discrimination to know whether or not their experience would be given the legitimacy of legal redress, potentially adding to their distress concerning the incident. However, given the absence of any kind of legislative framework for understanding what is, and what is not, religious racism, the legal 'merits' of reporting an instance such as this is diminished in the face of the obvious emotional impact of the perception that religious racism has occurred.

Sherene, while not currently wearing hijab, would like to begin doing so. However, an overwhelming fear of not gaining employment in her chosen profession has meant that she is indefinitely postponing her taking up wearing hijab¹⁰⁹. She told me that the field in which she wants to work, business and accounting, is notoriously 'narrowminded' and unaccepting of those who do

¹⁰⁹ For many Muslims there is an understanding that once a woman has made the commitment to wear hijab then this is a commitment that should not be reneged upon even temporarily. Consequently it isn't an option for Sherene to wear hijab all the time but take it off while at work. Either she makes a commitment to wear hijab always and everywhere or waits until such time as she is able to make this commitment. This attitude was expressed by one of the interviewees who said, 'when I put on the hijab it will be for always'. Although some women do make the choice to remove their hijab temporarily while in their workplace, this has serious emotional implications for them (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:61-63) (see also Katherine Bullock's participant Halima, who feels like a 'hypocrite' wearing her hijab only in certain situations and not in others (2002:47)).

not fit the 'corporate mould' and she therefore doubts if she would be employed if she wore hijab. This knowledge, and the knowledge that she is unable to fulfil her religious beliefs in her preferred manner, causes Sherene to 'worry a lot'. She wishes that she had made alternative career choices when applying for university but doesn't feel she can change courses in this final year of her studies because she would not be able to repay her Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt. Thus, Sherene feels trapped, not by her religious beliefs, but by the racism that prevents her from fulfilling these beliefs. Her feelings and perceptions of her job prospects are similarly reflected in the experiences of some Muslim women in the HREOC consultations (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:62). One woman said she was

unemployed for about two years. Every job that I would go to I know that I've got the skills ... it would really surprise me to get a phone call telling me that I didn't got the job ... When I took it (the hijab) off, I automatically got a job ... to find work this is what I had to do.
(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:62)

The report argued that employer pressure for Muslim women not to wear their hijab while 'at work was reported to be especially acute in service industries where client contact is an essential part of the job' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:62). Thus Sherene's fears of not gaining employment as an accountant while wearing hijab, and Latifa's suspicions that her hijab was a barrier to her employment at Fashion Store, are not unfounded or baseless.

Zakiyah experienced work-related religious racism which was justified in terms of 'what the customer wants':

Zakiyah: It's good to wear a scarf and I love it – it's what I've chosen to do and I think that sometimes it could be a benefit to wear a scarf because people remember you. But then there's the fear that there are those people with either narrow minds or conservative thinking or whatever who are going to be apprehensive towards employing someone with a hijab on ... I always wanted to work with television and a couple of years ago I did work experience with Channel Eleven. I already had my journalism degree but they sort of hinted to me, it wasn't said explicitly, they just hinted to me that if "you took your scarf off you'd probably get a job, but you know we are not going to employ people with headscarves because it's not what our viewers want". So it's ... 'what our viewers want'.

Alia: Would you ever contemplate taking off your hijab in order to get a job?

Zakiyah: No, no way. No, no, no, no, no way, because to me there's no job in the world worth enough for that because it's part of who I am and my identity. I'd never give up my identity for a job because if I did then in the end I wouldn't be satisfied by that job anyway

because I'd be giving up who I am for that ... And if that's not respected by people then they don't have to employ me and that's fine.

While some of the other young women felt that they could not wear the hijab and pursue their chosen profession, Zakiyah was clear that her religious identity was paramount and that, while her experiences with Channel Eleven upset and angered her, she could not be satisfied in a job unless she was able to wear her hijab and otherwise practise her religion.

While only three of the women discussed a perceived or actual conflict between employment and hijab it is interesting to note that none of the women I interviewed who wear hijab are employed by non-Muslim employers. Those women who are in the workforce either work in Muslim owned workplaces or they do not wear hijab. My research findings differed slightly from that discussed in the HREOC report (2004) whose respondents included women who were employed by non-Muslim employers and who had positive employment experiences wearing hijab:

I used to do the mad rush home every lunch hour to pray ... one of my bosses said to me one day 'Come and have lunch' and I said 'No I've got to go home to pray'. He said, 'What do you do when you pray? Do it here – go in the conference room. If anyone says anything tell them to come and see me' ... About a week later the big boss came and saw me and asked, 'Have you had any problems? If you do, you come to me and I'll sort it out because it's not on!' So I have had really positive responses. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:63-67)

Although the selected narratives of Latifa, Sherene and Zakiyah only focused upon issues related to the hijab and employment, all of the women mentioned that other aspects of their religious identity and the fear of facing religious racism, either in the workplace or while seeking employment, were factors in their decisions about career and employment. This mirrors research that focused upon the career and employment opportunities and experiences of British Muslim women (Parker-Jenkins, Haw et al. 1998). A number of the women I interviewed said that they had made decisions about possible careers based upon a number of factors such as their personal interests and goals, their religious requirements, and their ability to gain employment in their chosen career in a non-Muslim country whilst remaining actively religious.

The women not only tried to choose career paths that would gain them employment while wearing hijab, but also those in which there was minimal close contact with male colleagues, in which they

were provided with appropriate facilities for performing their daily prayers, and in which they would not be pressured to attend religiously inappropriate functions such as 'drinks sessions' or Christmas parties. These factors were also important for the women in both Mubarak's (1996) Australian research and the British research (Parker-Jenkins, Haw et al. 1998; Weller, Feldman et al. 2001). Furthermore, Mubarak's respondents also echoed the women I interviewed in believing that religious racism in the workplace is not solely confined to issues of hijab but to a range of other religious issues (Mubarak 1996:136-144).

The Isma consultation devoted a significant amount of space in the report to issues of workplace racism as experienced by the participants. HREOC stated that 'just over one quarter of survey respondents experienced some form of racism, abuse or violence at work' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:60). Many of the participants felt that even simply having a Muslim name was enough to make them a target of racism. However the issue of wearing hijab was also a serious concern for many of the women. One participant told of how she was given a job via a telephone interview but when the employer saw her wearing her hijab he told her that she would no longer be employed unless she removed her scarf:

I asked him, 'Are there any other reasons why you wouldn't give me this job?' He said 'No. You're a really nice person and a hard worker but I don't want to bring religion into my laboratory' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:62).

This narrative has strong connections to those told by Zakiyah and Latifa earlier in this section. The worries that many of the young women I interviewed had about gaining meaningful employment while wearing hijab were also reflected in the HREOC consultation; 'They would never employ you in a commercial law firm with the hijab ... I've had people tell me, "You take that (i.e. the hijab) off and you can come"' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:63). Furthermore, the consultation stated that:

Many Muslim women working in fields such as law and medicine felt that employers and colleagues saw them as less intellectually capable or professionally committed compared with other staff if they wore traditional Islamic dress (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:62).

Public Places

Other forms of everyday racism include verbal abuse, denigration and 'teasing' (Beagan 2003). Sometimes this occurs when non-Muslims make racist comments that are overheard by

unidentifiable (that is, non hijab-wearing) Muslim women. Although the perpetrators of racism do not intend Muslims to hear and be offended, the effect is the same. Hanna said that:

I've heard people saying things that are offensive to Muslims. I've heard people say, 'They (Muslims) hate pigs but they are pigs themselves'.

Kulthum told the story of when:

I was walking down the main street in Murray Bridge and a man driving past in his car stopped and goes, 'Excuse me'. I turned around because I thought he was just going to ask me something but he goes, 'Do you know where they build bombs around here?'. I was like '*Excuse me?!*'

As well as being a narrative of 'everyday' racism this narrative also demonstrates the ways in which dominant media representations are taken up by members of the community. Via the media stereotypes Muslims are not only targeted in terms of their religious identity but in ways that connect this identity to extreme forms of social deviance, that is, terrorism.

Another aspect of everyday racism that was described by a number of the women is the use of eye contact, facial expression and body language. Hostile staring is often used to convey racist thoughts and attitudes and make the women feel unsafe, uncomfortable or confronted. Often these behaviours were combined with verbal abuse:

Everybody looks at you, especially on public transport or in a public place, as if you're going to bomb them. Sometimes some of them talk really dirty words at you – they swear at you.
(Omayma)

Verbal abuse, denigration and body language/facial expressions as examples of everyday racism were also the experience of Muslim women (for example see Mubarak 1996; Rasool 2002; Spalek 2002a, 2002b; Ahmad 2003; Deen 2003) and non-Muslim men and women (for example see Long 2000; Beagan 2003) in several other studies. The HREOC consultation listed some common examples of insults that were experienced by participants and which are echoed in the narratives told by the young women in this thesis: 'towelhead, tablecloth [...] and nappyhead [...] terrorist, Bin-Laden [...] bloody Muslim' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:51).

Schools

Schools are places where ideologies about national identity, religion and belonging are played out. As such, they are frequently contested spaces in which religious racism (and other forms of racism are experienced (Almond and Woolcock 1978; Rizvi 1990; Hatcher and Troyna 1993; Soudien 1998; Aveling 2002; McLeod and Yates 2003; Shain 2003). As noted in Chapter Two, the South

Australian public¹¹⁰ education system was created with the 1851 *Education Act* which made provisions for 'good secular instruction based on the Christian Religion' (Almond and Woolcock 1978:5). As Kameniar argues, 'the authors of the Act understood, indeed presumed, that Christianity was an integral part of the identity of the colony and not something separate from it' (Kameniar 2004:95). I agree with Kameniar that 'attempts to expunge Christianity from conceptions of "secular" education have merely served to make its presence less visible but no less powerful' (Kameniar 2004:125).

One of the effects of this embedded but unacknowledged Christianity is that students of 'other' faiths often feel marginalised or experience what has been described as 'institutional racism' (Rizvi 1996; Ahmed 2004). In research I conducted previously in a South Australian public high school, young Muslim women narrated numerous incidents of religious racism related to their schooling. The school in my study was located in a middle class area of metropolitan Adelaide, although the student population came from across the metropolitan area. As well as a large population of students of non Anglo-Saxon/Celtic or Christian background there was a significant number of Muslim students at the school. The school marketed itself as a multifaith and multicultural school that welcomed 'difference and diversity' amongst its student cohort.

The women in that study spoke about their struggles with the school over access to a suitable space in which to perform compulsory midday (Thuh'r) prayers. They had been previously assured of the school's support of their active religiosity but when they requested a prayer space they found their requests unexpectedly stonewalled. During their weeks of lobbying the school, at one point the students were told they would have to pay to use a room during lunchtime. They were outraged at this demand because the school was already providing space free of charge to a group of Christian students for prayer gatherings during lunchtime. Eventually the school gave permission for the women to pray in a small office belonging to the school's Christian chaplain. This room was unacceptable for use as a Muslim prayer space because the walls were adorned with Christian iconography and prayers¹¹¹. In their analyses of this incident the young women identified the

¹¹⁰ In Australia 'public' schools are those entirely funded by tax payers via state government funding. 'Private' or 'independent' schools refer to non-government funded schools such as those run by religious organisations. While these are often thought of as being funded differently to public schools, most of them receive a certain level of government funding, (and now more per student on average than public schools).

¹¹¹ During my research I visited this room and found that, not only was it unacceptable for use in terms of the Christian iconography, but it was also extremely small with space for only one person at a time to pray.

always present but rarely articulated assumptions of the school: in spite of it being a secular government school it was also primarily a Christian school and there was little room for those of 'other' faiths to actively practice their religion. It is also significant that the school employed a Christian chaplain but did not employ chaplains to cater for students of other religious backgrounds.

Similarly, the students spoke about the school's willingness to cater for alternative dietary requirements such as vegetarianism and veganism, but was simultaneously unwilling to cater for the sizable Muslim student population in providing halal food. They argued that in light of the school's self-promotion as a multifaith and multicultural community it should have been prepared to cater for their dietary needs. The young women felt that:

the school is willing to support those who 'fit' into what is largely acceptable within a broadly secular Christian society, as vegetarianism is, but not willing to accommodate the needs of 'other' faiths (Imtoul 2002:41).

As well as these narratives of institutional racism, the women at the school told about numerous incidents of abuse, bullying and physical harassment that they experienced at the hands of other students as well as staff members. Similarly, students participating in HREOC's study 'reported incidents where they felt that teachers and staff condoned racist behaviour or were directly discriminatory' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:59).

Narratives of Resistance

A number of studies of racism and its impact on the daily lives of individuals and communities discuss 'resistance' (Poynting, Noble et al. 1999; Shain 2000; Beagan 2003; Peek 2003; Shain 2003; England 2004). Resistance is commonly characterised as the ways in which individuals who experience racism refuse to act as passive victims, accepting the racism without response. Resistance is not always overt or outspoken. Rather, it is often subtle and may go unnoticed by all except the person who is resisting. I argue that it is a 'coping' strategy which provides emotional distance and control over a situation which is potentially very distressing for the affected person/s. The resistance used by individuals depends on a number of factors such as the context, the specificities of the racism involved, who is perpetrating the racism and the 'mood' of the person resisting.

One of the ways that the women in my study resisted direct and overt racism was through laughter. As explained by Naima, laughing at racism is one way of not allowing perpetrators of racism to gain the satisfaction of seeing their jibes sting. In this way the women refuse to allow racism to ruin their day:

How did we deal with it? Well we just laughed it off because there's not much you *can* do ...

So you really shouldn't make anything of it. Anyway it didn't affect me too much. (Naima)

Laughter is also used to resist long-term and more public forms of racism such as media representations and comments by public figures. The use of laughter as resistance in this way can be seen in the Islamic Human Rights Commission's (IHRC) annual spoof awards¹¹² in which individuals and organisations who are seen to be guilty of religious racism (what the IHRC calls 'islamophobia') against Muslims and Islam are 'presented' with awards under categories such as 'Most Islamophobic Media Personality of the Year' and 'Islamophobe of the Year' (Crittenden 2004)¹¹³.

While it is true that laughter is used as a strategy of resistance by young Muslim women, sometimes laughter itself is used as a racist weapon against these women. In these situations, alternative strategies of resistance are needed. Omayma explained her reaction to having laughter and ridicule used against her:

When they laugh at me and say, 'Look at her – she looks like a nun!'¹¹⁴, I don't really care because I know that they're going to tease me and say these things. I was expecting that stuff so it doesn't affect me that much.

For her, the *expectation* of racism is enough for her to counteract the ill effects of racism¹¹⁵. However, Beagan argues that laughter and ridicule in the form of racist jokes are particularly 'effective' forms of racist violence because they may appear so trivial. She argues that 'racist jokes are "just" jokes, yet they entrench the power of the dominant group' (Beagan 2003:858) and so

¹¹² Using laughter along with naming and satire is also a long-standing western feminist strategy with examples such as the Guerrilla Girls (see <http://www.queerrillagirls.com>) and the New South Wales 'Ernie Awards' which are annual spoof awards given to the perpetrators of highly sexist and misogynist comments and hosted by a NSW parliamentarian, Meredith Burgmann (for information on the 2004 Ernie Awards see <http://www.abc.net.au/thingo/txt/s1180534.htm>).

¹¹³ Often the awards are 'accepted' on behalf of the 'winners' by comedic characters who reflect something about the person who has won, or somehow relates to the specific incident that resulted in them winning the award. For example, the 2003 Most Islamophobic Media Award was won by the Fox Network and the award was collected by the 'first Asian Fox hunter', that is, a Muslim man of Asian background dressed in the traditional British fox-hunting outfit of red riding jacket, hard hat and jodhpurs. This of course was a pun on the word 'fox' and the idea of a news-hunt, it was also a comment on the white-centric nature of fox-hunting which is seen as one of the quintessentially 'British' sports and therefore is linked to notions of citizenship and belonging (for further information see the IHRC's website <http://www.ihrc.org>).

¹¹⁴ In terms of a discussion of religion, this is an interesting example as it demonstrates that although Christianity is embedded within Australian society, overt displays of Christianity outside certain locations are represented as Other. In an overtly Christian society this display would be seen as a mark of inclusion.

¹¹⁵ This also shows how she has to manage the racism – by expecting it and not letting affect her too much.

have a cumulative effect that 'significantly [increases] the level of stress experienced by the recipient' (Beagan 2003:859). Thus racist 'jokes', one aspect of 'everyday' racism, are not something to be laughed off as trivial or insignificant.

Zakiyah told me the story of how she had thought about going to an Australian Rules Football (also known as Aussie Rules or 'the footy') match with a friend's small children but:

I didn't go but I thought about going and then I thought, 'No I'd better not go because I'm wearing the headscarf and I might come up against racism'. I thought that was really sad because I've grown up with footy, gone to the footy all my life, but as a Muslim woman I'd feel uncomfortable going to a footy match with a hijab on because I'd be afraid of the racism and I didn't want to put myself in a situation where I might get it. If I'd been going on my own I might have just thought, 'Go, just go and don't be afraid', but I was with a couple of young kids. I even thought I could go and wear a beanie over my hijab and then people won't know, but that's even sadder – but it would have made it easier for me. (Zakiyah)

Zakiyah's narrative indicates a number of strategies of resistance. Through her experiences in other public spaces, she hypothesised that the footy would be a likely site of racism. Although she felt equipped to deal with this on her own, she did not want to expose young children to the effects of racism and so she opted to avoid the footy altogether. While it is clear that Zakiyah believes this to have been the 'right' decision, it is also clear from her story that this decision cost her dearly. Not only did she deny herself and her young friends a great deal of enjoyment by watching their favourite team play their favourite game, but she also experienced a degree of internal, emotional angst over her other proposed options of resistance. While Zakiyah never contemplated removing her hijab in order to feel safe enough to attend the match, she did consider wearing a beanie over the top so that her hijab would be almost fully disguised¹¹⁶. Ultimately she chose not to do so because, although this action could be read as fulfilling her religious beliefs subverting the racist attitudes that shun hijab-wearing Muslims, she felt that it was a terrible decision. Because she *chose* to wear hijab as a sign of commitment to her religion and as a very public statement of this, in covering it with a beanie, Zakiyah felt that there was an element of disloyalty to Islam and her

¹¹⁶ I am not suggesting here that covering a hijab with a hat is in any way equivalent to removing it. The removal of a hijab has serious religious implications while covering it with a hat does not.

own sense of identity which she did not want to be guilty of¹¹⁷. For her, covering her hijab with a beanie would not only be an erasure, however temporary, of her religious identity which should be accorded respect or acceptance from those around her, but it would also be an act of surrender; she would be 'giving in' to racism, something her pride refused to allow.

Kulthum shouts back at people who make racist comments and told me that when she was younger and in school she would 'bash' people who were racist towards her or other Muslims. Soon her reputation as a fighter (her reputation was assured after having broken the nose of an older male student who taunted her about her religion) meant that other students were careful not to cause offence. Although Kulthum would not favour a physical response to racism nowadays, she does not regret its past effectiveness. However, she still favours a direct approach in responding to racism by verbally confronting people even when this occurs in public. While only Kulthum stated that she favoured a direct verbal confrontation with perpetrators of religious racism, a number of the young women admitted to having lost their temper and verbally retaliated. Many of these women told me that on occasion they had even sworn at perpetrators of the abuse. Each of these women regretted having done so for a number of reasons. Firstly, they ordinarily did not use swear words and felt that doing so was not Islamically appropriate despite the provocation of the situation. Secondly, they regretted their behaviour because their own response could have led to an escalation in the situation. This fear was alluded to an unrelated comment made by Naima in which she said 'if you (retaliate) then you're just going to get into a heap of trouble'. For young women, the 'trouble' that they most fear and try to avoid at all costs is physical and/or sexual violence¹¹⁸. Interviews with hijab-wearing Muslim women in Birmingham, England, supports (Spalek 2002a) the argument that Muslim women experience religious racism in gendered ways.

Participants in the HREOC consultation reported having verbally retaliated to abuse in much the same manner as Kulthum does. One participant told of how she was confronted by an elderly man at a shop who asked if 'she was a terrorist and carrying a bomb' the woman responded with the equally ridiculous question, 'Are you a paedophile?' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity

¹¹⁷ While this narrative is primarily one of resistance it is also one of whiteness, belonging and national identity. Australian Rules Football is closely tied to notions of white Australian identity (despite the game's long history of non-white players both of Indigenous and other ethnic heritages). Going to the footy is seen by many people as a quintessential white Australian pastime and as such there is limited scope for those located outside the boundaries of hegemonic whiteness, particularly Muslim women who wear hijab, to participate in this pastime. I would argue on this basis that Zakiyah's assessment of the footy as a site of potential racism was an appropriate one. Her analysis is supported by literature from Britain that details the racism inherent in whiteness dominated sports such as soccer, rugby and cricket (Long 2000).

¹¹⁸ The women did not narrate any experiences of sexual violence during the course of the interviews. However this does not mean they didn't experience any and it does not reduce their *fears* of experiencing it in the future.

Commission 2004:86). For some women then, a direct verbal response is a comfortable and preferred option of resistance, despite the possible risks, while some women may be driven to such a response out of sheer exasperation.

Barakah suggested that the most effective form of resistance to direct personal racism was, in her experience, to remain calm and disengaged from the incident:

When people try and rile you up, you just have to stay calm. That's probably the best way to act. I mean, I've seen other people go a bit psycho when someone makes a (racist) comment but when you pull them up and go, 'What are you doing?' you're doing exactly what they want – they want you to get all angry and crazy and excited so [I say] 'just stop it!', then they're like, 'Yeah, you're right!' ... No-one has the right to make me feel inferior. No-one can make you feel inferior unless you let them. (Barakah)

Similarly Mariyah said that she tries to talk really calmly and politely with people who are rude to her and so refuses to engage with aggressive or threatening behaviour. It is difficult to continue a harassing or argumentative 'discussion' when one party refuses to engage with the rudeness. Mariyah believes that this form of resistance is not only an effective one, but one which assists her in deflecting some of the emotional trauma associated with being the target of religious racism. Once again, similar narratives appear in the Isma consultation (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85).

The women indicate that this particular response to religious racism developed after seeing other Muslims react with anger and retaliate in some way. Barakah said that this form of response often makes the situation worse, but even if it remains stable or dissipates, an angry response is not the best way to deal with the incident because often this is the reaction a perpetrator of racism is looking for. Ignoring the racism or acting as though they are indifferent is an act of subversion because the women are refusing to engage on the same level as the perpetrator. In maintaining calm and an air of indifference (despite what their inner responses might be) they are gaining an element of control as well as an element of satisfaction at their own capacity to not be drawn into a futile power struggle. As Beagan argues, when dealing with relatively 'minor' incidents of racism such as verbal abuse or racist joking, most of these incidents 'have to be allowed to pass, to protect one's time, energy, sanity or bodily integrity' (Beagan 2003:859).

Impact of Religious Racism

The relentless experience of racism, even if at an apparently low level, feelings of stress, anger, distress and fear. These emotional reactions to incidents or experiences of religious racism were echoed by the experiences of other 'victims' of crime (Spalek 2002a:75).

It affects me badly ... yeah, really badly actually, especially during exam times when I'm feeling stressed and other stuff is going on. (Omayma)

As a full-time student, one of Omayma's most stressful times of the year is examination time and any further external pressure or emotional stress impacts quite significantly on her wellbeing and her ability to study appropriately and effectively. Thus, it can be said that experiences of religious racism significantly affect the quality of life of all the young Muslim women in my study.

While some of the young women identified emotional responses, for example 'I get really angry and annoyed' (Sherene), many of the women, such as Naima and Barakah, suppressed these feelings. As individuals at risk of racism 'may expend untold energy on remaining ever vigilant, ready to respond (or not respond) to racism' (Beagan 2003:859), the effects of racism are not limited to the moments after a racist interaction but are more insidious, long term and continuing¹¹⁹.

The women also described how religious racism impacted on their lifestyle choices, for example in choosing something as momentous as a career or as apparently simple as whether or not to attend a football match. All the women told stories of how they had altered their life or their life choices in some way because of a fear of racism. Many of the women spoke about choosing to 'stay home' (Sherene) or only leaving the house in the company of other Muslim women or relatives (deploying the concept of 'safety in numbers') at certain times in their life because they were afraid for their personal safety (see also Peek 2003; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004). Latifa told a particularly disturbing story about a young friend of hers who was pregnant and who wore hijab. On her way home from work one evening (in Adelaide) she was attacked by a group of young men, punched and had her hijab pulled off as well as being verbally abused. As a result of the attack, the young woman miscarried her baby. Latifa said that this incident had terrified her and also made her feel very sad, not only for the loss of her friend's baby, but also because her friend no longer felt safe enough to wear hijab.

¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, these sorts of impacts received almost no acknowledgement in the press even during the HREOC consultations.

As Zakiyah described it, religious racism and its impact is a perpetual cycle of violence and insecurity for Muslim women. She discussed this by way of an analogy about having blue hair:

Maybe the feelings within ourselves are perpetuated by representations of Muslims. Say for example you were someone who decided to dye your hair blue but on television the next day all you saw were stories about how bad people with blue hair are – that they're the people who kill others, they're the terrorists, they don't care about other people etc. If you walked out the next day with blue hair then you're going to feel very insecure because of these stories. Other people will be looking at you because you've got blue hair and all the previous day they saw stories about bad people with blue hair. You're also going to feel an added sense of antagonism within yourself because you're feeling like everyone is looking at you [with hostility]. So it's a perpetual cycle. (Zakiyah)

Stories such as those told by the women in this study are echoed repeatedly throughout the literature. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report into Muslim and Arab Australian's experiences of racism is one long litany of the fear, insecurity, uncertainty and apprehension that racism creates (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004). Comments from participants such as 'I was afraid they might attack me [...] and I didn't want it to escalate, so I just ignored them' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85) and 'I don't want to pick fights [...] I'd rather turn a blind eye and walk away' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85) support this argument. Other studies that portray the lives and experiences of Muslims, particularly Muslim women also repeat and reiterate these stories and feelings¹²⁰.

The narratives that the women told in the interviews indicate that many of them implement an on-going management (surveillance) of self in relation to how they cope with other people's racism. This self-scrutiny is yet another pressure brought to bear on these young women as it means they are unable to relax fully. They must always be alert to signs of racism and to monitor their responses to ensure that they are avoiding racism or minimising its impact on their lives (Spalek 2002a; Beagan 2003). In addition to these pressures, the women also need to manage their responses to racism whenever they are engaged in a religiously racist interaction. This is because, as young women, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of 'serious trouble', that is, physical

¹²⁰ See for example Franks 2000; Akram 2002; Imtoul 2002; Deen 2003; Khalema and Wannas-Jones 2003; Kampmark 2003a; Lygo 2004; NSW Anti-Discrimination Board 2003; Sukkarieh & Zahra 2002; Spalek 2002a, 2002b; Peek 2003; Shain 2003; Poynting, Noble and Ang 2004.

and/or sexual violence that may occur as part of a racist incident (Spalek 2002a). At times of public targeting, or increased aggression and negativity towards Muslims, these anxieties and concerns are heightened, thus adding increased layers of stress to ordinary activities and interactions (Spalek 2002a, 2002b). The HREOC consultation argues that some participants are so constantly affected by a myriad of racist incidents that they 'have become desensitised' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85). However, the narratives from the young women I interviewed suggest that it is not an experience of desensitisation that leads some people to 'ignore' racism, but instead, it is 'often too exhausting and time-consuming to respond to each and every incident' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:85). In order not to become physically, mentally and emotionally 'exhausted', many recipients of racism actively choose not to respond (Beagan 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that 'everyday' racism impacts significantly on the lives of the women in this study. What are often individually characterised as 'minor' incidents of religious racism accumulate to cause considerable stress and distress to the women. The women narrated numerous instances of such racism that occurred in a variety of public spaces such as airports, schools and workplaces. The chapter argued that Muslims who experience such racism are unlikely to lodge formal complaints to organisations such as HREOC, particularly because Muslims in South Australia are unprotected by legislation. It also argues that the lack of legislative framework or even public discussion which shapes an understanding of what constitutes religious racism means that any and all incidents where the women feel aggrieved on the basis of their religious affiliation can be framed as religious racism by the women. It also argues that, for the young women in the study, the emotional impact of these incidents are profound.

The chapter then moved into a discussion of the strategies the women use to 'resist' religious racism. Many strategies were deployed by the women, including laughter, 'fighting back', refusing to engage with the racism, and avoidance of potentially racist situations or locations. Feelings of stress, anger, fear and distress were all common emotional responses. This emotional toll is an often unacknowledged or under-researched aspect of racism. This chapter argued that the women's resistance to religious racism is an act of agency. However, it needs to be understood that the notion of 'women's agency', while disavowing the labelling of women as 'victims', needs to

be understood in a context where oppression and subordination act to limit the extent to which the women can enact agency (Parker 2005:2). While it may be politically strategic to claim 'agency' for young Muslim women when they resist the impact or effects of religious racism, this agency is limited, and to claim otherwise risks trivialisation of racist practices and their effects.

In summary, one of the reasons why religious racism has such a profound and significant impact on all the women regardless of how they dress (i.e. with or without hijab and thus identifiable or not) and regardless of how long they've identified as Muslim, was indicated by Hanna's explanation:

Hanna: I take things personally.

Alia: Because Islam is something you hold dear?

Hanna: Definitely. Definitely.

So long as there are women identifying as Muslims and so long as religious racism occurs, these women will continue to be negatively affected at an emotional and psychological level (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004). Indeed, these women are doubly affected by the racism, at a personal level and because this racism insults and disparages the religion that is so central to their identities. The following chapter takes up the ways in which the women formulate and articulate their identity within the current wider social context.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Articulating Identity: Religion, Culture, Nation and Community

This chapter begins with a discussion of the central markers of identity that the women spoke about when asked to articulate their identity: religion, ethnicity, culture and community. The chapter then moves into a detailed analysis of the intersections between national identity, whiteness and religion, and the impact that these have on the women's sense of identity. In particular, it examines the impact that the women's identity formations have on hegemonic constructions of what it means to be 'Australian'.

Identity: formations and articulations

In articulating their identities, many of the young women focused on three major areas: their religion, their ethnic culture and their community. For almost all of the women, being Muslim was of primary importance and was the aspect of their identity around which all others were built¹²¹. They differentiated their religious identity from their cultural identity which they most commonly associated with their ethnic/racial heritage. This formation of identity differs somewhat from previous and dominant understandings of identity in which religious identity is subsumed by cultural identity¹²² (Bhachu 1991; Modood 1992; Shain 2000; Das March 15, 2003).

This section is therefore an exploration and discussion of the ways in which, for the women in this study, religion is their foremost identity regardless of however else these women identified themselves. It is also a discussion of the relationship of religion to other identities, particularly unmarked identities, such as, whiteness, and how those other identities are expressed.

¹²¹ Similarly Spalek's interviewees 'spoke about a "hierarchy of identities" in which the Muslim identity occupies the dominant position' (Spalek 2002a:64).

¹²² I have only located one study in which religion and culture are delineated. It is a study of the ways in which Somali migrants to Sweden give up certain cultural practices in favour of a more religious lifestyle (Johnsdotter 2003). Pauly Jr, in his study of Muslims in Europe, wrote about Muslim communities in Britain as having 'acquired a more culturally South Asian and religiously Muslim character' (2004:118) although he does not elaborate on this distinction anywhere else in the book. The study by Archer (2001) focuses on young Muslim men in Britain but has a dual focus on their Asian culture and identity.

As Barakah described herself:

I'm born Muslim. My parents are converts. My father's a first generation British, he came over when he was nine and my mum was born here – her parents were born overseas in England and Canada and they're mostly Anglo. But my parents pretty much joined the ethnic population. My mum's family was in North Sydney and they lived in all the posh areas and my dad's family was from Newcastle – the central coast surfy areas – but we grew up in the middle of ethnicville. My parents wanted us to be in a Muslim environment with lots of Muslims, mosques, food, mixing with Muslim friends.

Her initial description of herself is as a 'born Muslim', after which she describes her ethnic heritage as well as her social class, something which none of the other interviewees mentioned. The way Barakah has ordered her description indicates the order of importance these various aspects of identity play in her life. For her religious identity is also closely tied to ideas of family and community. Her family's collective Muslim identity was of such importance that her parents deliberately chose to move the family to a suburb in which there was a high demographic concentration of Muslims in order that Barakah and her siblings could be surrounded by Muslim neighbours, halal shops, and mosques. In short, they wished to be part of an active, local, vibrant Muslim community.

What is also interesting in Barakah's description of her identity is the slippage in awareness and unawareness of whiteness. While Barakah actively identifies herself as having white Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage, it is also clear that she does not see this as an ethnicity. She describes her parents as having 'pretty much joined the ethnic population' after becoming Muslim and the family as living in the 'middle of ethnicville'. These comments reflect the dominant understandings of ethnicity in which Anglo-Saxon/Celtic whiteness is considered the norm and all other heritages are considered 'ethnic' in opposition to its normativity, that is, different. Many scholars in the field of whiteness studies discuss the tendency to see Anglo-Saxon/Celtic whiteness as outside ethnicity (Frankenburg 1995; Dyer 1997). Thus, when Barakah talks about 'ethnicville', she means a suburb dominated by non Anglo-Saxon/Celts, probably non-white, most likely 'third-world looking' (Hage 1998). Barakah, however, does differentiate between culture and religion. She spoke about having an 'Anglo culture' but as being Muslim, which indicates that, although she does not explicitly state that Anglo-ness is also an ethnicity, she has an understanding of 'culture' as being strongly linked to ethnic heritage and as different from 'religion'.

Although they are both of Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage Zakiyah's articulation of her identity differed from Barakah's. For Zakiyah, being Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Australian was both her ethnic heritage and her culture. However, like Barakah and other participants, her religious identity has the central place in her sense of identity:

I was always a Muslim. I'd always identified myself as a Muslim as I was growing up ... and I also grew up with very much of an Anglo-Australian identity. (Zakiyah)

Most of the women categorically stated the various aspects of their identity in the order of importance that they held for them. As Kulthum said 'I'm Muslim and Turkish but I've never felt Australian. I'm more Muslim than Turkish'. So for her, religion was first and foremost and then her ethnic heritage. She also clearly emphasised that her Australian birth and citizenship held no importance for her sense of self identity. For Latifa, her Australian citizenship was part of her identity but came in third place behind her religious identity and her ethnic heritage/birthplace: 'My identity is Muslim/Uzbek/Australian in that order'. Mariyah placed similar emphases in her articulation of identity but used notions of community as a vehicle by which to do so:

My communities are the Muslim community and the Afghan community. My religious identity is more important to me than anything else and if I do something cultural I always make sure that it's within the guidelines of my religion. (Mariyah)

Clearly then, for Mariyah, culture is tied to ethnic heritage while religion is independent of both. For her, having a culture and doing what is culturally acceptable is appropriate only when this does not contradict what is religiously acceptable.

For Sherene and Omayma their ethnic identity and ethnic community did not play a large role in their lives. They based their identity and social networks around their Muslimness. They too linked culture to ethnic heritage and nationality rather than religion and, while they recognised that they had a culture which was drawn from these, they did not place great value on this culture, preferring to structure their lives around their religion.

The only person whose articulation of her identity differed markedly from the other participants was Ellen, whose ethnic background includes Aboriginal:

My dad's Aboriginal mixed with a bunch of other stuff, mainly Asian stuff, and my mum's Chinese from Malaysia and I've converted to Islam. If you talk to an Aboriginal person and you say, "who are you?" they'll always say where they're from and who their family is. Whereas if you ask Anglo people they'll say, 'My name's this and that, I'm this and I work here', they base things around their material stuff.

Alia: How has your articulation of your identity changed since becoming a Muslim?

Ellen: Yeah, yeah it's changed heaps. Because now ... yeah I'm a Muslim and it makes a difference the way that, I don't know, it's definitely changed my life ...

Ellen went on to explain that although she didn't tell everybody she was a Muslim because, as a new Muslim, she was not yet used to dealing with people's hostile reactions to her religious identity, she certainly strongly identified as a Muslim: 'I don't tell people willy-nilly that I'm Muslim but if I trust that person then I'll tell them I'm Muslim'. She explained that, since becoming a Muslim, her religion impacted on all aspects of her life and therefore it structured the ways in which she thought of herself and her world. She explained that she is still learning to become fully comfortable with her Muslim identity in much the same way that she had to learn how to become comfortable with her Aboriginal identity and Asian appearance as a young child growing up:

I want to ... become more comfortable with being a Muslim because it's the same kind of thing as how it took a while to become comfortable being an Aboriginal person because in South Australia they're not used to Asian Aboriginals. (Ellen)

Perhaps Ellen's identity articulation differed because of her identity as an Indigenous woman within the context of a largely 'white' Australia with a history of violent confrontations between white and Indigenous communities (Stephenson 2004a & b). This is reflected in her comments about the difference in the way Aboriginal people in her experience introduce themselves in terms of their 'country' and their family connections while white non-Indigenous people tend to identify themselves in terms of their name and their occupation.

However, it also seems that Ellen, in many ways, is still in a process of working through how to define herself as a Muslim Aboriginal. Although she says that becoming a Muslim has changed her life, she is as yet unable to articulate this impact on to her identity with the same clarity that the other women have. This raises a number of questions as to why this is the situation. Is it due to a

lack of role models (i.e. other young Muslim Aboriginal women) for her to emulate? An incompatibility between the identities 'Muslim' and 'Aboriginal' (as she notes, 'in South Australia they're not used to Asian Aboriginals')? A result of the newness of her Muslim identity and this is therefore a period of transition? A result of her family's reluctance to accept her Muslim identity? Or perhaps it is because she feels no need to 'privilege one identity over any other. Rather than defining themselves as 'Muslim' or 'Indigenous' in any order, these identities coexist¹²³, and one does not have to yield to the other' (Stephenson, P, 2005, pers. comm., 14 September, 2004).

And for the vast majority of the women in this study religion came first. None of the women (with the possible exception of Ellen) indicated that they felt unsure of their identity or that they were experiencing an 'identity crisis'. On the contrary, they were all clear and unconflicted about what aspects of identity were important to them and the differing roles these played in their life. These identity formations bear little resemblance to the 'fluid' or shifting articulations of identity proposed by Stuart Hall or Avtar Brah. Rather, the participants in this study argue that religion is paramount to their identity and that other aspects such as ethnicity or nationality are subordinated to it.

In a significant point of difference to previous understandings of culture and religion, these women do not define religion as part of culture. For them, culture is inextricably linked to ethnicity and nationality whereas religion is something quite different and separate. Archer's research found that her participants all 'identified themselves first and foremost as "Muslim"' (Archer 2001:87) this is an increasingly familiar research finding in Britain (for example see Gardner and Shukur 1994; Shaw 1994).

The next section discusses the intersections of religion, culture, gender and ethnic heritage and begins with an analysis of an anti-racism campaign involving images of hijab-wearing Muslim women.

¹²³ Neither Stephenson nor I are suggesting that these identities are fixed or always harmonious but they do, nevertheless, coexist.

Australian Whiteness and National Identity

Two beautiful young women smile back at me from the postcard. I recognise myself in them. Part of me is reflected back at myself. They look like me but not like me. Their heads touch where they'd laughingly squeezed together to fit into the photograph's frame. Their faces say they might have Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage (but it's hard to tell). Their skin is white and unblemished. Beneath their joyous smiles runs the text, 'sisters daughters australians' and below this in smaller font, 'religion is not the only label they wear'. What religion? What label? Islam. Muslims. The young women are both wearing a hijab.

This postcard was part of an anti-racism campaign by the organisation Australians Against Racism (AAR) in 2004. Recognising the racism and marginalisation that many Muslims in Australia experience, AAR instigated the campaign to

evoke the common ground we all share. A sense of identification and familiarity with people from a Muslim background will generate a better response to them in everyday life. People often fear and reject what they don't know – this ... campaign aims to increase knowledge and challenge those feelings (www.australiansagainstracism.org).

Without unpacking some of the problematic discourses surrounding this campaign, I raise it here because it highlights some key issues related to Muslim women in Australia. Many of these issues were also raised in narratives told by the young Muslim women when they touched upon national identity and whiteness in the Australian context. Of particular interest and importance to this chapter are the ways in which these Muslim women were located as 'non-Australian' and it offers some possible explanations for this. In particular this chapter discusses the concerted non-Islamic nature of dominant Australian identity which often makes it difficult to combine the identity Australian and Muslim, as AAR is attempting to do in the postcard described above.

NOTE: This image is included on page 196 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 21 – AAR anti-racism campaign postcard

Negotiating the boundaries of national identity

Many of the women, particularly those who wore hijab, reported that non-Muslim people they interacted with often viewed them as new migrants to Australia. This attitude was manifested in a number of interactive strategies such as questioning, speaking slowly and clearly (to accommodate the perceived lack of English language skills), and hostility. As one of the women in Mubarak's study said:

I've had people use very poor English with me. They would say, 'You/ have to/ take *this*/ to the bank', and I'd say 'I know'. They think that I don't speak English because I wear *hijab*. One lady said to me, 'You speak English quite well' and I replied, 'Thank you, you do too'. Why would they think that I don't speak English? Because I wear *hijab*? It's ludicrous (1996:141).

In the following extract one of the young women I interviewed, Barakah, narrates a story which emphasises the way in which Muslims, particularly Muslim women who wear hijab, are seen as migrants. She and her husband had made a visit to a museum in Glenelg. While they were at the museum an elderly Anglo-Saxon/Celtic male volunteer guide questioned her as to her origins:

he says, 'Hello are you new to the area? Would you like me to show you around?', and, 'Where do you come from?' I go, 'Yeah, we come from Central Street' (laughing), and he goes, 'Oh ... okay ... yes ... I'm sure you can find your way around and if you need anything just ask me'. So we walked around the museum and we just had a little chuckle to ourselves. Later, we walked downstairs again and we said, 'Oh thanks it was really lovely', and he said to us, 'So now that you're living in the area you can come back anytime!' You know, you just have to laugh! (Barakah)

Hijab is a dominant signifier that can work to obscure other signifiers. In the current social and political context, the hijab is the primary sign by which non-Muslim viewers make meanings. In many cases it is read as a sign of migrancy. This is particularly obvious in Barakah's story as she has a very Anglo-Saxon/Celtic physical appearance and both she and her husband have marked Australian accents. If the tour guide had been 'reading' Barakah's physical appearance or her accent he would not have needed to ask 'where do you come from?' Barakah's response was to subvert and resist the implications of migrancy entailed in the question by giving the name of the street where she lives rather than discussing her family background. However, at a deeper level this narrative reveals underlying hegemonic attitudes about belonging and national identity. While

Barakah *looks* 'white', she dresses in a manner not usually associated with dominant forms of whiteness and is therefore marked as not-belonging, as outsider. This construction is challenged when she speaks, both by her manner of speaking (accent) and in what she says (idiom), because her voice indicates a belonging of some sort.

Both Barakah's experience and her strategy of resistance is mirrored by the experiences of 'white' Muslim women in Britain (Franks 2000) and other Muslim women in Australia (Mubarak 1996). As Franks (2000) and Hage (1998) argue, belonging, when it is tied to notions of whiteness and national identity, is contingent and partial for those who are not firmly located at the centre of hegemony. Hage describes this contingency of belonging in terms of a process of accrual of 'national capital' (1998:62). He argues that there are certain factors that individuals can accumulate in order to maximise their belonging to the nation but that these are hierarchal and not fixed. In his analysis, factors such as idiom and accent are not as powerful or as valuable as visual appearance (1998:56-64). Therefore it can be argued that Barakah, despite her 'white' physical features and her 'Australian' accent/idiom, cannot fully belong to the nation because the value of her accrued national capital is far outweighed by her hijab. Hence, Barakah gains capital from her skin colour, physical appearance, accent and speech habits but it can be argued that wearing hijab strips her of much of this capital due to its disavowed status within hegemonic understandings of the nation.

Many of the young women I interviewed spoke about being questioned (often by complete strangers) about their ethnic background with the implication being that they are migrants:

Hanna: People see you and they always say 'Where do you come from?' ... and that's [based on] appearance. For example ... you look Arab, or you might look Greek or you might look Italian but people always ask 'Where do you come from?' ... now what does that mean?

Alia: And so how do you answer that question?

Hanna: I say I'm Lebanese.

Alia: Do you feel the question 'where do you come from' is a telling one though?

Zakiyah: Yeah, yeah ... I think the people who are asking that don't know me, and ... would probably think 'she's from another country, she's not Australian', but when people hear me talk and when they interact with me ... they would be more inclined to think, 'yeah she's Aussie'. So I think there's a differentiation between people who know me well and would go 'yeah, she's Aussie', and then people who don't know me very well or just see the visual appearance [of my hijab].

As has previously been argued, belonging (or being perceived to belong) is contingent, and so for those young women like Barakah and Zakiyah who can claim an Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage, the question 'where do you come from' is more easily deflected than for those women who do not share their ethnic background. For Latifa, Sherene and Naima, women with a non-Anglo-Saxon/Celtic physical appearance, their identities (whether hyphenated or not) as Australians are frequently not accepted by their questioners despite their unmistakably Australian accents. Clearly most interlocutors cannot fathom the idea of an Australian Muslim. In their minds all Muslims are migrants and for a Muslim woman to claim otherwise disrupts their view of the nation.

As stories from participants in the HREOC consultation show, part of the representation of Muslims as recent migrants involves the use of language (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:86). The popular assumption is that they are migrating from countries where English is not a dominant language and therefore they will have difficulties communicating in English now that they are in Australia. Zakiyah expressed her frustrations at being positioned as a non-English speaker (despite it being her only language) by people she meets and speaks to in her daily life:

they expect someone who doesn't speak English very well and someone who is intimidated ... and I'm just like ... I'm not! (Zakiyah)

Barakah, Omayma, Latifa, Naima, and Mariyah echoed Zakiyah's experience, each having been spoken to in a slow and simple manner.

Ien Ang argues that 'racially and ethnically marked people' who live in Australia are often 'extremely (over)sensitive' about the assumption that they do not speak English and/or do not 'come from' Australia (Ang 1996:43). She argues that because these people are aware that questions such as 'Where are you from?' are:

often asked in the context of a denaturalisation of our status as co-inhabitants of this country and the automatic assumption that because we don't fit into the stereotypical image of the typical Australian, we somehow don't (quite) 'belong' here. As a result we anticipate, often correctly, that the (white) person asking us the question would expect the answer to be some distant, alien or exotic land (1996:43).

Ellen spoke explicitly about the positioning of Muslims as migrants, particularly from Asia and the Middle East, and the impact that this positioning has on her as an Indigenous woman who does not yet wear hijab. She said that, given the racist comments she has overheard (often when people speak in her presence they are unaware of either her Indigenous identity or her Muslim identity, or both, and so are less circumspect about the views they espouse), she believes that when many non-Muslim Australians 'think of Muslims they think of Arabs or Indonesians and they think of girls who wear scarves and stuff. And so they're unwilling to accept the idea that someone who looks like me could be a Muslim' (Ellen). It may be argued that the surprise that Ellen's claims to a joint Indigenous-Muslim identity elicits is, in part, the result of perceived opposition between Indigenous and Muslim identities. An identity like Ellen's can often evoke surprise amongst non-Muslim non-Indigenous people because, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, colonisation of countries such as Australia and Aoteroa/New Zealand are based upon dualistic classifications that have their roots in Enlightenment thinking and which are unable to accommodate the realities and complexities of Indigenous people's identities (1999:59-65)¹²⁴.

One of the aspects of the representation of Muslims-as-migrants that Barakah discussed was the belief that there are too many Muslims coming to Australia and are therefore seen as a threat. She said that in her interactions with some non-Muslim Australians there was an attitude that Muslims:

were bringing people in from overseas and that this will encourage other Muslims to come from overseas especially if we start setting up Islamic institutions. It is the Pauline Hanson¹²⁵ attitude of 'They're going to take over' and 'They're going to kick us out'. (Barakah)

¹²⁴ See also Plumwood (1993: 41-68).

¹²⁵ During 1996 a right-wing Federal politician, Pauline Hanson, was elected as a member of the House of Representatives as an Independent but subsequently formed her own party – One Nation. Her policies and attitudes were largely derided as simplistic and racist in that she frequently espoused anti-Asian and anti-Aboriginal views. She claimed to be representing the 'battlers' of Australia by which she meant working-class (or self-employed) white, Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Australians who shared her misgivings regarding immigration, Aboriginal reconciliation and multiculturalism (Hage 1998:240-247). While Pauline Hanson was not re-elected in subsequent Federal elections, her name has become synonymous with attitudes similar to those described by Barakah and members of One Nation continue to hold seats in both the Federal and State parliaments (McLeod & Yates 2003).

Barakah's experience demonstrates that, for some non-Muslim Australians, the fear of being 'swamped' by waves of Muslim immigrants is very real¹²⁶. This fear is compounded by the growing numbers of 'parallel institutions' being set up for, and by, Muslim Australians¹²⁷.

Hage (1998) discusses this attitude in his book *White Nation* in which he argues that those Australians who feel able to talk about the numbers of 'Others' present in the national space see themselves as guardians of such. In their role as guardians of the nation, these usually white, Anglo-Saxon/Celtic, Christians discuss, debate and ultimately pass judgement on the numbers of 'Other' deemed acceptable within 'their' national space (Hage 1998:123-128). Barakah's experiences also demonstrate that racist attitudes towards the 'Other' are not new. What is new, however, according to Hage (1998) is the extent to which Muslims, in recent years, have been positioned as Australia's most dangerous 'Other', the 'Other' most in need of 'managing' by the 'guardians of the nation'.

Naima told the tale of her recent experiences with a group of white Australians at a popular beach near Adelaide:

One time we went to Glenelg and we were driving down into a car park but it was at the end of a one-way street. There were no other cars so we quickly drove (the wrong way) down the street into the car park. There were a bunch of Australian people who didn't look very nice and they started making comments like 'Oi it's a one-way street', and, 'We're Australians so we're allowed to daydream'. They said a lot of other stuff – basically how we had no right to break road rules but they can because they're Australian. It was just strange and stupid. (Naima)

Naima's narrative highlights the unspoken assumptions of whiteness, national identity and 'governmental belonging' (Hage 1998), as well as the ways in which these operate to subordinate Muslim Australians through religious racism. Naima acknowledges the illegality of her (and her female Muslim companions') actions in driving against the flow of traffic in a one-way street but it is the responses of the (white) Australians that are indicative of issues deeper and more complex

¹²⁶ To be afraid of a 'people' indicates the belief that these people have the capacity to inflict harm. In the case of Muslims this 'harm' would be in the form of terrorism and religious zealotry whereas, for example, Asian Australians are often feared for economic reasons as they are popularly represented as being astute business people with the capacity to destroy the financial security of 'ordinary Australians' (Hage 1998:210-218; McLeod and Yates 2003).

¹²⁷ Recently a number of private Muslim schools have opened in Australia as well as an Islamic financial institution that is run according to Islamic financial principles (Saeed 2001, 2003). A Muslim women's refuge for victims of domestic violence in Sydney has been in operation since the 1990s. Plans are also underway for a private Muslim hospital and an aged care facility to open within the next decade. Such institutions have become financially viable due to the increasing numbers of Muslim identifying Australians.

than South Australian road rules. Both Naima and the group of people in the carpark identified the latter group as 'Australian' (belonging and having a claim of ownership to Australia, Glenelg and the one-way street) and Naima and her friends as 'not-Australian' (not belonging and having no claims of ownership). The assumption that the hijab-wearing Muslim women were not Australian is grounded in popular understandings of Muslims-as-migrants and as always Other to the imagined white Australian identity. However, these assumptions have another implication in this narrative (which is a narrative of whiteness and national belonging as much as it is about religious racism): that white Australian citizens have the 'right' to pass judgement on what is illegal and what is legal. They are policing this space and judging which deviations are acceptable and which are not¹²⁸. On the surface, the white Australians in this narrative are judging the driving of Naima and her friends to be illegal but at a deeper level they are judging their *presence* to be illegal. Through shouting abuse at Naima and her friends, they are claiming Glenelg, the carpark, the one-way street and Australia to be *their* space over which they have jurisdiction. In their view of *their* space, the presence of the young Muslim women is unwelcome and unwanted. In their understanding of belonging and ownership, the perpetrators of this violence felt that they also have jurisdiction over the minds and thought processes of Naima and her friends when they told them that they had no right to 'daydream'.

In the narratives of identity that the young women told me, tensions they identified, are not within the minds of the Muslim women I spoke to, but rather, they are evident in the way some non-Muslim, particularly white Australians, perceive the women's identity. As is clear from the interviews, these Muslim women are clear and un-conflicted about what their identity is and how to articulate it in its different forms. For many of the women, their religious identity was the most important – all other identities were built around it and subordinated to it. They also told stories which showed that their choice to privilege religion and religious communities has meant that they are seen as 'traitors to Australia'. Thus being 'Muslim' and 'Australian' are seen as an impossible contradiction which is unsurprising given media coverage of Muslims as 'terrorists'.

¹²⁸In popular Australian culture such 'minor' lawbreaking is often seen as a sign of larrikinism – harmless rejection of authority and public officiousness which is viewed with indulgence and often greeted with wry and affectionate smiles from bystanders (Ward 1958). However, this narrative suggests that Muslim women are not Australian because only those who 'belong' are allowed to break/bend the law and only those who 'belong' are given latitude whereas 'outsiders' have to strictly conform to spoken and unspoken rules.

Ellen clearly articulates these issues:

Alia: So do you think that your allegiances to Islam and to other Muslims makes some people think of you as a traitor to Australia?

Ellen: Yeah of course. Because the thing with Islam is that because its people are from a whole bunch of different countries and I think that's something that scares western people because it's not something they can define. It's like people all around the world who have something in common and that most Muslims would choose [to stand with] Muslims from other countries over something else like national allegiances and I think that bothers some people. I think a lot of Muslims don't talk about this because non-Muslims would get really peeved if they knew that most Muslims felt that way – that they'd choose Islam over their country. In a way it would prove to them that we're not worthy to be Australians.

Ellen was not alone in her analysis, as both Mariyah and Naima also expressed similar views. This understanding was also reflected in Stephenson's research with Indigenous Australian Muslims (Stephenson 2004a & b). While none of the young women in the study believed that they were 'traitors' to Australia, on the contrary many expressed a deep sense of connection to Australia, their sense that their allegiances to Islam and a transnational Muslim community made them targets of suspicion from non-Muslim Australians points to the ambivalence with which Muslims in Australia are regarded. Indeed, while many people with religious affiliations would privilege their allegiance to their religion and religious community above nationalistic interests, the lack of suspicion with which other religious groups are treated indicates that Muslims are seen as particularly capable of treasonous conduct. Given the normative construction of Australia as a Christian nation, as previously outlined, it is only religious groups who are placed in opposition to Christianity (and hence also the nation) who are called upon to 'prove' their unwavering commitment to the Australian nation. In the current climate, it is Muslims who are called upon most frequently to prove their loyalty to the nation or viewed with suspicion when such calls are rejected.

Many of the women understood that there is a significant difference between notions of personal nation-based identity (*feeling* Australian) and national identity (the broader context). For these women, identifying oneself within a nation/ality was largely unproblematic with regards to their own articulation and self-identity. However, issues arose when these identities were examined in the light of broader social understandings of national identity, especially Australian national identity. In particular, while they may self-identify as Australian, the women felt that they do not figure in the

broader concept of Australian national identity. Naima touched upon this when she attempted to explain who she meant by the term 'Australians' and how these people were different from herself (while she also identified as having an Australian identity):

Naima: Blonde hair, blue eyes kind of thing.

Alia: So is being Australian about being white?

Naima: Yeah, because a lot of people say their own nationality first if they have another nationality apart from being Australian. I mean, if they're someone with Greek background then they'll say 'Greek', or 'Italian' if they're Italian, or 'Afghan' if they're Afghan.

Alia: But the only people who don't do that are ... who?

Naima: Basically white Australians.

For her, only those who never felt obliged to, or were asked to, hyphenate or qualify their ethnic/national identity, were white people of Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Christian heritage who had Australian accents and citizenship (Hage 1998). These are the people most fully recognised by the term 'Australian' and who can most easily and clearly see themselves reflected through the paradigm of Australian national identity.

For many of the Muslim women, the *feeling* of Australianness was apparent. They described themselves as Australian, spoke with Australian accents, in Australian idiom. They'd been born in Australia or made it their home. They felt a connection to the nation and yet they still did not *belong*. They could not *be* Australian and were not perceived to even *feel* Australian by some of those they interacted with. This is because, using Hage's work, the majority group in society ('guardians of the nation') believe that you can neither *feel* nor *be* (personal identity as patriot) Australian if you do not conform to particular normative conceptualisations of what it means to *feel* or *be* Australian¹²⁹. Thus it may be possible for some Muslim women to *feel* Australian but in the broader narrative (of national identity that is gained through acceptance by the non-Muslim state) it is not possible for them to *be* Australian. Thus, *being* Australian is, to a large degree, moderated externally. One has to be accepted and validated by others to actually *be* Australian. In the narratives told by the women in this study, such acceptance and validation is nowhere evident.

However, it is important not to lose sight of the agency that these Muslim women have in constructing their own identities and for creating spaces which validate their own sense of themselves and their communities. While this chapter has presented arguments that suggest the

¹²⁹ I thank Damien Riggs for his comments and assistance here.

futility and impossibility for Muslim women to fully belong to the nation this argument is troubled, unsettled, disrupted by the women's narratives that suggest that the categories 'Australian' (as non-white and Christian) and 'Muslim' (not Australian and non-white) are less discrete than they have been traditionally been constructed. Indeed, to use Michael Humphrey's term, there has been an increasing sense that an 'Australian Islam' (2001) for Australian Muslims is being constructed in Muslim communities in Australia. He argues that in post-modernity/late-modernity, in multicultural societies such as Australia, essentialisations that place categories such as 'Australian' in direct opposition to categories such as 'Muslim' deny the permeability and plurality of identity constructions: 'neither are anchored territorially and are fluid in multicultural contexts. In Australia, nationalism and Islam share this reality' (2001:33-34). Thus, for the women in this thesis who have articulated a sense of national identity that is closely aligned with their identity as a Muslim are articulating an acknowledgment that national identity, culture and religion can (and do) interact in complex ways but that Australianness is not always or necessarily placed in opposition to Muslimness. Indeed, in a global context in which these women are constantly having their claims of belonging denied or denigrated it is important for them that the complexities of their identity are recognised in order to counteract hegemonic constructions of their identity that deny them this complexity. Consequently, while it is true that the hegemonic white Anglo-Saxon/Celtic Christian view of the nation does not always include or accept these women's belonging, many of the women have constructed a view of the nation in which they *do* belong, thus making it possible for women like Barakah, Zakiyah and Latifa to say 'I'm a Muslim Australian'.

Australia – a Christian nation?

Naima also felt that part of the reason why Muslims were seen to be, and consistently remained, on the margins of Australian society and identity was because 'we won't assimilate. We won't change our religion and you know, we shouldn't have to'. Part of this may be because of the underlying and unacknowledged role that Christianity plays within contemporary Australia. As has been discussed, for the women in this study, being a Muslim in Australia is fraught with dangers and potential crises. One of the causes of this is the apparent incommensurability between Islam/Muslimness and Australian national identity. As has been argued elsewhere, Australia is a nation with a Christian

¹³⁰ This has connections to the debate that has been occurring in Britain and other European countries about whether there are distinctly different ways of being Muslim that are inflected with regional or national variations (Joly 1995; Nonneman, Niblock et al. 1996; Rath, Pennix, Groenendijk and Meyer 1999; Ahmad 2001; Ansari 2002; Karic 2002; Modood 2003). Of particular importance to this debate is Tariq Ramadan's influential book *To Be a European Muslim* (Ramadan 1998).

foundation, heritage and tradition despite its claims to secularism (Pike 1957; Phillips 1981; Imtoul 2004; Maddox 2004; Phillips 2005; Randell-Moon 2005). The women in this study were very astute in their analyses of the role that Christianity plays in Australian society. As Barakah said:

it's a majority Christian society. I mean, a lot of Christians don't practice, they don't go to church but still ... for the more 'white' part of society there are a lot of Christian aspects. For example, the governments often push a particular line which really is coming from a religious point of view but they say it's just 'culture'.

Barakah's comments highlight the links between Christianity and whiteness (Dyer 1997). Her comments also draw links between the discourses of 'morality' and 'rightness' and Christianity, particularly in decisions made by Australian governments. Ellen also expressed this concern when she discussed the tendency of public (often political) figures to deploy Christianity in public discussions on a range of issues.

When you watch TV, they celebrate Christmas, they don't celebrate Chinese New Year, they don't celebrate Ramadan. And on the news it's always, 'in such and such a church they are celebrating Christmas in these ways' ... And anytime there's a moral decision to be made they go to the churches for a statement – for anything legal or moral or whatever – they often get the bishop of something or other to comment and ... what's so important that his statement means more than anyone else's? This just goes to show that they base a lot of things on Christianity. (Ellen)

Australia is a Christian country but many individual Australians, although they may describe themselves as Christian, are not practising or religious. However, this lack of religiosity does not detract from the inherent Christianness of Australian society. For Zakiyah, the level of implicitness and inherentness of Christianity is clearly demonstrated when Christmas time arrives and there is a sense of incredulity that certain Australians (in this case, Muslims) would choose not to celebrate Christmas:

Australia is secular but it's still predominantly Christian. Most people are more secular because they're not fully practising but they still say they're Christian. I think it's institutionalised religion that has become less important in people's lives ... On a societal level Christianity is the predominant religion here and it's subtle. I think that it's the accepted perspective ... when Christmas arrives everyone asks 'What did you do for Christmas?' and it's unknown to them that you don't have Christmas or celebrate it! (Zakiyah)

For Mariyah, the embeddedness of Christianity is revealed at times of public momentousness when Churches are called upon to lead public displays of mourning, prayer, or celebration: 'every time something (major) happens, you always see images of the Prime Minister in a church or in a mass or something' (Mariyah).

Ultimately, these young Muslim women see Australia as a Christian nation populated largely by Christians, both religious and non-practising, as the following comments show:

(Australia is) obviously Christian ... even if people don't know it they are still influenced by it. I think that it's become less and less of an actively religious thing but a lot of their practices stem from Christianity. (Naima)

A lot of people don't practise Christianity but they still celebrate Christmas and Easter and they'll still call themselves Christian. (Omayma)

Thus, these young Muslim women are articulating what T.A Howard argues:

Secularization is conceived as the transportation of beliefs and patterns of behaviour from the 'religious' to the 'secular' sphere ... the culmination of this kind of secularisation process would be totally anthropologized religion and a society which had taken over all the functions previously attaching to the religious institutions (Howard 2000:20).

It is this discourse that allows hegemonic understandings of Australian society to remove any reference to religion while simultaneously participating in activities and modes of thought that are fundamentally located in Christian religious origins.

In a narrative that revealed much about the 'place' of Muslims in Australia, Barakah told the story of how she was denied an education at one of Australia's most prestigious all-girl's schools, 'Sandstone Ladies College' (not its real name). Her mother had attended this school for the duration of her school days and, in the tradition of the school, enrolled her eldest daughter at the school as soon as she was old enough. When Barakah's mother (a 'respected member of the old scholar's community' (Barakah)) took her to meet the principal and discuss certain religious requirements:

they didn't accept me (as a student) because Mum said, 'When she gets older she needs a room to pray and the male teachers can't be around when she's swimming'. And they said, 'Look, there are too many demands. She can't wear that thing on her head with a school hat! It just doesn't work – you're going to have to look for another school'. And Mum said, 'Okay, I'll look for another school – maybe I'll just start my own!'. They said to her, 'Yes ... well you can try!'

In previous research I conducted in South Australia, stories such as the following told by one young Muslim woman, Shakira¹³¹, bear striking similarities to Barakah's story which is about a school in another state:

When I actually started wearing *hijab* I went to the principal and said 'is it gonna be okay?' and she's like 'yeah that's fine as long as it goes with the school uniform'. So we organised that I'd either wear cream or brown 'cos my uniform was brown. So I was the only girl in the whole school who was wearing *hijab* at the time and my school was from reception to year 13 ... um ... so we had this whole school photo and we got it back and what they'd actually done to my photo was, like ... they'd air-brushed it out so it looked like I just had brown hair like they'd sort of coloured my *hijab* in brown so I wouldn't stand out! So I was really, like ... upset, and I just went to the, principal and I just sort of went off at her saying 'how would you feel if someone did that to your hair?' And she said 'oh well, we did it because we didn't think you'd want to stand out so much'. Then she started trying to blame it on the photographer and ... I just said 'You're just doing it 'cos you don't want, you know, to be seen as a Christian school with a Muslim girl in it' (Imtoul 2002:42).

While it is true that Sandstone Ladies College, as a private, Christian denominational school was acting within its rights to refuse Barakah entry, the rudeness and disrespect shown to Barakah and her mother offers another dimension to the story. As Franks argues, 'white' Muslim women who begin wearing *hijab* often 'meet with hostility' (2000:918) because they are viewed as having betrayed white, middleclass Christianity (2000:923)¹³². Although Franks suggests that only 'white supremacists' would view these women as 'race-traitors' (2000:923), the work of Hage (1998), Lygo (2004), and Perera (2000) provide arguments that there is a deep emotional, cultural and social investment in white Christianity that can lead to a feeling of being threatened when faced with any transgression of the boundaries of whiteness (most potently indicated by a *hijab*). To reject Christianity, which is at the core of Australian whiteness, is to reject one of the most fundamental aspects of white Australian identity and belonging and those who do so, such as Barakah's mother, can expect to be treated harshly. As Hage argues, the power of whiteness lies in the fact that it is not only white supremacists who work to protect its boundaries and who

¹³¹ Shakira's mother gave her version of this same incident in the HREOC report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2004:86).

¹³² Not only was Barakah's mother treated with hostility and anger, but she was also the focus of a great deal of puzzlement. Her schoolmates could not understand why someone would choose to become a Muslim and dress in such a 'different' way. While this puzzlement indicates the centrality of Christianity in Australian society, it may also indicate a certain *laissez-faire* attitude towards religion in that anyone who strongly identifies with religion (of any variety) is 'other' in the Australian context (Costello June 1, 2004) (this is also, arguably, the case in Britain (Weller, Feldman et al. 2001:15)).

subsequently may resent what they see as its erosion by people such as Barakah's mother (Hage 1998), but also by 'ordinary' people such as those in charge of Sandstone Ladies College.

It may also be argued that more excluding than Australians' individual Christian identities, is the long term and deep-seated sedimentation of a value system, holiday calendar, and codes of social operation based on Christianity. As a result, being a practising non-Christian (for example, Muslim) is being non-Australian while being a practising Christian is acceptable, provided that one is a member of a major denomination (Catholic, Anglican, or, Uniting) and not a member of a minority, often evangelistic sect of Christianity (Christadelphian, Pentecostal, Assemblies of God Church) which are, like Muslims, labelled 'fundamentalist', 'extremist' and 'fanatical' (Maddox 2004). However, the key difference between these versions of religious othering is that Muslims are not only seen as fundamentalists but also as violent, militant terrorists who are a threat to 'life as we know it' as previous chapters canvassed. Minority, evangelical Christian groups are derided as 'loony' but harmless.

Belonging?: Rethinking Gender, Religion and National Identity

Returning now to the postcard of the beautiful young Muslim women, it is painfully clear that the word 'australians' does not apply to them. Although they may *feel* Australian and wish to be *seen* as Australian, they cannot *be* Australian on the terms set by white non-Muslim Australia. While I recognise the motivation of AAR's campaign was to reduce the racism and othering that Muslims in Australia experience by deploying a discourse of 'sameness', taking a photograph of two young women who wear hijab and inscribing across their bodies the word 'australians' simply draws attention to, and reinforces, their otherness.

If 'religion is not the only label they wear' (as AAR asserts), then the only other label is gender. They are described in gendered terms as 'sisters' and 'daughters'. Their visual presentation is also a highly gendered representation. As I commented earlier in the chapter, their looks conform to a dominant understanding of conventional beauty: clear skin, white skin, even white teeth, glossy lips, plucked eyebrows. Even their hijabs can fit into this paradigm: the fabric is embroidered which gives it a feminine texture and it is draped in aesthetically pleasing folds that frame the women's smiling faces. These women are posed in a highly feminised manner with their heads canted slightly, smiling at the camera and they are cuddled close and passively inviting the viewer's gaze.

This presentation encourages the viewer to like these women, to view them as 'girly', cute and harmless.

Their portrayal brings to mind Ang's analysis of an 'Asian' woman in an Australian multiculturalism poster. She argues that this woman symbolised a non-threatening, feminised, desirable 'other' who can successfully be integrated into the Australian family (Ang 1996)¹³³. However, Ang argues that this image is ambivalent because the woman is still the embodiment of the other that 'might be precisely a sign that 'Asians', no matter how desired, can still *not quite* be imagined as integral to the national self' (1996:47).

Similarly, AAR's postcard may reinforce dominant understandings of Muslims as being located outside the Australian family even as the postcard is a way of trying to include them. By describing the two young women as 'Australians' this postcard is challenging hegemonic understandings of belonging by refusing to accept the non-Australian/migrant status so often conferred on Muslim women by white, non-Muslim Australia. By acknowledging that there are alternative ways of belonging to the nation, ways which can and do include Muslims, the postcard acknowledges that belonging can be generated in direct conflict with the majority group who attempts to control and withhold belonging. Such a reading of this postcard also allows for analysis of some of the anxieties and insecurities of white Australia.

¹³³ I would argue, like Ang does, that the message of inclusion into the Australian family would not be as strong if the person in the image was a man who was bearded or in Islamic clothing. Even if he were smiling, the overwhelming connection to negative representations of bearded Muslim men would eliminate the possibility of seeing this man as non-threatening.

As the hegemonic nation works extremely hard to ensure that national belonging is done on its terms, the Muslim women who resist this form of belonging, demonstrate its futility and impossibility as a national project¹³⁴. Furthermore, their challenges to this hegemonic national belonging draw attention to issues of Indigenous sovereignty and Australia's status as a 'settler' nation, peopled by migrants on land stolen from Indigenous peoples. It can be argued that white Australia attempts to deny Muslim people belonging in order to assert and maintain its own right to belong irrespective of its non-Indigenous status. No wonder, then, that Indigenous people who also identify as Muslim, such as Ellen, are viewed with confusion, suspicion and bewilderment by white Christian Australia. They are double-troubling the dominant view of the nation which sees two binaries with regards to identity: Australian (white) vs. Indigenous and Australian (Christian) vs. Muslim. Within these specific formulations there is no room for someone to hold an Indigenous Muslim Australian identity (or indeed claim to be a Muslim Australian). Yet, as the Muslim women with whom I spoke demonstrate, the white Australian nation does not hold control over definitions of belonging as tightly as it may wish, and thus there continues to be spaces for Muslim women to define belonging *on their own terms*.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that identity is primarily constructed around a number of key markers such as religion, nationality, ethnicity and culture. For most of these women, religion assumed a primary importance in their self-identity. These women construct religion as distinct and different to culture. Culture is seen as an expression of ethnicity and nationality, whereas religion is an expression of faith. This formation of identity differs quite significantly from dominant understandings of identity in

¹³⁴ While this thesis argues that there has been little public discussion of, or space for the articulation of, the identity of Muslims in Australia, it needs to be pointed out that since the July 2005 suicide bombings on the London transport system, the political and media response has, in part, been to encourage some public exploration of this. Prominent public lawyer, activist, community leader, writer and young Australian Muslim, Waleed Aly has been given an unusual amount of column space in which to engage with debates about issues affecting Muslims in Australia (particularly his home state of Victoria), including issues of identity, in the *Age* newspaper over the past year. The ABC Compass program *Islam on Parade* (ABC TV, 16 October 2005) focused on Waleed Aly and his wife Susan Carland, and their friends, who are all young Muslim Australians, and their attempts to articulate their sense of identity in mainstream Australia. In September 2005 Prime Minister John Howard held a summit with fourteen government selected Muslim community leaders and members to discuss anti-terrorism measures and the role that the Muslim community has in the process. While this summit was frequently derided in public commentary as a 'meaningless talk fest', it did provide a public, political forum, albeit highly structured and constrained, in which members of the Muslim community were able to present an alternative identity from common and hegemonic positionings. Indeed, the summit provided one of the participants, Iktimal Hage-Ali, with a springboard into public commentary on issues affecting young Australian Muslims (see, for example, *The Age* 'Intolerance on display in headscarf row', 30 August 2005:15; *The Daily Telegraph* 'A land of mateship, but being a young Arab is hard', 29 August 2005:21). These examples indicate that other young Australian Muslims are asserting a unique identity which although it privileges their religious affiliation, is inextricably linked to their simultaneous position as Australians, and that their understanding of what it means to be Australian is very different to hegemonic constructions of that concept. These examples also indicate that there have been particular individuals and particular moments in which such an alternative identity can be heard in the public sphere, particularly, the media. However, these examples are few and none of them involve Muslim women from South Australia.

which religious identity is subsumed by cultural identity. This chapter argued that, despite young Muslim women being largely absent from hegemonic constructs of the nation, the women refute this absence, and, through their resistance, ensure a certain degree of national belonging, although it may not resemble hegemonic national belonging.

In many studies, the lives of young Muslim women are analysed through the prism of 'two cultures' and the findings report either a clash of these two cultures or celebrate young women who are able to 'straddle' both 'cultures' (Knott & Khokher 1993; Shain 2003). This paradigm is inappropriate for this thesis however in the light of the women's definitions of religion and culture. The difficulties these women face cannot be regarded as a 'clash of cultures'. The tensions are, instead, produced in the intersection between the women's own identity formations and white Australia's understandings and constructions of Muslim women.

Conclusion

Reviewing the Thesis: Key Contributions

This thesis adds to the existing, albeit very small, body of knowledge about Muslims in Australia, and to the even smaller body of knowledge about Muslim women in Australia. Of primary importance in this area are the ways in which this thesis allows for a new understanding of the identity formations of young Muslim women who locate themselves within a majority non-Muslim nation such as Australia. It argues that, as most of these women place their religion at the centre of their identity formation, they do not figure in hegemonic constructions of national identity. However, this thesis argues that the women find ways to challenge their exclusion and to construct their own sense of national belonging, one which does not centre around ideas of whiteness and which encompasses all aspects of their identities such as religion, gender, ethnic heritage and community.

This thesis presents original theorisations on the nature of racism – in particular, how racism can be theorised with regards to the intersections with religion by offering a new theorisation of ‘racism’ which covers the discrimination, hostility and marginalisation experienced on the basis of religious affiliation – religious racism. After arguing that terms such as ‘prejudice’, ‘discrimination’ or ‘islamophobia’ do not appropriately address the full range of hostility and marginalisation experienced by Muslims, this thesis addresses the two major deficiencies of these terms. The first is the overly psychological or individualised nature of the terms ‘islamophobia’ and ‘prejudice’. Other definitions like ‘racial discrimination’, while they identify structural disadvantage, do not identify discrimination on the basis of religion. Hence, this thesis argues for the use of the term ‘religious racism’ as a way of identifying both individualised expressions of hostility and also structural disadvantage or discrimination, on the basis of religious affiliation.

Throughout the thesis numerous examples are presented to support such terminology: incidents such as Barakah’s exclusion from Sandstone Ladies College based on her religious affiliation, the newspaper photographer who asked Zakiyah to cover her face for a photo-op because it conformed to stereotypical imagery, assumptions that Ellen only became a Muslim because she was coerced by a (non-existent) Muslim boyfriend, Kulthum being abused on the street as a bomb-carrying terrorist, Buckingham High’s refusal to provide appropriate prayer space for Muslim

students, Shakira's experience of having her hijab airbrushed out of a group school photograph, and Amina's fears of not gaining employment if she wears hijab, all support the definition of religious racism utilised throughout this thesis. The term 'religious racism' recognises not only the differing forms and practices associated with such experiences, but encompasses and acknowledges them. This terminology encompasses material disadvantage such as the refusal of employment or education, the individualised interpersonal interactions such as verbal abuse or physical harassment, the underlying discourses and attitudes that motivate such behaviour and which may be manifested in more subtle ways such as in media representations, while also recognising the specific manifestation of racism when it targets religious affiliation.

In addition, this thesis presents an in-depth snapshot of print media representations of Muslims in two mainstream Australian newspapers, the *Australian* and the *Advertiser*. The analysis of these newspapers spanned a two-month period of 2003 and argues that the overwhelming portrayal of Muslims and Islam in these newspapers is negative and hostile. This thesis reiterates the argument that such consistent, persistent and dominant representations of Muslims can be implicated in the increasing levels of hostility experienced in the lived daily realities of young Muslim women in South Australia. It argues that as with studies conducted in other contexts, the Australian news media can be considered culpable and complicit in the (re)production of racism. This thesis argues that until the racist discourses and practices are addressed by the media industry, there is little hope that representations of Muslims will improve. Hence, Muslims in the community can expect high levels of religious racism to continue.

In the analysis of the print media representations, the images available for analysis were characterised by a portrayal of Muslim womanhood as either subordinated, oppressed and subjugated to aggressive, violent and 'hyper' Muslim masculinity, or unnatural and violent. By far, the most popular and common representation of Muslim women portrayed them as the former, dressed in black, heavily veiled, divided from and subordinated to Muslim men. However, the image of the gun-toting Iranian women and representations of Chechen female suicide bombers are portrayals of a more assertive but 'disordered' view of Muslim women. This is a portrayal which demonises them as contravening dominant understandings of hegemonic femininity – calm, pleasant, gentle, caring, non-violent, maternal. Women who take up arms for a cause can be read as either patriotic, positively assertive, role-models for gender equality, or, as 'unnatural' women. Given the long and overwhelming history of portraying Muslims and Islam in a negative way, it is no

coincidence that the few portrayals of armed Muslim women are not presented in a positive light, but rather, take up the discourse of 'unnatural women'. While most newspaper representations of Muslims and particularly Muslim women were striking in their overwhelming negativity, this thesis includes a discussion of a few representations that could be seen as positive. This discussion argues that the underlying discourses of the individual articles, their brevity, and the overwhelming negative media context means that these representations can only be seen, at best, as ambivalent.

The women in my study argued that their lives were at odds with these widespread representations of Muslim women. In particular they spoke about the incompatibility between popular representations of Muslim women as being subordinated, uneducated, oppressed and the victim of aggressive Muslim masculinity and their lived realities in which they largely felt empowered, educated and as having considerable agency over their own lives. The participants discussed the implications such negative perceptions of the intersections of Islam and gender have on their own lives. The disparity between dominant representations of Muslim women, and the realities of their daily lives, was a source of immense frustration to the women in this study as they felt that regardless of how they lived their lives, many non-Muslim Australians and the media insisted on positioning them in negative and inaccurate ways.

This thesis also offers one of the few comprehensive discussions of current Australian, and South Australian, anti-racism/discrimination/vilification legislation available. It argues that under existing State and Commonwealth legislation Muslims in South Australia remain unprotected from religious racism because religion is not recognised as a significant, or independent, factor in incidents of racism. The participants in this study raised their lack of legislative protection as something they were concerned about. This thesis argues that the lack of legal recourse adds to the significant distress and impact that Muslims experience after being the target of religious racism. Having included an in-depth analysis of three relevant pieces of legislation, the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975), the Commonwealth *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act* (1986), and the South Australian *Racial Vilification Act* (1996), this thesis categorically argues that Muslims in South Australia are unprotected if they feel that they have been 'discriminated' against, 'vilified' or in any way harmed or disadvantaged on the basis of their religious identification. Religion is not recognised as a separate marker of identity, or as a potential fulcrum of racist oppression. As the participants in this thesis, as well as participants in HREOC's 2003 *E-race forum on Islamophobia*, argue, tautological arguments for the inclusion of religious affiliation under

the definition of ethnicity are inappropriate and would be ultimately ineffectual in preventing or punishing acts of religious racism. For these Muslims, Islam is a way of life that, although it may be strongly connected to, or associated with, particular racial, ethnic or national communities, is not solely or exclusively connected to these groups. That is, Islam is not the sole spiritual property of any one ethnic or national group. The participants in both studies expressed the attitude that such a definition sets up a rigid and exclusive category of those who can be defined as Muslims (and those who cannot) and therefore it defines who is eligible to take legislative recourse if they feel that they have been the target of religious racism.

This thesis argues that the continuing lack of legislative recognition of religious racism means that there will be a continued under reporting of racism, particularly in South Australia, against Muslims (and those who claim other 'minority' religious affiliations). Like HREOC, it recognises that there is a discrepancy between the numbers of formal complaints of racism and the lived experiences of Muslims and argues that until there is legislative change that recognises the specificities of religious racism, such incidents will continue to be under reported. The continuing refusal to recognise, in legislation, the racism experienced by Muslims is, in part, a result of the continuing unacknowledged centrality of Christianity in the South Australian public context.

In other ways, as well this thesis provides a re-evaluation and re-appraisal of the status of Australian society as one that is 'secular'. It offers evidence that argues that Australia is, in fact, a Christian nation with a Christian heritage – a status which has immediate and identifiable implications for the lives of the women involved in this study. In the course of writing this thesis I have had the opportunity to share my ideas with colleagues around Australia and overseas. While my research has always been received with interest and approval I have detected a sense of resistance and ambivalence towards my argument that Australia is inherently a Christian nation. People have often countered my argument by reiterating the mantra 'Australia is a secular society' and by that they mean that religion plays no part in contemporary Australia. Sometimes they have cited ABS Census data which suggests that Christian affiliation has declined over recent decades as 'proof' that Christianity no longer holds sway in Australian society. While it is true that the numbers have declined, it is also true that over 67% of Australians still actively identified themselves as Christian in 2001. However, my thesis argues that the power and influence of Christianity in Australian society is not just a 'numbers game'. As Maddox argues, despite the numbers, 'religion [i.e. Christianity] is still welcome in [Australia] but mainly as something we

approve of for others, rather than participate in ourselves' (Maddox 2005:142). And it is this very notion that 'religion is for others' that makes my arguments discomfoting for some colleagues. For as long as hegemonic Australia '[thinks] of ourselves as a nation founded on Christian 'values', and [thinks] of religion as a good thing for political leaders to have' (Maddox 2005:142), Australia will remain deeply influenced by an institutionalised form of Christianity which lacks the compassion and commitment to anti-racism that often accompanies a more active religious practice.

It is this connection, and simultaneous ambivalence, to Christianity amongst many Australians that provides room for Conservative politicians like John Howard to utilise the language of Christianity to demonise (among others, Muslims) because 'firm in our belief in our own reasonableness, benevolence and commonsense, most of us may have few resources to resist frightening stereotypes' (2005:143) or the willingness to recognise (and reject) the way in which Christianity is being used to subordinate and marginalise others. As Maddox so eloquently puts it 'Whatever it is he [John Howard] encourages us to feel, it can't possibly be racism, because (he reassures us) the relaxed and comfortable mainstream aren't that kind of people' (Maddox 2005:143). Thus, the myth is continued, Australia is a secular nation and Australians are not racist. To challenge either of these ideas is to challenge the foundational narratives of the nation. This thesis does both.

This thesis offers a number of arguments which challenge existing understandings or theorisations in a number of areas, with particular reference to the lives of the Muslim women in this study. Almost all the women (with the possible exception of Ellen) articulated a primary identity based on their religious affiliation. Many contemporary texts discuss identity as shifting, fluid, partial and fragmented. Theorists who write on identity issues such as Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah, as well as many others whose theorisations about identity are more closely grounded in participants' lives, argue that identity is not essentialised, fixed or coherent. They argue that it changes form, shape and name depending on historical and social context. These arguments, while appropriate for many studies, do not accurately reflect the lives, experiences and articulations of the young Muslim women in this South Australian research. For these women, they are always a Muslim first and foremost, although they do recognise and articulate other aspects of their identity such as their ethnicity, race, and nationality. For them, context is irrelevant with regards to their primary identity as a Muslim. Context is important when they decide which other aspect of their identity to privilege. For instance, many of the women spoke about the relative importance of their ethnic communities in their lives, although others suggested that these communities were not highly significant in their

lives. For many of them, these communities were the context in which they privileged their ethnic identity above all their other identities apart from their paramount religious identity. Thus to Hall's notion of fluid identities should be added the example of identities in which one aspect is central although other aspects might be fluid and context-dependent around that core aspect of identity.

For these women, religion was conceptualised as different from 'culture' (which was seen as relating to ethnicity and national heritage). In their articulations of their sense of identity, these women rejected the idea that they experienced a 'clash of cultures'. Many previous studies of the lives of young Muslim women have constructed them as 'suffering' from anxiety and oppression as a result of living 'between' Islam and 'western' culture. In articulating both a strong religious identity and strong ideas about their place in Australian national identity, the women in my study experienced neither a sense of 'in-betweenness' nor a sense that they had to 'choose' between their identification with Islam and their identification with Australia. Indeed, much of the anxiety that these women suffered came as a result of their identification with both Islam and Australian national identity, given that they experienced such persistent everyday rejections by mainstream Australian society.

Future Directions

Over the past few years there have been a number of global incidents and issues which have brought Muslims and Muslim communities around the world into the spotlight. Australia, with its increasing population of Muslim communities, like a number of other majority non-Muslim countries with growing numbers of Muslims, has become increasingly interested in all things connected to Islam and Muslims. However, much of this interest appears, unfortunately, to be readily co-opted into a regime of surveillance and control.

While Australia lags behind countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, France and the United States, the number of academics conducting research that relates to Australian Muslim communities has expanded dramatically over the last few years, although they are still comparatively few in number. Universities such as Melbourne University, Monash University, the University of New England, the University of Western Sydney, as well as the University of Western Australia and the University of Queensland, all have staff conducting research relating to Islam/Muslims across a wide range of disciplines. A number of these universities have also recently

begun offering degree programs or topics with a focus on Islam and/or Muslims. However, the Australian research in this field appears to be dominated by either historical (for example, the University of Queensland's development of a discipline of Islamic Studies within the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics) or theological research (for example, Melbourne University's research institute The Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam). Where the research is located in a non-theological and non-historical framework, it is dominated by region-based studies (e.g. Islam and Muslims in Indonesia) or ethnicity-focused (e.g. experiences of Lebanese youth in Sydney). While all this research is valuable, there still remains a space for contemporary, Australian-based sociological research which relates to the lived experiences of Muslims. For example, further research into the ways in which specific sub-groups of Muslims (Muslim men, older women, children) experience religious racism, representations of Muslims on Australian popular television, representations of Muslims in Australian popular fiction, experiences of white Australians who become Muslims, ways in which Muslims experience the criminal justice system (both as victims and as perpetrators). The possibilities are almost endless.

More specifically my research in this thesis raises a number of questions and avenues for further research. In particular, having outlined the pervasiveness and relentlessness of negative representations of Muslims and Islam in the print media, it would be valuable to conduct research with non-Muslim media workers which endeavours to show how these workers reproduce dominant discourses in the media, and if they ever question them. This is especially pertinent, given both the development of 'critical' and self-reflexive media practices taught in most media degrees and the common argument given by media workers that they don't make the news, they merely report it – this latter point demonstrating that they have not learned any self-reflexive practices in their media degrees after all.

Another avenue of future research is to theorise the potential for Australia to move from being a secularised Christian society to one which is 'multi-faith'. Is this a possibility, and if so, what would this society look like? In taking up a less theoretical approach to further research, it would be valuable to investigate the possibility of developing changes to the various pieces of anti-racism legislation in order to protect Muslims (and other minority religious groups). The feasibility and practicality of developing legislation to target religious racism across all Australian states and territories is both a practical and timely one for the Australian community. Similarly, research into

the lives and experiences of Muslim women around Australia, not just in South Australia, would contribute significantly to existing research.

Some Final Thoughts

The introduction to this thesis argued that, due to the current global situation in which Muslims (and Muslim women in particular) are constructed in overwhelmingly negative ways in the media and public discourse, it was impossible to write a thesis which focused on the 'ordinary' lives of Muslim women. The interviews with young Muslim women in South Australia demonstrated that, although hostile representations of Muslims and Muslim women and personal experiences of religious racism had a deep impact on their lives, they continued to find ways to express their sense of identity and individuality. For instance, although public discourse and representation excluded Muslim women from hegemonic national identity, they could not be prevented from claiming an Australian identity. Similarly, although many of the women feared that they would not be employed if they wore hijab or self-identified as a Muslim, those women in the study who wished to be employed found work, even if they had had to make career changes in order to achieve employment.

To return to the introductory premise, although I was not able to write a thesis focusing on Muslim women and their love of Aussie Rules, or how young Muslim women juggle work, family and life, and nor was I able to write a thesis about Muslim women gardeners, I have written a thesis that testifies to the resilience, courage and ability of young Muslim women to negotiate a range of challenges and competing interests in their daily lives with dignity and agency. And although I have written a text that demonstrates that religious racism plays a central and influential role in the lives of these women I have argued throughout that their lives are much, much more than this. As a result, I firmly believe that while *this* thesis did not focus on footy, family or gardens, it will not be long before such a thesis *is* written. I look forward to that day.