The Lived Experiences of Muslim Women in Australia:

Racism and Gendered Responses

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)

Declarations

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Abstract

Shortly after September 11, Muslim populations in Western non-Muslim contexts received increased attention. While the increased publicity was directed at all Muslims, Australian Muslim women, and especially women who were more ‘visibly’ Muslim, were at times more vulnerable to Islamophobic targeting. Conceiving of Islamophobia as both a form of systemic or structural racism *and* as a series of everyday microaggressions, this thesis explores how Australian Muslim women across different demographics respond in gendered ways to the Islamophobia they experience in their everyday lives. The study is particularly interested in an intersectional appraisal of the ways Muslim women perceive and respond to the Islamophobia directed at them, ranging from normalisation, silence, and the emotional management of others to overt resistance and activism. Additionally, this research considers the role of faith in the women participants’ lives and how this assists them in understanding Islamophobia, while partially shaping the strategies the participants deploy in their responses towards broader and individually expressed Islamophobic attitudes.

Keywords: Muslim women, gendered Islamophobia, resistance, agency, faith

Chapter 1. Introduction

> I remember when September 11 happened, I was in Year 12 or Year 11. We didn't watch a lot of TV in our house, but I remember that day because it was such a big thing, family and friends were meeting up talking about the event. I went to school that morning and everyone else were talking about it, but I don't think I really realised the kind of impact that it would have on Muslims. I remember a few days after that we began to hear of community members being targeted, having their hijabs ripped off. (Maryam, 34, Bangladeshi, hijab, stay-at-home mum)

When September 11 happened, I was a young girl living in Oslo, Norway. I had just started Year 9 and was a few weeks into the school year when I woke up one morning to find my parents with the blood drained from their faces as they watched the morning news showing the Twin Towers collapse. I cannot even remember if my mother made us breakfast that morning. Instead, I remember my 10-minute walk to school that seemed to stretch for much longer as my 14-year-old self-tried to make sense of what I had just seen on TV and the fear that had paralysed my parents to the screen.

As I arrived in class, I noticed that there were two other teachers in the classroom in addition to our head teacher. That was unusual. We never had additional teachers join our lessons. They all looked serious. They named all the immigrant children in class (the majority were Muslim but also Christian Arab and non-Muslim Asian) and asked us to stand up and follow the two teachers. We were all named, and one by one we stood up. The two teachers led us out of the classroom and out of the school building to a childcare facility that was across the street, adjacent to the school. We were led into a room and asked to take a seat. We all sat down, and as soon as we did, the teachers began to distribute the morning newspaper that had a blown-up image of the Twin Towers in smoke, collapsing. I cannot remember what the heading was because as soon as I saw the image, my stomach turned into a knot as I remembered the news on the TV and my parents' faces earlier that morning.

We had barely been distributed these papers when the teachers pointed to the front page of the newspaper and asked, 'What are your parents saying about this?'

I cannot remember if I gave an answer to that question. I think words must have faded from my mouth as I tried not to vomit from the churning knot in my stomach. I also must have learnt to forget about this incident, burying it deep in the back of my memory for many, many years until one day, it suddenly came back to me quite forcefully as I was reading various academic work in preparation for the 'Literature Review' chapter. Fifteen years after September 11, as I was sat at my office desk at Western Sydney University, looking out of the eighth-floor window, sipping my coffee and contemplating the various readings I had done so far on Islamophobia, it dawned on me; my experiences of the past 15 years of my life had a name: Islamophobia.

Before September 11, I had perceived myself as a Norwegian girl, a carefree child of immigrant parents of mixed ethnic backgrounds, Muslim by faith and Norwegian by spirit. After September 11, I found my identity to be reduced to just that of Muslim. All else that I felt washed away as I suddenly became the focus of every single class conversation relating to terrorism, Middle East, and gender oppression of all sorts. In hindsight, I recognise that part of the reason for this may have been because I was so visibly Muslim as I was wearing the hijab at a time when nobody else in my school, no student, no teacher, was visibly Muslim in the same way.

My choice for wearing the hijab was neither cultural nor political, but faith based. Nonetheless it was a personal choice to adhere to the scriptures of faith, and dress accordingly to reflect traditional Islamic principles of modesty. Yet embodying a traditional Islamic identity had its own consequences. I was asked to present my opinion or commentary on all sorts of questions relating to 'Muslim' issues. In heated debates over female genital mutilation (FMG), the teacher would turn around and ask me for my expert opinion. Ironically, I did not even know of FMG until the topic emerged in class—the very idea of it traumatised me for days afterwards. This is how I came to learn about many of the 'Muslim issues' to which I had previously been quite ignorant. They came to my attention during my teenage years in school as I was continuously asked to comment on them. It did not end there as my hijab, too, was an issue frequently discussed as part of the curriculum. It emerged in religious studies as much as it did in social sciences and history. It also emerged in my German language studies class: My teacher, a White Norwegian middle-aged

woman, thought it was appropriate to bring it up as a topic of discussion to practise our German. As the only girl with the hijab in class, I was pointed at by the teacher as an example of a veiled woman. While still pointing to me, my teacher looked at another boy in class while she mentioned that Muslim women claim to cover themselves to be less attractive, but here we have a 16-year-old Muslim girl who, by covering her hair, has made her face stand out and extra visible. Then, while still pointing at me, she asked him, 'Look at her, her face stands out. Do you think she is pretty?' The boy had lowered his head in embarrassment, his cheeks blushing as red as mine, and I, for the first time in my life, wanted the Earth to split open and take me whole into its deep cavity.

These sorts of events did not stop and tended to escalate in the coming years with each global incident where Muslims were allegedly involved. Perhaps one of the incidents that I remember vividly is from the time right after the July 7 bombings in London. My family had moved to England, and we were living in Manchester. As I was walking to school one morning, I was approached by a big, bulky Englishman in his work suit. He looked furious, and as he cornered me, only a 17-year-old teenager at the time, against a brick wall, he was lashing all sorts of insults my way. He certainly made a point that I was a terrorist in a way that insulted both my faith and gender and stripped me of all dignity. I do not know how long this incident lasted as time seemed to evaporate while I stood there numb and silent, absorbing the hurled insults, and his spit, on my face. He eventually walked off, while still insulting me, my faith, and 'my people'. And I walked off to continue my day as usual, terrified on the inside, faking calm on the outside. I never told a soul of this incident until I began this research and began to slowly connect the dots between racism and sexism.

Then there were other two incidents, this time in Australia shortly after the Lindt Café incident. I was doing late-night shopping at Casula Mall for my workplace, a mental health agency in Sydney who were going to hold a mental health awareness event the following day and needed me to organise last-minute shopping. I was eight months pregnant at the time, front heavy, and slowly loading the trunk of my car with the shopping. A middle-aged driver in a ute pulled his car up close to mine and rolled down his window. He started to hurl racist abuse my way, telling me to, 'Go back to where you came from', 'Take that fucking burqa off', and 'I hope you all die' (or something similar). Among all his other insults, I heard the common ones I'd heard before: 'terrorist', 'slut', and 'whore'. Interestingly, this man had a heavy south European accent, Serbian maybe, and yet there he

was, an Australian immigrant insulting another Australian immigrant and conflating the difference between a hijab and a burqa. I was certainly not wearing a burqa.

After this incident, I drove home and contacted the police to report the driver. Two officers arrived in the next half an hour, a man and a woman, and I informed them of what had happened, of the insults and the threat (that he wished I was dead). I provided his plate number, which I still remember to this day, and told them that I had started contracting painfully and worried I would go into early labour. The officers listened to all I had to say, and when I was finished speaking, the male officer said, ‘He probably just had a bad day’. I looked at the female officer in disbelief. She avoided eye contact and looked down. He probably had a bad day! And they left.

Not even a few days later, when I was crossing the road on foot in Liverpool, a car with a group of men sped up (although the light was red for them) towards me in an intimidating manner, just short of hitting me, while shouting the common insults that I was used to by now. There was a Filipino man, a healthcare worker from Liverpool Hospital, who had crossed the road at the same time as me. He was so shocked to witness the event and kept apologising to me on their behalf. He was angry and teary, and kept saying, ‘Why would they do that to you?’ to which I replied, ‘Because I’m visibly Muslim and I’m a woman’.

This was about one year before I started by PhD journey, and while I had experienced on my body the merging of anti-Muslim racism with sexism, I did not get acquainted with the term to describe this experience until I began my research. That is when I became familiar with gendered Islamophobia,[1] a word that now added meaning to my past experiences of hostility. For me personally, that was the first step towards empowerment: simply having a word to describe my and other Muslim women’s lived experiences. This word gave me a renewed power that I had never felt before. I felt a greater sense of agency in having the tools to define my own social situation.

[1] This notion was first used by Jasmin Zine (2006) and later by Barbara Perry (2014) to describe racism targeting Muslim women. In this research, gendered Islamophobia refers to the intersection of race and sexism in targeting Muslim women specifically because they are Muslim women, in which they also experience Islamophobia in gendered ways different to men.

While my first experience in Norway on the morning of September 11 had given me an initial taste of structural Islamophobia, my subsequent experiences in Norway, England, and Australia provided me with the lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia.

My reason for commencing with these stories is to provide the reader with some background context to my positionality as a researcher and a small insight into my own lived experiences with Islamophobia, as a Muslim woman. My background as a Muslim woman places me both as an insider and an outsider within this research. As researchers, we do not write from an entirely objective standpoint, and therefore, it is important that we practise reflexivity as part of the research process. Harding (2004) concluded that being aware of the researcher position as an 'insider' or an 'outsider', in terms of the lived experiences of the research participants and being cognisant of one's own subjectivity as a researcher, is crucial to both the development of the study and readers' understanding of the research results, which will be further discussed in Chapter 4. As it is impossible to completely separate the researcher from the participants' experiences, it is necessary to make clear that my own lived experiences of Islamophobia, as much as the participants' experiences, have influenced the direction of this research.

I perceive my subjectivities as well as my awareness of my researcher position as a strength in this research. This has been, first and foremost, about me as a Muslim woman researching other Muslim women's experiences to disseminate the research wider to Muslim women, with the specific goal of empowering other Muslim women. And of course, it has also been about contributing to scholarship on Muslim women's experiences in Australia to advance our understanding of intersectional oppressions in order to navigate these productively and creatively through activist efforts.

In Australia, Islamophobia, which is anti-Muslim racism, is a lived experience for many Muslims, both men and women, who are discriminated against because of their religion (Iner, 2019). Significantly, more Muslim women are targeted by Islamophobia than Muslim men. According to the latest research, 72% of Islamophobia victims in Australia are women, and 71% of Islamophobic perpetrators are men (Iner, 2019). As a result, Muslim women, especially those more visibly Muslim, find themselves targeted by gendered Islamophobia at their intersection of both faith and gender, where racism and sexism merge in its discrimination (Perry, 2014). This is what makes Muslim women's experiences gendered, because they are specifically targeted by gendered Islamophobia because they

are Muslim *women*, and therefore Muslim women's experiences differ to those of Muslim men's experiences of Islamophobia.

Gendered Islamophobia manifests in many different ways in the form of everyday experiences that are entangled with the wider systemic structural oppressions at the macro-level of society (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020). Therefore, individual expressions of Islamophobia are entangled with the systemic and structural Islamophobia that is entrenched at the institutional level, as this thesis will demonstrate.

The systemic institutionalised oppression and vilification of Muslims, as seen following the War on Terror and during the current counter-violent extremism measures, is not unique to Muslim populations. Previous groups in history have also been systematically oppressed in the name of national security and cohesion. In the United States during World War I, German communities were raided, and the teaching of the German language was deemed un-American and banned (Kumar, 2012). Later, during World War II, the United States confined at least 120,000 Japanese people in incarceration camps under brutal conditions with limited cooking and plumbing facilities. Two thirds of these were U.S. citizens. Nonetheless, anyone with Japanese ancestry was deemed a threat and incarcerated based solely on their perceived race (Nagata et al., 2015). During the same period in Europe, the German Nazi regime considered Jews and non-Aryans (including women and children) enemies of the state and, also during World War II, waged a policy of systematic extermination against them.

In the Australian context, Indigenous populations suffered immense systemic oppression. Massacres of Indigenous populations were carried out by European settlers, and mixed-race Indigenous children were forcefully removed from their homes to be culturally assimilated into the Australian society at institutions dedicated to this purpose (Tatz, 2001; Terszak, 2015). These acts resulted in both a physical and cultural genocide of Australia's Indigenous people so that they were long written out of Australian history books (Rolls, 2011; Tatz, 2001). The ramifications of systemic anti-Indigenous racism are seen today in discrepancies in the quality of health care, education, and income levels, among many others, between Indigenous populations and the rest of Australia (see Bourke et al., 2018; Humpage, 2016; McMullen, 2005).

Other populations in Australia have also fallen victim to systemic oppression. The first anti-Chinese acts (1855/1881) go back to Victoria and the gold rush, which was

followed by all colonies limiting Asians and, subsequently, coloured immigrants like the Afghan cameleers (Kabir, 2010; Martens, 2018). The cameleers, many of whom were Muslim and vital to the exploration, expansion, and construction of 19th-century Australia, were also considered by many to be an economic curse and a threat (Cleland, 2002; Kabir, 2009). This prejudice resulted in the creation of the Anti-Afghan League in 1896 and the Imported Labour Registry Act in 1897, which prevented 'coloured aliens' from importing other workers from overseas, and eventually in other restrictive acts that aimed at maintaining a British cultural hegemony in Australia (Cleland, 2002; Ganter, 2008, 2012; Hassan, 2010; Kabir, 2009).

It is important to consider these sociohistorical processes when conducting research within a Westernised[2] context and recognise how these processes have helped shape contemporary knowledge production and power structures. Understanding these processes at the structural level is important in thinking about contemporary knowledge and conceptualising current Islamophobia. Such awareness is also important to help contextualise potential counterstrategies to address the historically embedded racism that exists within the Australian settler–colonial context.

It is also important to delve back in history to understand how the past has shaped the contemporary, how Eurocentric representations of the Other, including Muslims, came to be established within Western contexts, and how emerging scholars are increasingly providing counternarratives to these representations. Reflecting on history, we must recognise that the birth of Eurocentric modernity and Western knowledge was a hugely complex process and traces some of its roots back to the fall of the last part of Islamic Spain, Islamic Granada, in 1492 (Grosfoguel, 2013). We must also acknowledge the oppression of human life and alternative knowledges that occurred during European domination of minority groups in Europe. In the reconquest of Spain, for instance, both genocide in the form of killing or forced conversions of Muslims and the burning of libraries were central methods of exterminating Muslim knowledges and heritage. These and other methods of erasure expanded through global colonial projects such as the colonisation of the Americas

[2] Westernised context: a context that has mostly relied on Eurocentric knowledges. Modern-day universities are examples of Westernised institutions that have been founded on Eurocentric knowledge (although alternative knowledges are also increasingly appearing now from these institutions). The argument is that the foundation has been Eurocentric, and therefore, much of the knowledge produced has also been Eurocentric (see Grosfoguel, 2013).

(Grosfoguel, 2013), the transatlantic African slave trade (Gilroy, 1993), the various colonial projects in Africa, Middle East, and Asia (Fanon, 1980; Said, 2003), and the colonisation of Australia (Robert van, 2004; Tatz, 2001; Tatz, 2011). These historical occurrences resulted in both the genocide of people as well as the destruction of knowledge considered non-European (Grosfoguel, 2013). De Sousa Santos (2007, 2015) referred to this destruction of the knowledges of Others as ‘epistemicide’.

This epistemicide, together with other complex processes such as colonisation of Muslim lands and Orientalism, resulted in conceptualising Islam and Muslims as foreign to the West, although Muslims had a longstanding history in the West and had contributed greatly by way of knowledges. These entrenched colonial frameworks that considered Islam and Muslims nonbelonging to the West have been increasingly problematic for Muslims but have also been increasingly challenged, too, by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars from various academic fields (Amin, 1989; Fanon, 1980, 2004, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2013; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; Said, 2003).

While most European colonies had achieved full or partial independence by the 1960s, coloniality of power[3] has continued to manifest in different ways and exist within power, epistemological, and ontological structures (Grosfoguel, 2006; Mignolo, 2007). In some cases, colonialism never ceased, instead creating settler–colonial nations such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, founded upon Indigenous lands on which the same colonial oppressions continue to exist in forms of contemporary coloniality. Also, those former colonies that achieved national independence experience coloniality of power, which spans all levels of social existence and involves heterogenous global hierarchies and power structures. Grosfoguel (2007) referred to these heterogeneous global hierarchies as ‘heterarchies’ (p. 217). They include hierarchies of epistemic, economic, linguistic, political, and racial forms of domination and exploitation. Given this, decolonisation did not, and could not, give rise to a postcolonial world. Instead, coloniality continues throughout the world through imperial, heterarchised, and patriarchal frameworks (Grosfoguel, 2006, 2007). This is the background for the status quo in which Other knowledges and ways of being have been mostly ignored in Western societies—including Australia, a settler–colonial

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[3] The effects of colonialism that continue to exist long after the cessation of historical colonisation is referred to as coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000).

country founded upon stolen land and systematic oppression, genocide, and epistemicide of Indigenous peoples and knowledges.

In the Australian context in which this research takes place, colonialism and the trauma of it continues for Indigenous populations who continue to experience numerous racial oppressions and are situated lowest on the racial hierarchy (M. Walter & Butler, 2013). This is manifested in racist overpolicing, Indigenous overrepresentation in prisons (which is the highest in the world; Hutchings, 2021), and lower life expectancy and socioeconomic disadvantage compared to the Australian general population (Weatherburn, 2014; Wise, 2019). Within this complex settler–colonial context, in which the Indigenous peoples are still largely oppressed, Muslims have also become settlers on this land via various forms of immigration. Some of this immigration predates the first colonial settlements such as the Makassar contact with Arnhem Land, some occurred during the colonial period, and much occurred in recent times, often due to displacements of Muslims from their homelands due to global wars and conflicts, thus Muslims have also become settlers within the complex settler–colonial context in Australia (Charkawi, 2019; Ganter, 2008; Kabir, 2010).. However, they, too, have been placed low on the racial hierarchy and Othered as not belonging through continued systematic intervention, policing, and misrepresentation—all forms of contemporary coloniality of power.

In this complex situation within the Australian context, the systematically racist focus on Islam and Muslims as the Other affects the everyday experiences of Muslims. Islamophobia particularly has material and symbolic consequences for Muslim women who are often visible and therefore easy targets of such racism. However, by recognising the coloniality of power in gendered Islamophobia, decolonial antiracist thinking and activism can be used effectively against these forms of discriminations. And by recognising the common experiences of oppression and discrimination that affect a diverse range of people in intersectional ways, Muslim women can form a solidarity with other marginalised and vulnerable groups in combined grassroots efforts towards social change for the betterment of Muslim women's lives, their communities, and marginalised Others.

Twenty years have passed since I was put in a room with a group of immigrant children and interrogated about my parents' views on terrorism. It has been 20 years since systemic institutional and structural Islamophobia was for the first time made evident in my lived experiences, followed by numerous other lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia.

These experiences all shaped me in different ways, and with each exposure to gendered Islamophobia, I was prompted to ask the question: How do other Muslim women experience racism, and most importantly, how do they respond to it?

This was the question that I was contemplating after I had parted ways with the healthcare worker from Liverpool Hospital a few years ago. A year later, I was enrolled as a PhD candidate at Western Sydney University, researching exactly that: how Muslim women experience Islamophobia within the Australian context, as well as their various agentic and creative responses and resistance to it. These are my core research questions.

Now, as my thesis is coming to an end, I am humbled to write this introduction. In my commitment to this research for the past few years, and through my meeting, and interaction with, the intelligent and powerfully creative women participants, I have increased my awareness of the many activist efforts and social organising led by Muslim women in Australia against racism and other forms of discrimination. I have also connected and begun to involve myself in some of these efforts, and as such, I have come to experience another feeling: social empowerment, which this thesis also illuminates in the Muslim women participants' voices.

This thesis begins with the literature review, Chapter 2, that explores the historical Orientalist representations of Muslims in the West despite their longstanding history and contribution to the West. It also shows how Muslim women were often used in such Orientalist representations to mark a stark difference between Muslims and Islam and the West, a phenomenon that continues to manifest with renewed vigour via gendered Islamophobia in the contemporary post-September 11 era.

Chapter 3, 'Conceptual Frameworks', delves into an explanation of Islamophobia as a form of anti-Muslim racism directed against Muslims despite their ethnocultural diversity as they are racialised into one homogenous group. It also explains how everyday Islamophobia is entangled and influenced by systemic structural forms of Islamophobia that target Muslim women, especially via gendered Islamophobia, because they are Muslim *women* and the visible face of Islam and Muslim communities.

Chapter 4, 'Methodology', provides the research design of this thesis whereby 27 Muslim women in Australia participated in either qualitative semi-structured interviews or focus groups aimed at exploring the research question: How do Muslim women in Australia experience racism, and most importantly, how do they respond to it? This chapter also

details the method of recruitment of these women, data collection method, the various justifications behind the research design, the research limitations, the demographic details of the women participants, as well as a pen portrait of each woman participant.

Following this, Chapter 5, the first discussion chapter, details the burden of representation as experienced by Muslim women who are more visibly Muslim (often via their dress but also via other exhibited Muslim markers). It shows how gendered Islamophobia has become normalised in Muslim women's lives, where these women have become vigilant and expectant of this gendered racism occurring in their everyday lives, especially in geographical contexts in which Muslims are the minority. Via Hage's (2000) concept of governmental and passive belonging, this chapter further demonstrates how Muslim visibility impacts these Muslim women's experiences of belonging in the wider society. It also shows how Muslim women using emotional labour in various agentic and gendered ways navigate the wider Australian context where such gendered Islamophobia may occur. The second discussion chapter, Chapter 6, details how Muslim women self-represent themselves to the wider public in agentic and intersectional ways using a variety of methods, some of which also involve emotional labour. This chapter also details Muslim women's contributions to various collaborative activist efforts against gendered Islamophobia in the Australian context, showing the various empowered ways Muslim women make a stand despite the arduous emotional labour involved as a result of being visibly Muslim in such spheres.

Another important note to mention is that most of the women participants in this study were practising Muslims, and many were visibly Muslim via their dress or via making their faith evident by declaring it public. This research did not intend to recruit visibly Muslim women only; however, as Chapter 4 explains, the nature of this research seeking Muslim women may have attracted those who were more devout and thus also more visible in different ways in public.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter begins by detailing the historical Orientalist representations of Muslims, and in particular Muslim women, in the West. It shows how Muslim women, their bodies, and visibility have been historically represented in negative ways to create a European or Western image in opposition to the Muslim Other. The chapter then moves on to demonstrate how since September 11 similar narratives have been used with a resurgent vigour by Western ideologues to push a representation of the Muslim as Other—an Islamophobic concept including numerous derogatory and stereotypical representations of Muslims that especially impact Muslim women in gendered ways. This chapter concludes by showing how Muslim women, despite being depicted as submissive and disempowered in gendered Islamophobic representations, are increasingly responding to these forms of Islamophobic narratives in agentic ways (Mahmood, 2005).

Historical Orientalist Representations of Muslims

Historical Orientalist representations of Muslims and the Orient constructed a binary between Islam and the West (Childers, 1997). In such narratives, the West is depicted as unrelated to Muslims and the Muslim world, emphasising a concept of us, the European or Westerner, versus them, the Muslim Others (Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006). This binary is problematic in its presentation of Muslims as foreign, inferior, threatening, and in need of enlightenment, among numerous other misconceptions and stereotypes (Said, 2003). The result has been to homogenise Muslims into one ethno-cultural category, thus ignoring the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity within Muslim communities across the world (Meer, 2013). Simultaneously, notions of the West have been homogenised in this process, where the West is presented as superior, developed, and rational (Said, 2003), while ignoring the historical and large Muslim presence in the West, ironically considered non-Western, non-belonging, or simply Others (Childers, 1997).

To understand historical Orientalist representations of the Muslim Other and their significance in contemporary times, we must first define what constitutes the West to

conceptualise what is referred to as the Muslim Other. An essential point that Hall (1992) makes in 'Formations of Modernity' is that the West and the East, or Orient, stand in binary opposition to each other. Hence, the West is defined as 'not the East', and the East is defined as 'not the West', a concept that Hall critiqued as problematic.

Others have also attempted to define the West. Ferguson (2011) asserted that the most economically powerful modern-day nations of the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany make the core of the West and the rest of Europe its periphery. Other countries considered 'Western', such as Canada and Australia, are ignored in their definition, which may be perhaps because these nations are extensions of French and British colonial projects and, by default, extensions of the West with no need of particular mention.

Orientalist narratives combined with similar perceptions as to what constitutes the West have carved a representational binary between those considered Western and the rest (Said, 2003). The assumed binary between the West and the non-Western world that broadly categorises people into belonging versus nonbelonging is concerning from a sociopolitical vantage point, where such binarism may be used as a discursive tool to promote discriminatory ideologies. For example, Huntington (1993) promoted the argument that the world will polarise into the West and everything that is the rest, or non-Western, and thus form opposing civilisations that will clash with each other in terms of culture, politics, priorities, and values. While it may be partially true—that the West is currently used as the defining marker for anything considered non-Western—such binary thinking can be weaponised against people and communities in detrimental ways. The West is frequently used as a marker of difference to people, nations, and ideologies considered foreign. Stuart Hall (1992) criticised such binarism and argued that this binary concept between the West and the rest is used to emphasise Western superiority and non-Western inferiority, simultaneously producing knowledge on what is considered the rest. The West would do so via 'regimes of truth', a term coined by Foucault and used by Hall to illustrate how knowledge production on the other occurs and maintains within the wider society. 'Regimes of truth' are discourses emerging from the structural power settings in the wider society that produce certain knowledges held to be 'truths' and absorbed by the wider society (Hall, 1992, 2017), such as in the Western knowledge production on those deemed the rest, or the Others.

He emphasised that this discourse on the binary production of the West is problematic as it in return also reinforces the idea of the West and the rest in some sort of a vicious discursive cycle (Hall, 1992). One group of people who have been positioned into the category non-Western by this binary narrative and thinking are Muslims.

Historical Trajectory of the Orientalist Binary

To understand contemporary Islamophobia and the binary representation of Islam and Muslims in opposition to the West, it is crucial to understand the historical trajectory of such thinking up until contemporary times. The awareness of its historical uses enables us to understand its contemporary implications within the wider community and its effect on Muslim communities, in particular Muslim women. Although such thinking, which highlights the exercise of power, gained a renewed vigour after September 11, its roots go deep into European history, starting as early as the First Crusade in the 11th century and continuing to the 16th century, where Islam and Muslims were positioned in opposition to Europe and Christianity (Drakulic, 2009; Meer, 2013). This oppositional thinking, what Said (2013) famously referred to as Orientalism, influenced the historical self-representation of Europe and, more broadly, the West. Eurocentric historical narratives have portrayed the rise of the West as a unique linear trajectory from antiquity to current powerful, global dominance (Grosfoguel, 2013). In this narrative, enlightenment and progress are presented as unique qualities emerging from Europe (Grosfoguel, 2013).

Scholars, aware of this Eurocentric bias, have critiqued this thinking, emphasising Islam and Muslims' longstanding presence in, and contributions, to the rise of Europe and thus the West (Childers, 1997; Connell, 2007; Goody, 2004, 2006; Grosfoguel, 2013; Saliba, 2007). Similar to Hall's (1992) argument on how the discourse of the binary, using Ferguson's (2011) phrase 'the west and the rest', is shaping current socio-political relations in the world, previous Western historical discourse acted in a similar way, attempting to mark Europe or the West as different from the rest of the world, especially the Muslim world (Grosfoguel, 2013). As Said (2003) claimed, the Orient, or the non-Western world, was constructed by Western representations of whom and what they perceived as the Other.

The genocide and 'epistemicide' (the extermination of knowledges) that was directed against the Muslims and Muslim libraries in Islamic Spain resulted in a dramatic extermination of both Muslims and Muslim knowledges from Europe (Grosfoguel, 2013, p.

73). Muslim libraries that housed millions of books on numerous topics were burned, and as emphasised by Grosfoguel (2010, 2013), many important books were stolen from these libraries and taken to European churches, where they were translated and plagiarised as European knowledge. This coincided with the beginning of the European Renaissance. As Europe had successfully rid itself of a significant portion of its Muslim population and knowledges, and as the European Renaissance gained momentum, Europe claimed the position of superior and enlightened at a great cost to both Muslim peoples and knowledge. As Europe promoted its intellectual identity as uniquely European, it simultaneously positioned Islam and Muslims outside the enlightenment process, and as such, Muslims came to be viewed as the opposite Other to Europe. Furthermore, Western colonisation of Muslim lands and peoples from the mid-18th century and the dismantling of the Ottoman empire in the 19th century further entrenched the West's self-image as superior, aiding its hegemony. This, in return, fuelled Orientalist binary representations of the Muslim world (Said, 2003). It is also important to note the pervasive binary thinking in even rather fair-minded and humanistic scholars like Max Weber, who claimed that Islam prevented societies from developing capitalism, which, despite his critique of capitalism, he viewed as a more evolved economic mode than previous structures such as feudalism (B. S. Turner, 1998; Weber, 1965, 2002).

Orientalist representations exaggeratedly misrepresented the Orient, or the Muslim world, predominantly in the Middle East, Africa, and South-East Asia, in an effort to maintain the narrative of a superior and enlightened self-image (Said, 1997, 2003, 2013). Said (2003) wrote,

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (p. 3)

This domination occurred in various forms through art, literature, and cultural studies, and government, public, and popular discourse. Muslim women in particular were frequently used in Orientalist (mis)representations to exaggerate the binary narrative via gendered Orientalism (Yeğenoğlu, 1998; Zine, 2002).

Historical Orientalist (Mis)representations of Muslim Women

Historically, Muslim women's bodies have been used in the literary construction of 'knowledge' on Muslim peoples from the Middle Ages to contemporary times and often in efforts by the West to create its self-image in opposition to the perceived Muslim Other (Yeğenoğlu, 1998; Zine, 2002). The Muslim woman's veil—in whatever form—has been discursively represented as symbolising various meanings such as cultural and sexual difference (Kahf, 1999; Yeğenoğlu, 1998). Yeğenoğlu (1998) asserted that this focus on the Muslim woman, and especially the veil, has been 'about the cultural representation of the West to *itself* by way of a detour through the other' (p. 1). This is not very different to what is happening in contemporary Western contexts in which Muslim women are used as discursive tools in nationalist projects attempting to define the nation state, national culture, and its values in opposition to her visible yet perceived nonbelonging presence (Ho, 2007). Thus, understanding the historical trajectory of the Orientalist (mis)representations of Muslim women is crucial to understanding the current Islamophobia that targets Muslim women.

While initially the representation of Muslim women focused on showcasing them as powerful and sexually transgressive members of royalty during medieval times, it eventually changed to the Orientalist representation of hypersexualised yet oppressed veiled victims in need of Western rescue during colonial times (Kahf, 1999). To illustrate this, Kahf (1999) provided numerous examples of how Muslim women were represented during the medieval era, during the Renaissance, and afterwards during colonial times. One of the first Western literary representations of Muslim women that Kahf presents is of Bramimonde in 'La Chanson de Roland', a poem where Bramimonde, a Muslim queen, is represented as one who yields both power and wealth. Such representation of Muslim women occurred during the 11th and 12th century in Europe when Gregorian reform attempted to limit European women to passive belonging, with minimal rights to property and power. Negative literary representations of Muslim women as powerful and wealthy were used to show a stark contrast between European women and the Muslim women, whose behaviour was disapproved. Thus, by representing the power and wealth of the Muslim woman as something disliked, these literary representations simultaneously promoted the exact opposite in European women. Such representations, of course, occurred within power

structures using production of knowledges to exert effort to shape the thinking and behaviour of the wider public. Behaviour that was disliked in the Other was not welcome at home; thus, European women's passivity and limited property rights and power was promoted as ideal against the Muslim woman Other.

In contrast to this type of representation of Muslim women as powerful, wealthy, and sexually transgressive, the period after the Renaissance (which tended to represent Muslim women more neutrally for a short period of time), changed to show Muslim women as oppressed, submissive, and victims of their menfolk, faith, and culture (Kahf, 1999). One example of this, as provided by Kahf (1999), is that of Antoine Galland's 'French translation from Arabic of the Arabo Perso Indian folktale cycle, *The Thousand and One Nights*' (p. 112). By removing completely Muslim women's female sexuality and power in his translation, Galland and other authors engaged in similar literary representation again set a stark contrast between European women and Muslim women Other. Kahf (1999) emphasised that for the Muslim woman during this period, 'her portrayal becomes her helplessness and increasingly subdued speech; her textual presence seems to shrink. The aggressive, active, forward quality assigned to the Muslim woman in earlier literature is driven into latency. Now passivity becomes her prominent and fundamental quality' (p. 112), while the European woman is now represented as the exact opposite.

The above two examples are especially important as they highlight how such representations have been used to shape the image of the Western self in opposition to that considered Other, and in this case, Muslim women, to suit the wider agendas of power structures. Furthermore, such representations of Muslim women were mostly products of the male gaze (Zine, 2002), which adds a misogynist element to Orientalism. Similar to contemporary Islamophobic representations of Muslim women frequently argued from the White male gaze, historical Orientalist framings of Muslim women portrayed them as both objects of desire and oppressed maidens in need of European rescue (Zine, 2002). This is rather familiar to the contemporary Islamophobic thinking that elevates White men as saviours of brown women from their male counterparts and culture (Ho, 2007; Razack, 2004; Spivak, 1988).

While contemporary Islamophobia is greatly focused on Muslim women's dress, it was particularly during the colonial period that Muslim women's dress came to be discursively represented as a defining feature of Muslim womanhood and eventually an

image of threat to Western culture and values (Hussein, 2016; Razack, 2004, 2005). This is because the dress denied the European free encounter with the Muslim world, where the European gaze could penetrate its society, and especially its women, to obtain 'knowledge' of the Orient (Mitchell, 1991). However, it is also important to note that veiling was not equally common across all Muslim societies but did in certain contexts become increasingly or decreasingly common as a resistive measure in opposition to colonialism and European imposed values, in particular those pertaining to women (Fanon, 1980). In Algeria, for instance, veiling became more common in resistance to French colonialism, and towards the end of French colonialism, voluntary unveiling was used in the same resistive effort to blend in and not attract suspicion from French colonisers (Fanon, 1980). During the earlier colonial period, when most Algerian women chose veiling, the European who was denied free access to gaze into their Muslim societies, and at Muslim women's bodies, instead produced pictorial and literary Orientalist (mis)representations of the Muslim woman (Alloula, 1986). These (mis)representations undressed her and rendered her hypersexualised beneath her veil (Kahf, 1999). It was common to position Muslim women within harems controlled by lustful, jealous Muslim men, and such (mis)representations became quite popular during French colonial times (Alloula, 1986). *The Colonial Harem*, Alloula (1986) provides numerous examples of colonial postcards of nude Muslim women with a face veil in sexually suggestive positions, or peeking out behind bar-covered windows that at the time permeated the French and European markets as souvenir representation of European colonies. Such representations continued into other forms, including materials aimed at small children. An example is that of the cartoon Aladdin where Jasmin, the Muslim princess, wears a see-through veil on her face while having her upper body bare, only wearing a bra, and living with her father and his male adviser within her castle walls. This cartoon also goes to great lengths to portray backward and violent Arab men in contrast to the image of the innocent and helpless half-nude Muslim princess.

The fact that such representations were largely fictive during colonial times and had very little to do with the actual reality of the Muslim societies meant very little, and soon these representations became essentialised as truths (Alloula, 1986; Kahf, 1999; Zine, 2002). Through the symbolism of the Muslim woman behind her veil, the Muslim world was perceived as a backward, inferior society with sexually frustrated men and hypersexualised yet meek Muslim maidens in need of rescue from repressive barbarity (Razack, 2004, 2005,

2008). Gendered Orientalist representations of the Muslim world were used to further justify Europe's colonisation of the Orient: to civilise the 'uncivilised' natives and rescue its oppressed females (Fanon, 1980; Perego, 2015; Said, 2003). As such, Muslim women were objectified through gendered Orientalist representations that continue to manifest today in various forms where Muslim women remain the focus in gendered Islamophobic narratives.

Orientalism as conceptualised by Edward Said, however, has not gone without critique. Critics have pointed out that while Said argued against the Orientalist misrepresentations of the non-Western cultures, he failed to provide alternatives to the phenomenon and also ignored the Western literature that did not misrepresent the Orient (Güven, 2019). In part, these limitations reflect Said's own era, education, and stay in the West that influenced his epistemic positioning despite his attempts to distance himself from it (Güven, 2019; Young, 2004). However, while stressing the negative effects of such binary thinking and misrepresentations, Said did encourage a vision beyond such binaries by emphasising humanism as multicultural in nature and embracing of commonalities between cultures. Similar earlier arguments against racialisation promoting equality between diverse peoples was also emphasised by others in the early 20th century, such as the works of Franz Boas in *The Mind of Primitive Man* (Boas, 1911).

Thus, while there is some validity to the critiques of the concept of Orientalism, Said's insights highlight how dominant misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims were used as a tool to establish European and, more broadly, Western cultural dominance over the constructed Orient and its people. Hence, Orientalism is a concept relevant to understanding the current representations of Muslim women in contemporary Western societies and remains relevant in understanding gendered Islamophobia in Australia. It gives hope to move past historical binary understandings and paves the way for pluriform modes of living within multicultural settings that account for diverse ways of being including religion, ethnicity, class, and gender, among others.

Contemporary Orientalism

Racism and Orientalist Representations in the Australian Context

To better understand how Australian Muslim women's experiences fit within the wider Australian context, it is crucial to first understand the current and wider representations of Muslims in Australia that is fuelled by reignited Orientalist thinking and

representations. Reignited Orientalist representations of Muslims played a large role in the War on Terror and subsequent countering violent extremism (CVE) narratives in the era after September 11 in the Australian context where others, including Indigenous Australians and Chinese Australians, were also at the receiving end of exclusionary politics (Dagistanli & Grewal, 2012). During the November 2001 election, just after September 11, the recently elected Liberal Government under John Howard took the opportunity presented by the U.S. War on Terror to link 'boat people' on their way to seeking asylum in Australia to terrorism (Crowley, 2013). Simultaneously, Australian television and media coverage heightened the fear of terrorism among the public (Crowley, 2013). The newly elected conservative government largely amplified such racist media rhetoric and public fear, which drew on the same narratives that Said had outlined in the concept of Orientalism, to steer legislation and maintain political power (Lawrence, 2006). Consequently, Australia tightened its national borders to keep 'terrorists' out of the country (Lawson, 2002).

Since then, the 'creeping blight' of Islamophobia in Australia has increased within the political spectrum from the left to the right and peaked in 2014 following international events in Iraq and Syria related to Daesh, an extreme deviant group also known as ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Briskman, 2015; Poynting & Briskman, 2018). The potential threat of Australian Muslims being involved or somehow connected to ISIS resulted in early morning police raids on Muslim homes in both Sydney and Melbourne (Briskman, 2015, p. 112). Although these raids resulted only in the arrest of one man (among the many who had been raided) who was charged with sending money to a person overseas suspected of fighting in Syria, the prearranged media presence and government rhetoric related to these raids escalated community fears (Briskman, 2015). They also added to the vicious cycle of positioning Australian Muslims as the threat within to be institutionally controlled through legal measures to maintain public and national security (Briskman, 2015). In similar fashion to past colonial domination of Muslim communities, contemporary legal measures have reignited such Orientalist thinking and thus normalised Islamophobia across government, media, and public spheres in Australian and other Western societies.

This form of dominating discrimination has been presented as a necessary precaution against violent extremism and as a measure of defending 'Australian values' (Poynting & Briskman, 2018). Discrimination of Muslims and the positioning of them as

Others who are culturally incompatible with (the vaguely defined) 'Australian culture and values' is now expanding from the right to the left of the political and media spectrum (Poynting & Briskman, 2018). Some broad examples that indicate the vagueness of Australian values as published on the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (n.d.) website indicate leadership, people, accountability, collaboration, and achievement as specific Australian values—yet these may overlap easily with the values of other cultures, too. There is now 'a significant ideological and political relationship between extreme right-wing groups and politicians and media outlets that would claim liberal respectability' (Poynting & Briskman, 2018, p. 2). Those within politics and media previously considered respectable and who would rarely involve themselves in Muslim vilification have now band-wagoned with the far right in their anti-Muslim semantics (Dagistanli & Grewal, 2012). The justification is largely the same as the radicalisation logic that links Muslims to potential threats and as such just steps away from radicalisation. Thus, radicalisation theories, together with CVE measures, have fostered blatant anti-Muslim discrimination and racism that manifests as 'a common good' for protecting 'Australian culture and values'. These forms of discrimination and racism have become institutionalised across the Australian sociopolitical spectrum and made respectable and unquestionable (Poynting & Briskman, 2018). Poynting and Briskman (2018) wrote, 'What was previously identified as the "creeping blight" of Islamophobia in Australia (Briskman, 2015) is now institutionalized via Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) measures and taken for granted, endangering democratic principles, cultural pluralism, and indeed the rule of law' (p. 2).

The manifestation of institutional discrimination against Muslims in Australia has increasingly been presented as a necessity in the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism (Akbarzadeh, 2016). The Australian Government currently enacts a CVE policy that targets Muslims specifically. The CVE presumption, like that of the radicalisation theory in the United States, considers there to be a linear trajectory from nonviolence to extremist violence solely through the supposedly driving force of Islamic ideology (Dagistanli et al., 2018). As such, it is 'anti-Muslim and entrenched in Islamophobic ideas and beliefs' (Yassine & Briskman, 2019, p. 55).

'Soft policing' of Muslim people in Australia has become the norm since 2008, with everyday practices of young Muslim people being a target of such policing (Yassine & Briskman, 2019, p. 57). Australian CVE policies overwhelmingly target young Muslim men,

'who are not only "suspects" but in need of being "saved" from extremism' (Yassine & Briskman, 2019, p. 62). At the state level, in response to 'concerns' about Muslim students being radicalised into violent extremist ideologies, the New South Wales (NSW) government audits all Muslim students who perform prayers (Government of NSW, 2015; Yassine & Briskman, 2019). Enforcing this audit, then NSW premier Mike Baird claimed that these audits were necessary to prevent radicalisations occurring in the playgrounds at primary and secondary state schools in NSW, encouraging teachers to reach out to police should they notice any sign of radicalisation among Muslim children ('NSW premier orders audit into prayer groups in government schools', 2015), thus putting all Muslim children in public schools under state surveillance. This illustrates the structural level of Islamophobia in Australia where this dangerous order endorsed by the NSW state is putting young Muslim children at risk for all sorts of state-supported discrimination and targeting.

Hence, and rather ironically, while it is no longer acceptable to be openly discriminatory or racist against a person because of their colour or race, such as was the case for ethnoculturally diverse Muslims during the 'White Australia' period (1901-73) (Kabir, 2006), the same discriminatory or racist act is justified if it is done to a person because of their religious identity (Kundnani, 2007a). While Muslims in the past, and especially during 'White Australia' were discriminated against due to their ethnoculture, such as being Afghan, Indian, Malay, or Javanese to mention a few examples (Kabir, 2006), Muslims in contemporary Australia are discriminated against due to their religion regardless of their ethnoculture (Iner, 2019). Interestingly, while white looking Muslims in the past, such as Albanian Muslims, did not experience discrimination due to their ethnoculture (Kabir, 2006), white looking Muslims in contemporary times experience racist discrimination due to their religion as Chapter 5 and 6 will later show. This is because such rhetoric does not consider Islam to be an involuntary 'race' but rather a voluntary religious identity, and thus, from a race discrimination legislation point of view, it is not considered racism, although more recently there is an increasing awareness that Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism (Meer, 2008, 2013).

This necessitates a definition of what Muslim identity entails. Nahid Kabir (2010) writes that Muslims are those who follow the religion of Islam. They believe in only one God, Allah (Arabic for 'God'), as the creator, and in Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as the final messenger in a long lineage of prophets. Kabir (2010,

2012) continues to explain that Muslim devotional practices rests on the five pillars of the Islamic faith, namely: testimony of faith (belief in one God, and in the prophet Muhammad as the final messenger), prayer (5 daily prayers), fasting (during the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, alms giving to the needy (2.5% of net annual savings), and pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during one's lifetime if circumstances allow it. Besides the fact that practicing Muslims generally adhere to the five pillars of Islam, Muslims worldwide, as well as in Australia, make up a heterogenous group of ethnically and culturally diverse people (Kabir, 2012). Islamic religious identity may be expressed in culturally diverse ways, and in everyday life through faith practices around food, dress , prayer and so on. Some of these practices, such as modest dress codes and wearing the hijab, or dietary restrictions that exclude pork and alcohol products makes Muslim religious identity more visible in Western, Christian majority social contexts.

The hijab is a particular marker of Muslim identity for Muslim women, who may choose to wear the hijab for different reasons, including a complex combination of cultural, political, or faith-based reasons (Ahmed, 1992, 2011; Mirza, 2013). What is important, however, is to note that the hijab is a part of traditional Muslim faith, and a dress code to which many practicing Muslim women adhere. In many Western societies, the hijab is often perceived to be a symbol of patriarchal control. However, in Western societies, as well as some other non-Western global contexts, most women have a choice to wear the hijab, and therefore the meanings associated with the hijab can vary. For some the hijab may be a way to affirm self-identity and pride in their Muslim heritage, especially in response to Islamophobia. For others it may be a feminist expression rejecting sexualisation and sexism in a society that undresses, commodifies, and sexualises women's bodies (Ahmed, 2011).

While some women embrace the hijab, others find wearing the hijab increasingly difficult. In response to Islamophobic targeting of the hijab, some Muslim women have taken off their hijab, and this remains their choice. Therefore, meanings surrounding the hijab are complex. While many Western /Global North societies claim to respect and tolerate minorities, minority practices, and multiculturalism (Ahmed, 2011), discussions related to the hijab appear to depart from those narratives .

The hijab, therefore, remains a signifier for the positioning Muslims as 'Other 'due to their religious identity. Within an Australian context, this gained a renewed vigour during the Sydney siege in December 2014. During this siege, a man held 18 hostages at a popular

café in Sydney for 22 hours before the hostage situation was dismantled and he was shot dead (Colic-Peisker et al., 2016). The Sydney siege was labelled the first terrorism attack in Australia and triggered the media, government, and popular discourse to further the image of Muslims as Others. While 'the Sydney siege affirmed Australian multiculturalism in a broad sense', it 'also strongly implied the Otherness of Muslims' (Colic-Peisker et al., 2016, p. 373).

The Orientalist discrimination against Muslims continues in Australia; what has changed is the institutional discourse used to legally justify it. Australian Muslims are increasingly stereotyped and represented as not belonging within the national space, as is further explained in the Chapter 3. However, emerging research on Australian Muslims show that racism impacts Muslims in various ways, motivating some to become activists for their own rights and the rights of all Australian Muslims, while others to retreat further from the mainstream society into spaces of safety from such racism (Esposito & Iner, 2018; Peucker, 2019, 2021). This is especially apparent in the response to recent parliamentarian, media, and public discourse on Islam and Muslims in Australia that can occasionally reiterate far right perspectives. The result is an emerging activism across Muslim communities to raise awareness of their situational standpoint in terms of their governmental belonging and human rights, while empowering other Muslims to embrace their faith identities (Peucker, 2021).

Where other researchers have mainly been concerned with the polarisation that anti-Muslim racism can create within the mainstream society between Muslims and non-Muslims (See for example Akbarzadeh, 2016), some emerging research has shifted to look beyond polarisation towards Muslim engagement in Australia (Dryzek & Kanra, 2014; Peucker, 2021). This is of particular interest to this research, as it shows that Muslims, despite being painted as not belonging and un-Australian by some contemporary discourses, are civically engaged not only for their human rights as citizens of Australia, but for the betterment of Australia for all through a combination of intra and intercommunity efforts (Peucker, 2021). This is not to say that the polarisation and dangerous targeting of Muslims resulting from anti-Muslim racism is less concerning. Rather, a shift in academic focus can help shed light on important matters of activism, intercommunity contact and collaboration, and real, though incremental multicultural progress in Australia.

Reignited Focus on Muslim Visibility to Promote the Muslim Threat

Muslim clothing styles as well as other markers of 'Muslimness' have been increasingly targeted with renewed vigour in Western contexts since September 11, as signs of difference from Western culture and symbols of potential threat (Kundnani, 2014). For example, the New York Police Department's (NYPD's) four-step radicalisation model considers that a person who adopts traditional Islamic clothing, grows a beard, wears the hijab, and is otherwise visually identifiable as Muslim is already in phase two towards radicalisation, thus already halfway towards becoming a terrorist. This is similar to other radicalisation models used in other Western (Fanon, 1980) contexts, including Australia, that rely heavily on embodied or otherwise Muslim visibility as a symbol of potential threat (see Gill, 2007; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2004, 2007; Taarnby, 2005). This, by default, wrongly stereotypes a large majority of Muslim people as a step closer to terrorism simply because of their *appearance* or visibility and has resulted in intensified state surveillance against Muslims (Kundnani, 2012, 2014). The same concept was applied during colonial times in which Muslim identity, often embodied by visibly Muslim women, was targeted as uncivilized problem in need of Western intervention. In *A Dying Colonialism*, Franz Fanon (1980) described this specific targeting of Muslim women as a powerful method of colonial domination and Western imperialism, not dissimilar to contemporary Islamophobia that targets Islamic identity via the visible Muslim woman. The campaign of French colonists that focused on liberating Algerian Muslim women from their uncivilized patriarchal cultures by undressing her from her religious coverings, often with the intervention of white French women, is not dissimilar to popular, neo-liberal feminisms (Rottenberg 2018).

Contemporary Islamophobia is not limited to state surveillance. Current Islamophobia manifests from the institutional to everyday lived experiences (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020). At the institutional level, especially in government and media rhetoric, Islamophobic rhetoric justified via Western feminist arguments is increasingly using binaries to categorise Muslims in other ways. These Western feminist arguments and categorisations remain relevant to radicalisation theories and include concepts such as moderate, good, bad, extremist, jihadist, and radical Muslim (Abdel-Fattah & Krayem, 2018; Kundnani, 2012). The boundaries between these categories of Muslims have blurred due to the fluid definitions and what constitutes, for example, a moderate or good Muslim versus a radical

or extreme Muslim (Kundnani, 2014). The fluidity and power of this rhetoric has been evident; Muslims who have previously been hailed moderate such as Tariq Ramadan and Yassmin Abdel-Magied have since been labelled extremists and radicals because they provide alternative viewpoints to those expressed by the mainstream and Western feminist status quo ('Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia', 2018; Ramadan, 2010).

The Australian Muslim woman, Yassmin Abdel-Magied, who had previously been hailed a moderate Muslim and had emerged on various platforms discussing issues relating to the Australian Muslim experience, was cast as problematic upon voicing her opinion regarding Anzac Day in which she indicated that there was no honour in war. This gesture was enough to exclude her from the fold of moderacy. As a result, Australian Yassmin Abdel-Magied migrated to United Kingdom as a voluntary act based on mainstream vilification and due to the backlash in opposition to her viewpoints, making the idea of free speech for Muslims, and especially Muslim women, in Australia a questionable concept. Free speech is a questionable concept for other marginalised and vulnerable groups, as well. Thus, this grey area, where one is perceived moderate and good one day and a problematic Other the next, has fostered a demonising atmosphere for Western Muslims in which they have been perceived asproblematic, capable of violence at any time, and therefore in need of foreign political intervention and local and national policing (Dagistanli et al., 2018; Kundnani, 2014; Poynting & Mason, 2006). For Yassmin Abdel-Magied, this meant she was only celebrated as the moderate good Muslim as long as she was adhering to the unwritten rules of conduct, and once she stepped out of line, she lost this celebrated status and was recategorised as a threatening Other—someone to be disciplined and feared (*Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia*, 2018). This indicates the unpredictability of Muslim belonging to wider Western contexts as full citizens with rights to free speech and thinking. Muslim belonging is further discussed in Chapter 3 using Ghassan Hage's (2000) concept of governmental and passive belonging, which also illuminates some of the Muslim women's experiences in the discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6).

In a similar fashion to past Orientalist narratives, deployed during colonial times to further dominance in colonised Muslim lands (Alloula, 1986; Fanon, 1980; Zine, 2002), contemporary Islamophobic narratives allow for increased policing of Muslims in Western contexts (Kundnani, 2014). The stereotyped ideology of the Muslim threat that resulted in

Yassmin Abdel-Magied being labelled problematic overnight is also the same ideology that has resulted in an era of surveillance, detention, and deportation targeting Muslims (Islam, 2018). As a result, many Muslims have been arrested, interrogated, tortured, and legally humiliated in pre-emptive CVE measures (Kumar, 2012).

Muslims are constantly under surveillance; undercover informants frequent mosques, bookstores, and community centres; school children who pray are audited, and homes and communities are raided (Kundnani, 2014; Yassine & Briskman, 2019). Muslims who attempt to confront wider systemic violations of their rights are often perceived as threats to the government (Kundnani, 2014). In the Australian context, for example, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) has been given increased powers in its deradicalisation efforts to monitor people via tapping their communication devices, installing listening devices in cars, homes, and workplaces, and using personal tracking devices on people, among numerous other surveillance methods (Cain, 2004).

More recently, there has been an increasing critique in opposition to contemporary policing of Muslim communities, which is increasingly recognised as largely Islamophobic and systematically discriminating against Muslims (Kundnani, 2014; Poynting & Briskman, 2018; Yassine & Briskman, 2019). Muslim groups, nonprofit organisations, and larger national organisations in the United States, Canada, some European countries, and Australia have increasingly mobilised both politically and socially to counteract this form of Islamophobia (see Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2019; Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2019; National Council of Canadian Muslims, 2019).

While there is a growing recognition that Islamophobic policing goes against basic human rights for privacy and freedom of speech and thought, it is ironically still argued as a necessary measure in contemporary times—to ensure the safety of Australia against potential internal threats. Many who are targeted by such ASIO measures are Muslims (Briskman, 2015; Yassine & Briskman, 2019), which indicates the structural presence of contemporary Islamophobia. Thus, the agentic act of standing up for one's rights may potentially also makes one a target.

Furthermore, some Muslims are coerced by agent provocateurs into committing crimes and are then arrested and trialled for CVE crimes (Kundnani, 2014). The 'legal apparatus' of Western governments has thus been configured to specifically target Muslims as suspects in a post-September 11 era (Kumar, 2012, p. 140), thereby continually policing

Muslim people in similar fashion to past Orientalist efforts. As visibility plays a large role in such targeting, Muslim people who are more visibly Muslim—whether through clothing styles, physical appearance, or via their stereotypically Muslim names such as 'Mohammed' or 'Aisha'—are especially targeted for such policing. This often renders Muslim women, who may be more visible due to clothing styles especially, targets of such gendered Islamophobic policing.

Renewed Focus on Muslim Women

> I personally have an issue with Western feminism. Even the term 'feminism' ticks a nerve with me. For me, it irritates me a little bit because they talk about women's rights, they talk about this and about that, but there's still an underlying tone of negativity when they talk about Islam, you know. (Raniya, 27, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

In the above quote, Raniya shares her frustration with what she calls Western feminism emerging in a post-September 11 context. This form of feminism, Raniya recognises, promotes women's rights yet undermines the different and alternative ways that Muslim women embrace their faith in their own feminist efforts. Thus, she maintains that mainstream Western feminism is not inclusive of Muslim women's lived experiences as it undermines their very faith, from which many Muslim women find empowerment. So much so, she associates the word 'feminism' with that of mainstream Western feminism, recognising the underlying racist connotations that discriminate against other ways of being feminist or doing gendered work for women's rights. Another participant, Khadija, also voiced her strong argument against Western feminism:

> I have a problem with the term feminism because of its long political history. For example, the way feminism was used as a tool by the colonialist to distance Muslim women from their religion. For example, in Egypt, there was a guy called Lord Cromer. He was from Britain and went over to Egypt to push the idea of feminism among the women over there. But at the same time, back in England, he was part of a men's club that was against the suffragettes! Double standards, because in his country he felt threatened by women's rights, but in Egypt he thought that was a good way to control the population under British rule by making the Muslim women feel that there is something wrong with their religion. And since women make half the population, and they are the ones mostly raising the next generation, he thought this would make it

> easier to colonise that country. Once you create ruptures in people's normal traditional ways of living, I feel like that makes it easier to control that population ideologically. (Khadija, 27, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, high school teacher)

The above two arguments by two different women in this study emphasise how currently, like past Orientalist narratives, Muslim women remain represented via contemporary Islamophobia as still in need of rescue by the West (Ho, 2007; Razack, 2004). It is also a racist form of feminist thinking, that perceives its own Eurocentric argument superior to the many diverse feminist thinking and practices that exist across cultures and faiths (Chandra Talpade, 2003; Hobson, 2007). For example, Muslim women commentators in Western mainstream media who speak up about issues relating to their personal experiences as Muslims are often silenced and shut down by Islamophobia (Carland, 2012). This is exactly the frustration of these women: They are not against women's rights but against the double standards of mainstream Western feminist standards and the historical ways it has been used to control Muslim populations. They recognise the ongoing coloniality in certain Western knowledges and ideas, like that of Western liberal feminism, which, despite its effort for gendered rights, continues to express racist attitudes towards Muslim women as one in need of Western emancipation from her veil and male counterparts (Bilge, 2010).On the other hand, some critical feminist thinking opposed to the racist categorisation of Muslim women, has theorised Muslim women's veil and visibility as a form of resistance to Western hegemony and culture (Ahmed, 2011). Sirma Bilge (2010) asserts that other feminist scholarship which sees the hijab as opperssive also robs Muslim women of their agency as it places Muslim women between the binaries of subordination and oppression, and reconfirms Muslims as still the Other in relation to Western culture. Feminist discussions on the experiences of Muslim women should instead account for Muslim womens' agency and intersectionality in their everyday expressions of their faith, including their choice of making their religious identity visible via modest dress codes (Bilge, 2010; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Muslim women, and specifically their bodies, have for a long time been racialized (Ahmed, 2002; Zine, 2002), and (mis)represented via Eurocentric or Orientalist narratives and in a way been colonised in narrative and representation. These narratives and representations have regenerated the same image of Muslim women throughout history as

illustrated in earlier sections of this chapter. Decolonial thinking and doing, also referred to as decoloniality, which is the dismantling of Western-centric representations and knowledges on the Other, seeks to dismantle ongoing coloniality in the form of Orientalist and racist representations by understanding how larger, structural, systemic powers operate within the wider sociopolitical context (Grosfoguel, 2013). Decoloniality is vital to Muslim women's responses to and resistance to gendered Islamophobia as it helps situate their embodied experiences within a wider web of powers and historical narratives. It raises awareness of past and current systems of oppressions and how these interplay to maintain steady oppression of marginalised and vulnerable people. It is also important to note efforts exerted in dismantling racist and Orientalist assumptions in order to reclaim the narrative, self-representation, and knowledge production of themselves and their communities, as further demonstrated in Chapter 5.

The mainstream Western feminist narrative since September 11 evolved to position Muslim women as simultaneous victims and potential threats or suspects within the wider CVE narratives (Hussein, 2016). Furthermore, the focus on Muslim women is also present in contemporary nationalist terrains where Muslim women are subject both to protectionism from the state (in paternalistic ways) and to violation during times of war, as was seen during the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq following September 11 and the subsequent CVE policies (Ho, 2007). This logic was especially evident in the War on Terror and subsequent narratives that focused on the integration of Muslims into Western culture (Kundnani, 2007b). In such narratives, Islamophobia was masked by the justification of protecting the West in opposition to the potential threat of the Muslim Other as well as 'liberating' Muslim women from their perceived backward cultures, regimes, and male friends and kin (Razack, 2005).

Similar to past Orientalist justifications for colonisation of the Muslim world, shortly after September 11, Western feminist justifications were used by the Bush administration and the European allies to justify the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Bhattacharyya, 2008; Riley et al., 2008). Other Western feminist rhetoric soon band-wagoned these conversations and used the imaginary of the oppressed Muslim female body as a further justification for these wars and occupation as well as the internal policing of Muslims in the West (Razack, 2004). This is what upset Raniya and distanced her from the notion of feminism.

The same logic extended to saving Muslim women worldwide, including Western Muslim women, from assumed oppression by their men and corruption by their faith (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Andreassen, 2018; Ho, 2007). Thus, Orientalist representations of Muslim women saw a renewed vigour through gendered Islamophobia and have since enforced a sharp contrast between an imagined liberal West and a perceived inferior and backward Muslim culture in need of liberation through continued intervention and policing (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Razack, 2004, 2005, 2008; Zine, 2002). Thus, Muslim women and girls have increasingly become prime targets of Islamophobia in the post-September 11 era (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014; Razack, 2004), in similar fashion to past Orientalist targeting of Muslim women.

Largely through their dress, they have become the battlefield upon which different aspects of contemporary Islamophobia takes place (Ghumkhor, 2019). These battlefields include Western feminist rhetoric on gender equality and strong arguments for Muslim women's liberation from their presumed oppressed state and what is presumed their stifled agency (Fernandez, 2009). Furthermore, extreme right-wing ideologies have increasingly entered this battlefield, fighting against Islam by targeting Muslim women specifically. In 2014, for example, anti-Muslim campaigns driven by the extreme right-wing Australian Defence Force encouraged its followers to take pictures of Muslim women in public areas, post these on their Facebook Page and get their followers to make derogatory comments against the women and Islam (*Who's Behind The ADL's Racist Violence?*, 2014). Muslim women are thereby 'caught at the intersection' of discrimination against religion and discrimination against women (Aziz, 2012, p. 236). Caught in this intersection of gendered Islamophobia, Muslim women are characterised in three distinct ways: as a sexualised and indefensible body, as a figure in need of Western salvation, and as a terrorist threat (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014; Razack, 2004).

Furthermore, gendered Islamophobia is especially preoccupied with Muslim women's dress. Terms such as 'unveiling', 'lifting the veil', and 'behind the veil', among many other terms and discursive phrases, indicate a strong desire to uncover Muslim women (Alqallaf, 2018; Perry, 2014). The strong desire and fantasy to uncover Muslim women from their traditional dress is also the desire to expand Western control in order to protect itself (Ghumkhor, 2019). So much so, that the west is ready to wage war to liberate Muslim women from their dress and identity (Abu-Lughod, 2013), not so much to save

women from something as it is to save her *into something* – one to adheres strictly to Western principals and ways of being, where “the political nature of the impulse to unveil is driven by deep psychic investment in the west” (Ghumkhor, 2019). Within the Australian media and government rhetoric, gendered Islamophobia that is focused on Muslim women’s dress is used as a narrative tool in constructing an Australian national image in opposition to the Muslim Other—an image of liberty, democracy, technological advancement, economic superiority, enlightenment and, most of all, an image of utopian gender equality (Ho, 2007). Some have attempted at banning the Muslim dress, especially the niqab or burqa (face coverings) in the Australian public claiming it threatening to Australian ideals of freedom. Some political parties such as One Nation and Australian Conservatives officially support the niqab ban (*Cory Bernardi renews his push for a burqa ban*, 2018). Other known politicians who have also been vocal about an official niqab ban are Jacqui Lambi, Mark Latham, George Christensen, Pauline Hanson, and Tony Abbot, whose arguments for the ban is justified as enforcing Australian values, protecting against the Islamic threat, and achieving gender equality (Benbow, 2005; *Tony Abbott: consider burqa ban in places ‘dedicated to Australian values’*, 2017).

This notion of gender equality in gendered Islamophobic rhetoric has built a bridge between Western populist feminism and Islamophobia and has enabled Islamophobia to be articulated in the name of liberal feminism (Dagistanli & Milivojevic, 2013; Ho, 2007; Razack, 2005, p. 12). A good example of such liberal feminist arguments is Susan Moller Okin’s (1999) essay, ‘Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?’ in which she argues that Western tolerance for multiculturalism threatens women’s rights in liberal democracies. The solution, she asserted, is to eliminate cultural practices that seem oppressive towards women by enforcing assimilation of immigrants into Western cultures. By arguing that multiculturalism is bad for women, she assumes that a Western liberal democracy is good for women and therefore fails to deeply analyse the many oppressive structures and practices against women that also occur in Western liberal democracies against which other feminist respondents argued (Flax, 1995; Mookherjee, 2005). Instead, Okin analysed gender oppression as a cultural problem rather than an intersectional problem that targets women through various isms regardless of religious, cultural, and ethnic background. Many in government, media, or among the public who think along the same lines as Okin speak from

the same vantage point of superiority in which racist arguments are expressed in populist feminist and nationalist terms (G. Hage, 2000).

Gendered Islamophobic thinking also ties Muslim women's dress to be a signifier of aggression intending to take over the West through rejecting Western modernity (Navarro, 2010). The essentialised rhetoric on the Muslim threat beneath the veil is perpetuated in media representations (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008; Navarro, 2010). In Australia, Pauline Hanson, a hard-right-wing senator, made a theatrical entrance to Senate dressed in a black burqa to demonstrate this perceived threat. After walking to her podium, she dramatically flung the burqa off and proceeded to talk about the importance of a niqab ban in the country (Murphy, 2017). This display showed that Hanson, and those who are like-minded, feel threatened by 2.6% of the total Australian population who identify as Muslim. While a much smaller minority of Muslim women in Australia wear a niqab, Hanson's contrived action was widely reported in the media. While widely condemned, Hanson suffered no consequences for her abuse of parliamentary privilege. As one of the highly articulated participants said in response to Hanson's antics,

> Whenever Pauline Hanson uses gendered language about Muslim women, it then is actually patriarchy. It looks like women's liberation to the uninformed viewer, but underneath it if you just scratch the surface it's patriarchy, it's colonisation being embodied in different ways. (Zainab, 30, Lebanese, hijab, lawyer)

Narratives like Hanson's illustrate the entrenched institutional colonial ideologies that dehumanise Muslims (Kundnani, 2014) and entrench gendered Islamophobic ideologies and rhetoric within the wider society in the name of Western feminism seeking to liberate Muslim women (Anna, 2016; Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Perry, 2014). The visible Muslim woman is thus also used as an important tool in gendered nationalism, which uses arguments of gendered cultural difference to promote the national image in opposition to the gendered cultural Other (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Mainstream media platforms are heavily involved in promoting gendered Islamophobic arguments to the wider public, thus enforcing persistent dominant narratives and misrepresentations about Muslim women. This is particularly observed in the way that media represent Muslim women's dress, where media references to the so-called veil indiscriminately encompass a vast array of Muslim clothing but particularly the headscarf

and the niqab. Perry (2014) observed that as 'much as it [the niqab] symbolizes chasteness . . . it also induces sexualized fantasies of what lies beneath' (p. 81). In times of increasingly available media technologies that easily broadcast images across various media platforms, it also arguably exacerbates the vulnerability of Muslim women to Islamophobia, making them hyper-visible. Perry continued, 'It is, perhaps, no surprise then that so many attacks on Muslim women involve ripping off her hijab. To satisfy the male fantasy, she must be at least metaphorically stripped, unveiled and thus exposed' (p. 82) (see also Matthew, 2019). While previously Muslim women were physically stripped to serve staged Orientalist representations of the Muslim world and create the fantasy of the hypersexualised Muslim woman, contemporary Muslim women are unveiled—both verbally through discourse and physically through attacks on her body (Iner, 2019; Perry, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the veil, in whatever form it comes, has become symbolic in contemporary Islamophobia as it signifies both a seductive and simultaneously hated difference (Perry, 2014; Yeğenoğlu, 1998).

In direct contrast to the imagined seductive force beneath the veil, and again largely because of their dress, Muslim women are also characterised as helpless victims in need of liberation from barbarous men or as submissive, weak human beings controlled by religious patriarchy (Ahmed, 1992; Razack, 2004). Perry (2014) critiqued this contradiction:

> Ironically, this popular stereotype of the 'weak' victim has become part of the controlling image of Muslim women . . . supporters of the war turned to the narrative of saving Muslim women from their oppressors. Ironically, the patriarchal model of Islam was to be defeated by an alternative patriarchy. (p. 82-83)

Here the Orientalist representation of Muslim women resurges, connecting her attire to cultural backwardness, while emphasising Western cultural superiority and freedom (Razack, 2004).

In addition to the images of the Muslim woman as seductive and/or oppressed, a third image of a threatening Other is also embraced in many Western contexts (Perry, 2014). Within such sociopolitical environments in which gendered Islamophobia flourishes,

more visible Muslim women,[4] and especially those who are visibly Muslim via their dress, are often portrayed as threatening to Western culture and values as well as to public safety (Zempi, 2014; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015).

Similar to narratives in other Western contexts globally, the rhetoric following September 11 became increasingly gendered in Australia, too, and focused on representing the image of problematic Muslim men and oppressed Muslim women through reignited, familiar Orientalist discourse. It drew heavily on the concept of liberating Muslim women from their oppressive cultures and male counterparts and in general protecting Australia, its culture, and values, however they may be defined, from the perceived Islamic threat within to combat Islamic radicalism and prevent potential threat (Briskman, 2015; Ho, 2007; Hussein, 2016). The othering of Muslims in Australian nationalism is not dissimilar to past Orientalist processes of othering via the concept of White saviour of brown and Muslim people, which is further discussed in Chapter 3 (Ghassan Hage, 2000).

Such narrative shapes the national image in opposition to what it perceives to lie outside this image. One focus of these narratives has been the embodied visibility of Muslim women that highlights an alternative lifestyle, faith, culture, and ways of being than what is projected as Australian culture and values. The past few years are evident of this, where Australian Muslim women have been increasingly used to define Australian nationalism (Ho, 2007). Muslim women, their bodies, and dress have been targeted in nationalist discourses and expressed in various forms.

One particular form of argument that frequents the Australian context is the 'White saviour' argument, where 'Muslim men and Islam are positioned as perpetrators of oppression and harm toward Muslim women, requiring non-Muslim intervention' (Briskman & Latham, 2017, p. 33; Dagistanli, 2007; Dagistanli & Grewal, 2012). Discourses focusing on protecting Muslim women's rights have also portrayed Islam and Muslim men as misogynistic and threatening to Australian culture and values.

These narratives have at times peaked, as was observed following the 2005 Cronulla riots, where Muslim males were represented as inherently misogynistic and dangerous (Ho, 2007). The Cronulla riots also marked a shift in Australian history where racist othering

[4] Muslim women can be visible in different ways. Visibility is mostly linked to Muslim women's dress; however, Muslim women can be visibly Muslim to the wider public via other means such as their Muslim-sounding names or via presenting themselves as Muslim to the public, thus making their Muslim identity visible.

moved from the Arab Other to the Muslim Other. This period also marked the emergence of 'chivalry-cum-feminism', which entered the stage on the othering of Muslims by 'accusing Muslims of hyperpatriarchy, and purporting to "rescue" Muslim women while targeting them for racist vilification' (Hussein & Poynting, 2017, p. 333).

These narratives, which focus on the perceived aggressive and misogynistic behaviour of Muslim males (Razack, 2004; Yeğenoğlu, 1998), remain 'part of a broader history of colonial feminism that legitimated Western supremacy through arguing that colonised societies oppressed "their women" and were thus unfit for self-governance' (Ho, 2007, p. 290). The same logic still manifests in Western feminist representations of Muslim societies, which often conflate their discourse with elements of radicalisation theories and CVE measures to present themselves as 'Muslim women's new defenders' (Ho, 2007, p. 290). This Orientalist narrative in Western contexts, including Australia, have rendered Muslim women especially vulnerable to gendered Islamophobic targeting in their everyday lives (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Iner, 2019; Perry, 2014). The next section details how Muslim women in Western contexts experience, but also respond to, gendered Islamophobia. As Chapter 5 later shows, some Muslim women are very much aware of the coloniality of power inherent in wider structures and institutions from which gendered Islamophobia is expressed and work hard at distancing themselves from this while producing alternative understanding of their experiences.

Gendered Islamophobia

Targeted by Gendered Islamophobia

> It's that women are experiencing trauma different to men. (Zainab, 30, Lebanese, hijab, lawyer)

> My in-laws can't stand the hijab. They don't like Islam much . . . My mother-in-law doesn't like Islam, or the hijab, but she doesn't really say anything. I try to put on a nice dress and make my hijab prettier. I try not to wear black . . . and [I] dress myself in something pretty, like a nice dress or something and make sure it's not black. She associates everything with ISIS. She's always watching TV, that's all she ever hears and sees. (Bella, 23, Dutch Maltese, jilbab, dental hygienist, currently stay-at-home mum)

Using Zine's (2006, p. 240) concept of 'gendered Islamophobia' as the Islamophobic targeting of Muslim women in which racism and sexism intersect in its oppression, this

section explores how Muslim women experience this targeting in embodied ways in contemporary times. (Mirza, 2013) As Bella's example above shows, gendered Islamophobia is an embodied experience. It is played out both on and within Muslim women's bodies as they experience gendered Islamophobia, process it internally within the body, and respond to it from the body (Mirza, 2013). This is because Muslim women are often the embodiment of their faith due to their visibility as Muslim, and by extension, also the embodiment of the Orientalist misrepresentations held about their gendered and Othered bodies (Mirza, 2013). Therefore, an analysis of Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia must account for their holistic gendered and bodied experiences. This is because racism does not occur separate to racialized bodies, but is internalised, processed, and responded to by racialized bodies in embodied ways that manifest the entrenched nature of racism external to the body (Fanon, 1980; 2004; 2008).

The notion of gendered Islamophobia has in more recent times included both Muslim women and Muslim men's experiences of the way Islamophobia targets them in gendered ways. A recent definition of gendered Islamophobia provided by the Justice for Muslims Collective (2019) stated, 'Gendered Islamophobia consists of the ways the state utilizes gendered forms of violence to oppress, monitor, punish, maim and control Muslim bodies' (p. 2.) For the purpose of this research, gendered Islamophobia refers to the way Muslim women experience Islamophobia in ways where racism and sexism intersect in its oppression or discrimination. Thus, gendered Islamophobia is much more than racism; it is the forceful intersecting of multiple oppressions against Muslim women that Muslim women in return choose to respond to and resist in different embodied ways.

An example of Muslim women's lived experiences is reflected in Zempi and Chakraborti's (2015) study of veiled Muslim women within contemporary Islamophobic environments. Their study showed the numerous and complex ways that gendered Islamophobia affected these Muslim women, their families, and their wider communities, as well as their sense of vulnerability in such an environment. The study concluded that gendered Islamophobia that targets Muslim women not only harms the women but also harms the wider society as it exacerbates the opposition of 'us' versus 'them' (p. 44).

A similar Australian study by Akbarzadeh (2016) reflected on the damaging effects of Islamophobia on the Australian society more broadly. Similarly, Akbarzadeh found that Islamophobia in Australia harms Muslim targets directly as well as polarising the larger

society into the binaries of Australian and Muslim Others creating internal divisions within Muslim communities. Hage (2002) asserted a similar argument, emphasising how racism towards one group of people also harms the wider society. The reasons for this are complex and may partly be because a continuous othering of minority groups within nation states may eventually result in these groups losing trust and belonging to the wider society, which in return will exacerbate existing concerns and create additional issues within the wider community. This is further explicated in Chapter 3 on the notion of governmental and passive belonging as conceptualised by Hage (2000).

This is exactly why it is crucial to understand the impact of gendered Islamophobia on Muslim women. The entrenched gendered Islamophobia across the macro and the microlevels in the wider society translate into everyday expressions of gendered Islamophobia directed at Muslim women. Additionally, gendered Islamophobia is expressed with various intensities, ranging from covert to overt expressions, as exemplified by emerging research on Muslim women in Western global contexts. Such experiences include covert discrimination, dirty looks, verbal abuse, policing of Muslim women's dress, surveillance, institutional and systemic discrimination, physical abuse, and hate crimes (see Andreassen, 2013; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2004; Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Perry, 2014; Poynting et al., 2004; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015; Zine, 2006).

A recent study on Muslim women's experiences in the United States showed that women who were more visibly Muslim due to their dress were particularly vulnerable to gendered Islamophobic abuse (Bakali & Soubani, 2021). Their hijab, in particular, rendered them visible targets to verbal and physical abuse. Participants in this study expressed being stared at and treated differently, verbally abused, having eggs thrown at them, stereotyped, and eroticised (Bakali & Soubani, 2021, para. 32). One participant from this study experienced sexually offensive abuse because of her hijab. She said,

> I was at the kids' school for Grandparents Day. That is when we invite all the grandparents of the kids from the school to come and experience a day in their grandchildren's school. The kids put on performances and shows. I was in the music room, and we were having a book fair. All the grandparents were waiting in line with their grandchildren to buy them books from the book fair. There [were] a lot of people, about 100 people in a long line out the door. One of the male grandparents was with his wife and approaches me and says, 'Do you have hair under that thing?' I smiled and

> said, ‘Yes I do’. So, he reaches behind me and grabs my scarf and my ponytail and yanks it. And he says, ‘Oh yeah, I can feel the ponytail back there’. Then he turns to his wife and says, ‘Oh yeah she has hair under there’. He says to me, ‘Why don’t you just take it off’ and motions with his hands, pointing up and down my body, ‘Why don’t you take it all off?’ (Bakali & Soubani, 2021, para. 32)

It is not surprising to note that the perpetrator here was a White man. This is consistent with other studies on gendered Islamophobia that showed perpetrators were more likely to be men (Iner, 2019; Najib & Hopkins, 2020; Perry, 2014). A Muslim woman’s visibility as Muslim triggers these men into eroticising her body via verbal and physical abuse. Their aim is to undress her, to render her invisible as a Muslim woman, to strip her of her Muslimness. This reflects the reignited Orientalist thinking that has permeated the wider society, where White men are perceived as the saviours of Muslim women from their menfolk and faith (Razack, 2004).

The *Islamophobia in Australia Report II (2017–2018)* (Iner, 2019) provided numerous recent examples of Australian Muslim women victimised by gendered Islamophobia. The report also showed that it was not only the women who witnessed such gendered racism but also their children who tended to accompany their mothers and be present during gendered Islamophobic attacks. One participant from this study reported,

> I was standing with my two small children outside Bakers Delight waiting for my cousin so we could get a coffee. An elderly Anglo male was walking towards me and screaming at me ‘take that bloody disguise off and become an Australian because quite frankly we are sick of it’. I have been abused before and I just laugh because they are obviously uneducated bigots but then my kids were freaking out and asking me why that man was yelling at me and what was he saying about Australia (Case 201–16). (Iner, 2019, p. 50)

Again, as exemplified by the above quote, the perpetrator was a White Anglo male hurling verbal abuse at the Muslim woman, directing her to take off her dress in order to ‘become an Australian’ because he was ‘sick of it’. This further reflects how deeply entrenched Orientalist thinking and gendered Islamophobia is in the wider Australian society that houses a very small fraction of visible Muslim women. It also reflects Hage’s (2000b) concept of governmental belonging where a person perceives themselves as one fully belonging to the Australian nation and with the right to police and manage those

perceived as a nonbelonging Other. This concept of governmental belonging is further discussed in Chapter 3 and used to analyse some of the women's experiences. This targeting of Muslim mothers exposes their children to witnessing gendered Islamophobic abuse from a young age, sometimes also resulting in the internalisation of Islamophobia, which was also verified by this research. Such incidents, depending on the type of abuse, can be uncomfortable at the least and extremely traumatising at worst. As scholarly research on gendered Islamophobia expands both in Australia and in other Western contexts, the impact of gendered Islamophobia on Muslim children needs crucial attention.

Although most of the time women were abused while alone without the presence of a male partner, there were also instances in which Muslim women in Australia were abused in front of their male partners, as exemplified by another participant's husband in the *Islamophobia in Australia Report II (2017–2018)*. He said,

> That guy asked us whether we are Muslims as he saw my wife was wearing hijab (my wife is an Aussie converted to Islam while we were in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia). He not only abused us, but also went into my little children's (aged 10, 8, 7 and 5) face and said he'd love to kill them all. My kids got scared and started crying. I cannot forget that journey for my entire life as I was sitting helplessly and watching him abuse myself, my wife and children (Case 150–16). (Iner, 2019, p. 56)

The above quote illustrates how dangerous Islamophobia can be. Structural and systemic gendered Islamophobic narrative sustained by Orientalist thinking and expressed at the macrolevel of society is often absorbed by individuals and expressed at the microlevel of society. Essed (1991) described 'everyday racism' (p. 16 as the ways individual expressions of racism at the microlevel entangle with the structural and systemic forms of racism at the macrolevel within society. Everyday individual expressions of gendered Islamophobia must be considered within the systemic macrostructures of the wider Australian society. Thus, as Hage (2000) emphasised, the hand that rips off the hijab is also an extension of the state narratives that are aimed at policing Muslim communities. Thus, gendered Islamophobia targeting Muslim women can be considered the physical manifestation of the wider Islamophobic narrative in Australia.

Despite the prevalence of gendered Islamophobia in Western contexts, there is simultaneous emerging research that indicates the agency of Muslim women in their

resistance in opposition to Islamophobia (Mahmood, 2005). The next section explores the resistance to Islamophobia in further detail.

Responding to (Gendered) Islamophobia

While Islamophobia in general has gained a strong foothold in the West in the post-September 11 era, there is simultaneously an increasing critique and resistance emerging from within Western contexts in opposition to Islamophobia. Activists from numerous Western-based organisations, both Muslim, secular, or representing other faiths and cultures, have exerted an effort to reduce Islamophobia through advocacy, interfaith dialogues, intercultural contact, education, and public speaking. Other forms of responses have also included the use of comedy, poetry and spoken word, social media platforms, and art to dismantle Islamophobic narratives, thinking, and stereotypes within the wider Western contexts (Amarasingam, 2010; Araújo, 2019; Faiza, 2021; Mahfouz, 2017; Moe, 2017; Sabra et al., 2015; Wheatley, 2019; *You See Monsters*, 2019).

Increased academic responses in opposition to Islamophobia have also emerged from both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars (see Abdel-Fattah, 2017b; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Andreassen, 2013; Briskman, 2015; Ho, 2007; Hussein, 2016; Kumar, 2012; Kundnani, 2014; McGinty, 2020; Mirza, 2013; Razack, 2005; Shakira, 2015). Specifically, Muslim women scholars in the post-September 11 era have published numerous scholarly critiques of Islamophobia, arguing against Orientalist representations, the binary 'logic' between Muslims and the West, and racist discriminations of Islam and Muslims (see Abdel-Fattah, 2017a; Abu-Lughod, 2013; Aziz, 2012; Hussein, 2016; Itaoui, 2016; Kahf, 1999; Mirza, 2013; Razack, 2004; Zine, 2002).

In establishing their critiques and responses in opposition to Islamophobia, some have strongly emphasised that Islamophobia is a form of racism, arguing that Muslims have been largely racialised based on their religion, and therefore, Islamophobia should be treated as systemic anti-Muslim racism (Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; Kundnani, 2007a; Meer, 2013). Framing Islamophobia as a form of systemic racism with a historical root in Orientalism has also shaped recent academic work on gendered Islamophobia (see Abu-Lughod, 2013; Keddie, 2018; Razack, 2005). These works have dealt with gendered Islamophobia as a phenomenon spanning the structural and the everyday, impacting

Muslim women in different ways in their everyday lives (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Iner, 2019; Perry, 2014).

Part of this emerging research on Islamophobia has also focused on Muslim women's embodied experiences of and responses to gendered Islamophobia, predominantly within Europe and the United States (see Al-Deen, 2019; L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Keddie, 2018; McGinty, 2012; Najib & Hopkins, 2019; Tetreault et al., 2019), but also a few slowly emerging within the Australian context (Krayem et al., 2022)

One study by Lewicki and O'Toole (2017) explored the political mobilisation of Muslim women in the United Kingdom within Islamophobic contexts. Focusing on two themes, the Bristol-based mobilisation against FMG and Muslim women's attempts to renegotiate inclusive spaces within mosques, their study showed that Muslim women challenged, engaged with, and reinterpreted sociopolitical norms, both Islamophobic and misogynistic. Furthermore, the Muslim women's activist mobilisation extended beyond the local and national to transnational contexts and struggles.

Mirza's (2013) study, also in the United Kingdom, echoed the agentic responses of Muslim women within potential Islamophobic Western contexts. Using postcolonial Black feminist frameworks of intersectionality, she explored how discourse that frames Muslim women in the West as 'either dangerous or oppressed is lived out on and within the body' (p. 5). Her study illustrated that practices like wearing the veil are embodied, and the engagement of these embodied practices inscribe gendered and racialised representations on the Muslim woman's body in intersectional ways from which they also respond in agentic ways. She found that Muslim women are agentic in their responses to gendered Islamophobia through their embodied daily life choices, such as choosing to wear the veil or not.

Muslim women's gendered Islamophobic experiences have also been explored in the United States. McGinty's (2020) study on embodied Islamophobia used 'emotional geopolitics, and Pain and Staeheli's "intimacy-geopolitics" (2014)' (p. 402) to suggest embodied and structural forms of Islamophobia are distinct yet related forms of Islamophobia. She argued that 'while systematic Islamophobia refers to the discursive and institutional dimensions, embodied Islamophobia signifies the ultimately lived and emotional experiences of anti-Muslim assaults in the context of the everyday' (McGinty, 2020, p. 402). Like past Orientalist narratives, current embodied Islamophobia, particularly

its gendered dimension, relates to broader forms of geopolitics that use the Muslim woman as a tool in Islamophobic rhetoric. This significantly affects young Muslim women and their sense of belonging to the larger sociopolitical context. But it is also from these experiences that Muslim women respond to and even resist gendered Islamophobia.

Similar research has also begun to emerge within the Australian context (see Akbarzadeh, 2010; Al-Deen, 2019; L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Keddie, 2018; Keddie et al., 2021; Mnguni, 2011). However, there remains a large gap in scholarship on Australian Muslim women's lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia, especially on Muslim women's agentic responses and resistance to Islamophobia. In a context where Muslim women have for a long time been represented as meek, oppressed, and incapable, these slowly emerging studies are beginning to paint a different picture of Muslim women, distancing themselves from previous Orientalist portrayals. These studies explore Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia in Australia and highlight how Muslim women draw inspiration and agency from their faith and cultures (Akbarzadeh, 2010; Keddie, 2017). Other Australian studies have explored the numerous ways that Australian Muslim women challenge gendered Islamophobic discourses, showing that they use diverse discursive and performative intersectional strategies to challenge gendered Islamophobic representations that construct Islam and Muslims as backward and Muslim women as oppressed (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Green, 2011; Iner, 2019).

The diverse ways that Muslim women respond to Islamophobia within the Australian context is reflected in Keddie's (2018, p. 522) study which showed that Australian Muslim women use 'feminist' *ijtihad* (which is the 'jurisprudential interpretation of religious text') to challenge Islamophobic representations of their faith, community, and Muslim women. Here, Keddie used 'feminist' with caution as she recognises the problematic ways that Western feminism has represented Islam, Muslims, and Muslim women. It is noteworthy to mention that feminism—Western or otherwise—is not one singular or unified view or movement, and some problematic narratives have emerged under the guise of feminism. Aware of this, Keddie's use of 'feminist' indicates Muslim women's gendered interpretations of their faith and the gendered ways they use their faith to challenge Islamophobia within wider Australian society.

More recently, a number of Muslim academics published *Muslim Women and Agency: an Australian Context* that explores how Australian Muslim women exercise agency

in different ways despite the discourse about Muslim women has remained mostly stagnant for decades, echoing the same misrepresentations (Krayem et al., 2022). Various contributors in this book show the great agentic progress and impact of Muslim women in Australia across different socio-political and educational areas, such as the contribution of early Muslim women pioneers in Australia (Ansari, 2022); Muslim women's agency in Australian domestic violence services (Krayem & Krayem, 2022); and the revival of female Islamic scholarship in Australia (Abdo & Jones, 2022). Others have also explored Muslim women's civil, social, and political participation in Australia showing that Muslim women have an influential role within civil, social and political spheres in Australia, although some are more active than others depending on their intersectional and educational capital (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Mc Cue, 2008). Furthermore, others have also explored Muslim women's agentic fight against right-wing media in which twelve young Australian Muslim women worked alongside four journalists working to find ways to break the right-wing racist discursive links between Muslims, terrorism, and refugees (Giotis, 2021). Others have explored Muslim women's integration and belonging in Australia, deepening their understanding of Muslim women's agency, gendered experiences, Islam, and sport participation in Australia, (Cheng, 2019). While all of these studies provide insights into Islamophobia from the perspective of Muslim women in Australia; such research is limited, particularly research on Australian Muslim women's daily experiences of and responses to Islamophobia. A more detailed understanding of Muslim women's day-to-day lived experiences is the primary aim of this research.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how historical dichotomies between what is considered Western and the Muslim Other have spanned from predating colonial times to current times. The Orientalist representation of otherised Muslims as not belonging to the West during colonial times has renewed in a post-September 11 era via the War on Terror and subsequent CVE measures and narratives that continue to show the ongoing coloniality of wider Western societies, where Muslims are systemically and structurally targeted. Similar to past Orientalist thinking, current narratives and representations also justify dominance over and policing of Muslim peoples and communities as a national necessity for security from potential Muslim threats. This is especially evident in the way gendered Islamophobia

operates by targeting the more visible Muslim woman to drive narratives aimed at further othering Muslims from the mainstream society.

Like past Orientalist narratives, contemporary narratives also frame Muslim women in need of saving from their faith, culture, and their men (Razack) while also being increasingly in need of policing. The Muslim woman has thus again become the battlefield on which gender, religion, and race intersect in complex ways, making her particularly vulnerable to gendered Islamophobic targeting in her everyday life, as she is often the visible embodiment of her faith and community. Despite the prevalence of gendered Islamophobia and the numerous daily challenges that this brings to Muslim women, there is a growing effort within scholarship in the Western context to resist Islamophobic narratives published by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. There is also an increasing awareness and activism among Western Muslim women to respond to gendered Islamophobia in their own unique ways.

This research adds to existing literature on Muslim women and Islamophobia, by providing insight into Australian Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia, as well as their gendered responses and resistance to it. As this research shows, Australian Muslim women are increasingly becoming their own defenders.

Chapter 3. Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter details the various conceptual frameworks used in this research to explore Australian Muslim women's experiences of and responses to gendered Islamophobia. This chapter first provides an overview of the historical and contemporary racialisation of Muslims in Western contexts, indicating that Islamophobia is a form of racism that operates both in structural and everyday forms. Merging Essed's (1991) concept of 'everyday racism' and Zine's (2006, p. 240 concept of 'gendered Islamophobia', this chapter then outlines the conceptual framework of everyday gendered Islamophobia to help explore how Australian Muslim women experience hostility. The women in this research experienced and responded to Islamophobia in varied ways. One interesting finding in the data was that the women felt they needed to 'manage' the situation by managing themselves and others. This is a gendered response to potential situations of hostility, deeming Hochschild's (2012) concept of emotional labour a suitable conceptual framework to analyse their experiences. Furthermore, Hochschild's concept of emotional labour is explored as a suitable conceptual tool in understanding Muslim women's responses to gendered Islamophobia from their intersectional social positions.

The 'Racialisation' of Muslims?

L'Orient vu de l'Occident (*The Orient Seen From the Occident*) by Etienne Dinet and Slimane Ben Ibrahim in 1925 is one of the first works to mention Islamophobia (Allen, 2010; Bravo López, 2010; Karaoglu, 2018); the meaning of the term was not clarified at the time but appeared to signify some sort of bias against Islam. The same term was later popularised by the 1997 report *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* published by the Runnymede Trust (Bravo López, 2010; Runnymede Trust Commision of British Muslims and Islamophobia & Conway, 1997). Others have also used this term, although the associated meanings differ to contemporary definitions of Islamophobia, including both the fear of Islam by Muslims and the fear of Islam by non-Muslims (Allen, 2010). The most contemporary understanding of Islamophobia, despite the variations in technical

definitions, is a discrimination of Islam and Muslims by non-Muslims (Meer, 2013; Meer & Modood, 2009b).

The literal meaning of Islamophobia also suggests an irrational fear of Islam and Muslims, where being terrified by the Muslim Other is both an irrational fear and a fear of something perceived irrational (Semati, 2010). The literal meaning suggests that an irrational fear of something is problematic when dealing with anti-Muslim hostility as it renders the Islamophobe a phobic holding irrational, uncontrolled fears that are not an active choice. This may be partially true in certain contexts where the wider structural and systemic nature of Islamophobia impacts a person's mental health, producing real fear of Others, in this case Islam and Muslims (Alarcon, 2019). However, racialisation and expressions of racism are often intentional choices, where everyday racist expressions are interlinked with the structural and systemic racist narratives in the wider society (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2003). The lack of consensus on the meaning of Islamophobia has led many academics to attempt a definition beyond its literal meaning (see Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Bleich, 2012; Bravo López, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2010; Meer, 2013).

Some critics argue Islamophobia is an unfounded hostility towards Muslims and a prejudice deeply rooted in history that fears the potential transcultural changes that could occur through real, multicultural contact in a presumed Judeo Christian West (Marranci, 2004; Sayyid & Vakil, 2009). Furthermore, some contemporary scholars and commentators argue that Islamophobia cannot be considered anti-Muslim racism. One of the main arguments is that Islam is not a racial category since Muslims are ethno-culturally diverse; this is an argument that often characterises the stance of those involved in the political and legal system (Kundnani, 2014; Meer, 2007; Meer & Modood, 2009b). An example of this are the CVE measures mentioned in Chapter 2, which echoes the insistence across such institutions that they do not 'see' colour (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), and therefore, these measures are not racist although they both racialise and express discrimination against the racialised group.

Others emphasise Islamophobia as a form of racism that racialises all Muslims into a homogenous group despite their ethnocultural diversity and targets them with racist hostility because of their religious affiliation (Meer, 2013; Meer & Modood, 2009a). Such commentators provide historical and contemporary evidence for the racialisation of Muslims through homogenised understandings of Muslims. They argue that the racialisation

of Muslims is not disconnected from wider historical and political processes of racism and exists today as an altered form of past racialisation processes though justified differently across time and space (Awan & Zempi, 2020). Following scholars who argue Muslims are racialised and therefore subject to racism, the term Islamophobia in this research refers to, and is interchangeable with, anti-Muslim racism. This is because although Muslims are ethnoculturally diverse, they have, through various narratives, been racialised into a single homogenous group. This homogenous group status affects self-identified Muslims in varying systemic ways.

Racism and Racialisation

The concept of racialisation traces back to 1899 (Barot & Bird, 2001), but many scholars link racialisation to Franz Fanon and specifically his writings on European colonialism and domination (Miles, 2003) in which Fanon (1980; 2004; 2008) reveals how lives are ordered and shaped by racism and racialisation (Murji & Solomos, 2005, p. 8). Many more contemporary scholars have also discussed race and racialisation (see Barot & Bird, 2001;; Goldberg, 1993, 2002; Meer, 2013; Miles, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1994), with some arguing that racialisation is overused in literature, often in generic terms without rigorous discussion and theorising of its meaning and practical mechanics (Essed & Goldberg, 2002; Murji & Solomos, 2005). These scholars highlight the need for researchers to define racialisation as it is used in their research. Taking this advice, the current research drew on the definition of racialisation provided by Murji and Solomos (2005, p. 5) as well as Meer (2013; Meer & Modood, 2009b), who state that while race is not real in a biological sense, racialisation categorises people into homogenous groups based on other embodied markers such as dress style, stereotypical names associated with that category, and skin colour, among others. Therefore, racism and racialisation are not mutually exclusive as racist systems construct racialised categories, and those who exhibit markers of the racialised category are also likely to experience racism (Meer & Modood, 2009b; Murji & Solomos, 2005).

Theories on which racism is grounded have changed over time (Blaut, 1992). In the period prior to the early 19th century, racism was grounded in biblical theory that viewed non-Europeans and non-Whites as inferior and a curse (Blaut, 1992). The Crusades, Balkan-forced migration of Muslims, the Spanish Reconquista, the colonisation of the Americas, and

the Atlantic 'slave trade' were all justified with this religious-based racist theory (Drakulic, 2009; Grosfoguel, 2013). From the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, social Darwinism and eugenics gained a foothold in academia. Thus, religion-based racist theory was displaced by a biological argument grounded in pseudoscience that perceived Europeans and Whites as biologically superior (Blaut, 1992). By the mid-20th century, after the World War II and the opposition to Nazism, the biological arguments were mostly displaced by cultural arguments, which viewed the Europeans as culturally 'superior' (Balibar, 1996; Blaut, 1992). However, these biological and cultural constructs of racism were not mutually exclusive either, simply the justifications to continue the racialisation and racist practice.

However, there have been some critiques of race and racialisation. In the United States, for example, cultural anthropologist Franz Boas dedicated much scholarly effort through his anthropological work with American Indigenous peoples to dismantle conceptions of hierarchy based on race and racialisation of people (Boas, 1982). He argued that conceptions of hierarchy based on race or culture were a product of social categorisation. His arguments also affected other critiques of race and racialisation, especially African American arguments and practical opposition to racism active in the United States from the early 20th century (Collins & Sturdevant, 2008; Du Bois, 2019). Other powerful contrary critiques of race (including of the superiority of White European cultures) also arose from the demise of Nazism and the recognition of the Holocaust through the Nuremberg and other trials of World War II war criminals (Ehrenfreund, 2007; Lee, 2011).

Thus, as society has mostly moved away from biological justifications of race and racialisation, now mostly cultural arguments are more broadly used to racialise diverse people into a homogenous group due to their religious and cultural differences or other visual markers. The biological argument, while it has been discredited, has not been completely displaced by the cultural argument, and some refer to biological superiority in their racialising of peoples into categories and in their racist expressions against categories deemed inferior. However, contemporary racism and racialisation mostly uses cultural arguments that racialise people and justify their racist expressions against them (Blaut, 1992; Kundnani, 2014; Meer, 2013), as is later exemplified in this chapter on the way Muslims have been racialised and experience racist expressions justified by various arguments, such as CVE measures.

Islamophobia as Anti-Muslim Racism

Until recently, scholars considered racism a phenomenon occurring with the rise of Europe and European colonialism in the Americas. However, Meer (2013) argued that contemporary racism, and specifically Islamophobia, relates to a history of religious bigotry long before race became used in the scientific endeavour to racialise people into categories in post-Enlightenment ideology. Meer also asserted that the racial formation thesis, as brought forward by Omi and Winant (1994), in which they argued that 'the conception of race does not occur until the rise of Europe and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas' (p. 61), is not an entirely accurate analysis of race and racialisation of Muslims. On the contrary, he asserted, the category of race and the process of racialising Muslims occurred prior to the European colonisation of the Americas. However, only recently have conceptions on race, racialisation, and racism appeared in discussions on Islamophobia. This is despite Muslims having a long history of being racialised as the enemy Other.

Contemporary Islamophobia uses cultural justifications to deem Muslims barbaric, savage, culturally inferior, uncivilised, in need of policing, potential threats, and terrorists (Balibar, 1996; Razack, 2005). However, many emerging Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and organisations have increasingly pushed back against this narrative, attempting to dismantle such racialisation. While these sorts of resistive efforts are increasing and spreading across various sectors of society, the homogenisation of Muslims still occurs across many domains such as in mainstream media and within Western government narratives. It is within these domains that the cultural label Muslim or Islamic is used to homogenise Muslims, driving measures and narratives that can contribute to anti-Muslim racism.

Hence, Islamophobia, despite its many definitions, still reflects a historical trajectory of anti-Muslim hostility, borrowing from the many forms of political, social, economic, Orientalist, colonial, and epistemic racisms of the past nearly one thousand years. In Australia, this hostility manifests in numerous areas including in both everyday and structural contexts (Ahmed, 2012; Akbarzadeh, 2016; Aly, 2010; Briskman, 2015; Briskman & Latham, 2017; Dagistanli et al., 2018; Poynting & Briskman, 2018; Yassine & Briskman, 2019). Thus, contemporary Islamophobia is not disconnected from historical racialisation and racism in opposition to Muslims. Rather, Islamophobia is contextual, differently

motivated, and expressed across varied geographical, social, and political contexts across the globe. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the more recent racialisation of Muslims in Western contexts has been exacerbated since the War on Terror and ongoing national CVE measures (see Alimahomed, 2011; Ata, 2010; Kumar, 2012; Kundnani, 2014; Muscati, 2002). This form of racialisation uncritically categorises Muslims, and those who appear to be Muslims, as potential threats and suspects in need of surveillance and policing (Kundnani, 2007a, 2007b, 2014). Ironically, this form of racialisation is so deeply entrenched in the wider Western context that even people who are not Muslim but are mistaken for one due to wearing clothing items, for example, the Sikh turban or having a Muslim-sounding name, are also racialised and experience anti-Muslim hostility. It is also worth noting here that these CVE measures are at odds with what security agencies in the United States and Australia now know: that ultra-White, ultra-right extremism takes more lives and/or is a far greater threat than Islamic terrorism (J. Walter & Chang, 2021).

The structurally entrenched nature of Islamophobic sentiment is also realised in everyday interactions with Muslims. This is especially evident in Muslim women's experiences in Australia, whereby gendered Islamophobia becomes interlinked with systemic racism in Australia (Ho, 2007). As Muslim women who are more visibly Muslim are seen as the embodiment of their faith and culture, they also become more vulnerable to Islamophobic violence.

Nation, Governmental Belonging, and 'Everyday (Anti-Muslim) Racism'

Racism is expressed in numerous ways, spanning from subtle expressions to more systemic and structural forms of nationalist expression. As flagged in Chapter 2, the relationship between everyday and more structural forms of racism is explored in Essed's (1991) *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory.* Essed explored Black women's experiences of everyday racism in the United States and the Netherlands. She argued that an individual racist expression cannot be analysed apart from a broader social and systemic structure of racism. Bonilla-Silva (1997) emphasised a similar point and argued that racism has, for the most part, been theorised as individual and independent from social structures by being considered a psychological phenomenon. Theorisation of racism as a psychological problem rather than a structural and systemic issue could also underscore the issue with the term Islamophobia, thus the importance of moving beyond such theorisation

and recognising Islamophobia as a form of racism. Furthermore, racism has previously been thought of as a ‘static phenomenon’, a form of ‘irrational thinking’, and ‘a remnant of a past historical racial situation’ (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, pp. 467–469). Like Essed, Bonilla-Silva (1997, 2003) suggested that racialisation and the resultant racism is structural and systemic in nature and that ‘the creation of a category of “other” involves the creation of a category of “same”’ (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 471).

The notion of sameness against which an Other is established is a point mobilised by Hage (2000) in his work *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* in which he explores the concept of belonging within multicultural Australia. He exemplified this with a comparison between White racism and White multiculturalism and argued that Australia has, since colonisation, been presumed a White nation:

> White racists and White multiculturalists share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White ‘ethnics’ are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will. (G. Hage, 2000, p. 18)

Here, Hage emphasised that the White nation fantasy perceives Australian culture to be that of Anglo Whiteness and is used in a comparative manner to measure non-White Australians’ cultural belonging to Australia. Non-White Australians here are all those who are of a non-Anglo White heritage. He explained that those who show minimal cultural traits of their ethnoculture and acquire more cultural capital of what is fantasised as Whiteness in Australia—for instance, fluent English with an Australian accent, engagement in activities perceived to be typically Australian like surfing, having a BBQ—come closer to the ideal of Australian as White. The accumulation of cultural capital, however, does not ensure what Hage termed governmental belonging, or the natural and taken-for-granted belonging to the nation that also involves the ability to engage in the management of the national space. This is because, as Hage asserted, only White Australians have the privilege of governmental belonging, whereas others find themselves on a spectrum of passive belonging to the state. Despite their efforts to gain cultural capital to increase their sense of belonging, as long as the White nation fantasy continues, non-White Australians are excluded from the national governmental belonging. This is illustrated in some of the women’s experiences, where their

attempts at exercising governmental belonging were shut down via structural expressions of Islamophobia.

From the above discussion on belonging, it can be argued that although in reality Australia is the home to both Indigenous and multi-ethnic people, both White multiculturalists and White racists share the same concept that the Australian nation is structured around White power and culture, and both work to maintain this by managing the increasingly active role of non-White Australians (G. Hage, 2000). This is what Hage (2000b) called the 'White nation fantasy', explaining that although Australia is, in reality, multi-ethnic, nationalists continue to strive to maintain the idea that Australia is inherently White and should continue to be structured around White culture where all others must fit into this White mould. Therefore, incidents such as the attack on Muslim women and the ripping off of their hijabs is considered by Hage a nationalist aggression that is also immersed with racism in which the perpetrator is exercising White power based on the idea that the non-White Australian is 'a mere object within this space' (p. 28). The issue, then, becomes about governmental belonging within the nationalist space. According to Hage, the nationalist space and, by extension, all institutional and structural settings within Australia, adhere to the fantasy of the White nation. For non-White Australians, belonging is often about 'behaving nationally' to accumulate as much national capital as possible to fit in and prove their national belonging and loyalty (G. Hage, 2000, p. 45; Sedef, 2005). As was earlier mentioned, this attempt at simply fitting in and being perceived as belonging to Australia is what Hage (2000b) referred to as passive belonging, which is in comparison to governmental belonging exercised by White Australians who do not need to strive to accumulate national capital to prove their belonging as the national space is inherently perceived as theirs and their belonging is guaranteed without struggle (p. 45). Another example of governmental belonging versus passive belonging becomes evident in some of the participants' experiences in Muslim minority geographical areas in Sydney and NSW, indicating strongly that an Anglo White intersectional social positioning impacts strongly on feelings of belonging to the wider Australian context.

As illustrated by Hage (2000), although non-White Australians may belong in terms of having Australian citizenship, and exercise accumulated national capital such as the language and cultural traits considered typically Australian, they are nonetheless limited in their capacity and power to manage the nationalist space. Because Australia is

foundationally considered a White nation, it is White Australians who primarily exercise governmental belonging to the national space, whereas non-White Australians mostly fall under passive belonging by being considered nominally Australian but not granted the platform for active management, contribution, and a role in shaping the nationalist space and discourse. Therefore, the level of belonging in wider Australia is not equally distributed as White Australians have the capital of governmental belonging compared to non-White Australians who 'passively belong'.

Governmental belonging exercised by White Australians also extends to their perceived entitlement to manage non-White Australians to ensure that the everyday active roles of non-White Australians do not alter the White nation fantasy. Therefore, any signs of governmental belonging exercised by Muslims—who are deemed non-White—are not welcomed and are sometimes met with hostility. Such rejections and hostility are about reasserting one's position of power within the White nation fantasy and emphasising one's belonging to the nation as normative by governing and rejecting others' attempts at belonging, and it is inherently structurally racist.

For the purposes of this research, I argue racist expressions are not individual acts of hostility but have a wider significance; they work to normalise understandings of Otherness around non-White people who are only nominally considered as belonging within the national space. Once racist meanings have been attached to categories of people, they become simultaneously normalised in systemic ways at the institutional level in society as well as at the everyday level in interactive processes between the everyday microlevels and the structural macrolevels of the wider society. In short, entrenched Islamophobic narratives at the micro and macrolevels of Australia normalise the othering of Muslims within the White nationalist space.

This feeds back into Bonilla-Silva's (1997) analysis of the normalisation of racialised categories which, they argued, drives racial subordination ranging from its structural to the everyday forms. Racially loaded narratives can pervade welfare, criminal justice systems, and medical institutions and intermingle with everyday racist expressions that result in the subordination of racialised groups (Essed, 1991). This is especially relevant as this research explored Muslim women's lived experiences of Islamophobia in Australia, which also include experiences across such mentioned sectors where racist narratives may occur in structural ways. As Kundnani (2014) asserted,

> My emphasis is on Islamophobia as a form of structural racism directed at Muslims and the ways in which it is sustained through a symbiotic relationship with the official thinking and practices of the war on terror. Its significance does not lie primarily in the individual prejudices it generates but in its wider political consequences—its enabling of systematic violations of the rights of Muslims and its demonization of actions taken to remedy those violations. (p. 10)

Furthermore, as Bonilla-Silva (1997) and Essed (Essed, 1991) have argued, it is important to recognise that individual members of a society interpret and act upon the racialised and stereotyped information presented to them from the wider systemic structures. Then, individuals in a constant and perpetual loop perpetually feed this back into society where repetition of racist understanding is normalised. Kundnani (2014) uses the example of terrorism to assert that 'the political act of labelling certain things as terrorism is usually a racialized act' (p. 22). In doing so, the problem is projected as a Muslim problem and not as a form of Western politics or entrenched racism (Kundnani, 2014). This has resulted in stricter measures for Muslims including surveillance, deradicalisation programs, detentions, tougher immigration procedures, community policing, and more. Equally, it has translated into forms of everyday Islamophobic expressions that reflect wider thinking.

Given that everyday expressions of Islamophobia cannot be separated from the larger sociopolitical structure that produces and nurtures such ideologies, so, too, are major Islamophobic incidents interconnected with more banal everyday forms of Islamophobic sentiment. For example, the Christchurch Mosque massacre in New Zealand was an extreme example of how everyday Islamophobic hate crimes are interlinked with the wider structural narrative. The shooting was not the act of a lone wolf, and nor was it a hate crime independent of wider racist narratives. It was an expression of Islamophobia that also permeates the structural institutions and systems of our society, which was expressed at an individual level by the perpetrator at Christchurch Mosque. An increase in hate crimes against marginalised groups was also seen in the United States under then president Donald Trump, when anti-Muslim and general anti-immigrant rhetoric soared high (Hodwitz & Massingale, 2021), indicating strongly that individual hate crimes are entangled with and fuelled by wider racist narratives. While the Christchurch Mosque massacre was one extreme example of Islamophobic expression, there are far more examples that are not as extreme but are indirect and subtle in the form of incivility.

Less overt forms of Islamophobia are manifested in constructions of the ‘good’ or the ‘moderate’ Muslim (Abdel-Fattah & Krayem, 2018) and may thus increase or decrease a person’s cultural capital of national belonging, as previously mentioned (G. Hage, 2000). These labels, frequently deployed by Western governments and media, focus on the moderate and thus continuously test Muslim integration and alliances with the West. Kundnani (2014) emphasised this problem:

> To be classed as moderate, Muslims must . . . align themselves with the fantasies of the war on terror; they are expected to constrain their religion to the private sphere but also to speak out against extremists’ misinterpretations of Islam; they are supposed to see themselves as liberal individuals but also declare an allegiance to the national collective; they are meant to put their capacity for reason above blind faith but not let it lead to criticisms of the West; and they have to publicly condemn using violence to achieve political ends—except when their own governments do so. No wonder moderate Muslims are said to be hard to find. (p. 110)

The Australian Government and mainstream media also enable structural Islamophobia by presenting negative and often exaggerated representations of Islam and Muslims as violent, backwards, and misogynist (Abdel-Fattah, 2017; Briskman, 2015; Poynting & Perry, 2007; Rane et al., 2010). Governments and media thereby normalise and fail to correct systemic and structural measures directed at Muslims in which exaggerated misrepresentations of Muslims continue to flourish in the wider community. For Australian Muslim women, as reflected in Chapter 2, this translates into various experiences of everyday gendered Islamophobia in their daily lives where ‘Islamophobic assaults and aggressions are emotional and psychological, social, spatial, gendered and institutional’ (McGinty, 2020, p. 409).

Experiencing Gendered Islamophobia

Muslim Women as Embodied Others

> I'm a social worker myself. Being a Muslim woman working in a psychiatric ward where I am the only Muslim Arab can be really nerve-wracking, because, obviously you feel like you stand out, and no matter what you do, how smart you are, how well you do your job, people will always see you as a Muslim first and foremost, because of your hijab and I am very conscious of that. (Raniya, 27, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

Muslim women experience everyday gendered Islamophobia from the intersection of gender, racial(ised) categorisation, class, and faith, among many other intersections. Their experiences are gendered and differ from the experiences of Muslim men in that while Muslim men are also targeted by Islamophobia, gendered Islamophobia especially preoccupies itself with Muslim *women*. In similar fashion to historical Orientalist (mis)representations of Muslim women, gendered Islamophobia targets them specifically because they are Muslim *women*, where racist hostility merges with sexist hostility.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, there is an Orientalist preoccupation with Muslim women's bodies. In particular, the veiled Muslim woman's body communicates her intersectional position as a sexed, raced, classed, and Muslim being: her visibility as a Muslim *woman* makes her vulnerable to racism, as well as sexism and misogyny. More clearly than words can communicate, she becomes the embodiment, or makes visible, her faith as well as community (Mirza, 2013; Rootham, 2015), and by virtue of being so visible, she also becomes the face of Islam. Generally speaking, then, a practising Muslim woman's experience of Islamophobia is often heightened with her embodied visibility as Muslim (Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Iner, 2019; Perry, 2014; Zempi, 2014; Zine, 2006). Likewise, Islamophobia disembodies Muslim women (Chatterjee, 2022)

Therefore, to understand Australian Muslim women's everyday experiences of Islamophobia, it is important to explore how various levels of visibility play a role in Muslim women's experiences and, in racialising their bodies, where 'race, gender and religion is written on and experienced within the body' (Mirza, 2013, p. 5).

When Muslim women's dress is repeatedly discussed in wider narratives as something backward, foreign, oppressive, threatening, non-Western, and so on, eventually these meanings, emotions, and associations become entrenched. Thus, these meanings, emotions, and associations are not intrinsic parts of Muslim women's dress but exist as a result of the repeated way they are associated with their dress. Consequently, Muslim women must navigate these persistent meanings and attempt to dismantle the various emotions, meanings, and associations related to their visible markers of Muslimness. While it is acknowledged that this is an emotionally tiresome task in which to continuously engage, it is also important to stress that persistent stereotypes are not permanent but continuously in flux. As persistent stereotypes are the result of repeated narratives, there is a possibility that negative connotations associated with Muslim women's dress can be dismantled with

the push forward of repeated counternarratives that associate positive emotions and meanings with Muslim women's dress.

Although the hijab and its many variants are markers associated with Islam and Muslimness (Ahmed, 1992, 2011), Muslim women who are not adhering to visible dress markers may be visibly Muslim in other ways or not visibly Muslim. Some may be visible through names that are often considered stereotypically Muslim, or other cultural dress codes, or skin colour, or Middle Eastern or South Asian ethnicity, among other markers. However, as mentioned briefly in the introduction, some Muslim women are not visibly Muslim to the wider public. Also, due to the self-selecting and snow-balling method to participate in this research as the Chapter 4 later shows, this research was limited only to practising and visibly Muslim women, who were visibly Muslim in different ways either via their dress, other Muslim markers, or by declaring their faith public. Therefore, the Muslim women's experiences as provided in the discussion chapters must be read in the context of this visibility and cannot be generalised to all Muslim women's experiences as some Muslim women are not visibly Muslim and may experience Islamophobia is different ways to women more visibly Muslim. Therefore, the issue with visibility is complex, and Muslim women may find themselves at different points on the spectrum of Muslim visibility and be identifiable, or not, as Muslims to the wider public through numerous markers and 'sticky images' associated with Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, even non-Muslim women who exhibit certain markers like the above may also find themselves associated with Muslimness.

However, the hijab and its variants remain one of the stronger markers that render Muslim women identifiable as Muslims to the wider society. It is because more visibly Muslim women have become markers of Otherness and the property of public debate across the political spectrum from left to right, rendering their hijab, dress and visibility 'a symbolic meaning far greater than its religious and social status' (Mirza, 2013, p. 6; see also Ho, 2007). This also shows how notions of gender play on Muslim women's bodies where they are expected to be a certain way because they are Muslim *women*. Just like little girls and boys are socially constructed to act in stereotypical ways associated with their gender, Muslim women by virtue of their gender are also socially constructed in the public imagining in Orientalist ways. Their social construction of their gendered behaviour contrasts that of

the social construction of non-Muslim women as forms of racism and Orientalism come to underpin these stereotypes.

While diverse Muslim women's visibility via the hijab embodies them as the symbols of Islam, Ipsita Chatterjee (2022, p. 340) introduces the notion of Islamophobia's disembodiment of Muslims (original emphasis and spelling). She argues:

> Disembodiment is worse than racialisation, sexualisation, de-modernisation, because while the racialized, the sexualised, barbarianized subject is de-humanised, a disembodied subject is *not even human*, she lacks a *being*.

Islamophobia disembodies Muslim women from their claim to resistance as their experiences of injustice has not been conceptualised nor validated, and her existence remain that of a problematic Other, something that must be annihilated in order to protect the West from invading Muslims and Islam. Thus, while on one hand Muslim women are embodied via their dress that renders them visible and easily identifiable as the symbol of Islam, Islamophobia works to disembody Muslim women by stripping them of their agency and right to exist wholly outside of labels of villainy (Chatterjee, 2022).

This shows how Muslim women's lived experiences are gendered and differ to their male counterparts and how the social construction of their gendered behaviour combined with racist underpinnings result in gendered Islamophobic stereotyping, embodiment and disembodiment in different ways. Muslim women's bodies have thereby become the battlefields on which gendered Islamophobia manifests through gendered and racist stereotypes (McGinty, 2020; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014; Razack, 2008).

Everyday Gendered Islamophobia

As discussed in Chapter 2, Muslim women experience Islamophobia in gendered ways, where racism and sexism intersect in embodied ways (Raja et al., 2019; Zine, 2006). Embodiment was explained by Grosz (1994) as internal subjectivity complexly expressed on the lived body. Grosz asserted that the analysis of the body therefore matters a lot in understanding internal subjectivities. She also maintained that analysis of embodiment is important in understanding the wider power structures in society as power structures and systems of oppression are internalised and expressed in embodied ways through lived experiences. As I demonstrate in the discussion chapters, in their accounts, some Muslim women participants, like Bella, emphasised the need to show a 'compliant' yet not

'oppressed' Muslim face to the public in opposition to the prevailing stereotypes of Muslim women as oppressed or suspects. This gendered self-representation was needed to counteract the gendered stereotypical constructions held about Muslims, which are also underpinned by racism. Emotional labour, which is further discussed later in this chapter and in the discussion chapters, was exerted in these efforts to manage the wider public's hostility or potential hostility.

Thus, analysing the embodied experiences of Muslim women in relation to gendered Islamophobia helps in the understanding of the wider power structures in society in which gendered Islamophobia is entrenched. Simply put, embodied analysis of Muslim women's lived experiences says a lot about both their internal subjectivities as well as the wider power structures in which Islamophobia is expressed.

Because embodied experiences are unique to each individual depending on their internal subjective interpretation of their external experiences, Muslim women experience and respond to gendered Islamophobia in different ways. Therefore, understanding Australian Muslim women's embodied experiences of gendered Islamophobia is vital in articulating the impact of Islamophobia in their lives. As explained in Chapter 2, gendered Islamophobia, which targets Muslim women bodies in different ways across micro and macro spheres, is lived on and within Muslim women's bodies as they subjectively internalise this racism and respond to it (McGinty, 2020). It is thus an embodied experience where intersectional social positioning, visibility or the lack of visibility, class, educational capital, among other things impact their lived experiences of Islamophobia (McGinty, 2020).

To explore Australian Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia, I build on McGinty's (2020) notion of embodied Islamophobia, which is the way Islamophobia is experienced on and within Muslim women's bodies, by merging it with Essed's (1991) concept of everyday racism, as defined in Chapter 2, to form the idea of everyday gendered and embodied Islamophobia as a conceptual framework to analyse Australian Muslim women's experiences of and responses to Islamophobia.

Fanon (1980, 2008) also outlined how racist oppression endorsed by structural powers manifests at the embodied level and how visibility as someone who stands out as different often plays a role in such oppression. He illustrated this with examples of Algerian people under French colonial rule in the mid-1900s who experienced racism on and within their bodies, subjectively internalising feelings of inferiority as well as finding empowerment

from within to resist such racist oppression for which French colonialism was notorious. Fanon also provided examples of how grotesque, racist, oppressive measures against the Algerian public, including women and children, impacted the victims and their families in complex ways, where their subjective perception of their identity as oppressed was expressed on and within their bodies. Their embodied racialised subjectivities resulted in some victims developing serious mental health conditions needing psychiatric help, whereas others, despite the great difficulty with coping with such oppression, found within themselves empowerment to stand up in resistance to oppression. Therefore, racist expressions may affect a victim's psychology and physical being in negative ways and may also result in intellectual internalisations of these racist expressions (Bhui et al., 2018; Fanon, 1980, 2008; Ferdinand et al., 2015; Okazaki, 2009).

Muslim Women's Identity

Fanon's emphasis on the impact of racism on the identities of victims may be applied generally to Muslim women experiencing gendered Islamophobia. Although Fanon's discussion applies to a different time and context, one where brutal colonial oppression was overt, it remains useful in conceptualising Muslim women's *identity* in relation to contemporary gendered Islamophobia often aided by Western feminism. Contemporary Islamophobia still impact on Muslim women's physical and psychological being and may result in internalisaton of racist expression which in return reshapes their identity. Or it may, in other instances, result in agentic resistance against such racism which Fanon also observed during his work in Algeria. The point remains that external experiences of racism may impact on internal subjectivities of targets of racism, thus shaping their identities. This is because, as Stuart Hall (1990, p. 222) argued, identity is not a simple concept and therefore susceptible to change due to external experiences:

> Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

Also, Hall's representation theory conceptualises representation as something that can be either positive or negative, but nonetheless repetitively assigns meaning to the

object of representation (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1992, 2013). In contemporary times, Hall argued, media is where most of such representations are made, and has immense power to sway the public in regards to people or other political or social issues, as it produces a particular meaning and fixes them to people, groups, or issues in the world. When stereotypes are used again and again, such as the French representation of Algerian women as subordinate, or such as contemporary gendered Islamophobic representations of Muslim women, they become naturalised as truth. Such representations occur to assert dominance and maintain power, however, they are not set in stone no matter how much they are presented as truth, as both the audience, as well as the people and groups represented, can attempt at reshaping the representation. For individual people, identity is continuously shaped and reshaped within this context of representation, and Muslim women in Australia experience their identity processes within Islamophobic contexts where hegemonic media outlets frequently target them through negative representations.

Combining Fanon and Halls' arguments, if mainstream discourse and representation of Muslim women is continuously negative, then Muslim women's identity may be shaped in ways that internalise the negative representation. Fanon saw evidence of this in Algeria under French colonial rule, where some Algerian women who were represented by the French as subordinate to Algerian men, backward, and in need of emancipation, began to perceive their identities as exactly that. The Muslim women's dress was especially made to symbolise subordination, and as Algerian women reshaped their identities in response to external representation, their hijabs came off and their dress changed to match that of Western dress codes at that time. This, for them, was an attempt at achieving emancipation from their internalised perception of a subordinate identity. For the French, however, colonisation of Algerian women and all of Algeria continued regardless of how much the Algerian women unveiled. Colonisation like racism has its own power, structural, and systemic agenda. It is, as previously discussed in this chapter, about power hegemony as Hage argued in *White Nation.*

Interestingly though, not all Algerian women responded to French colonial oppression and racism by adhering to acceptable French dress codes (Fanon, 1980). Some Algerian women resisted adopting French dress codes, and some went even further by dressing in more traditional and modest styles. Hence, in response to racist French representation of Algerian women, some Algerian women reshaped their identities to meet

that of acceptable French standards, while others reshaped their identity embracing more cultural, more religious, and more native traditional standards (Fanon, 1980). This shows that people's subjective internalisation of and responses to negative external representation varies, and how individual identities are continuously reshaped accordingly within the context of mainstream hegemonic representation.

Using these concepts, I explore how Australian Muslim women experience gendered Islamophobia, where anti-Muslim racism and sexism intersect, and how these are internalised subjectively and expressed by the women in embodied ways in their everyday lives.

Responding to Gendered Islamophobia

Emotional Labour and Gendered Islamophobia

Many Muslim women who stand out as the visible representatives of their faith community find themselves under pressure to alter their outward expressions so as to not trigger any Islamophobic aggression towards themselves or their Muslim communities. This burden of representation impacts Muslim women in various degrees and is often emotionally laborious as they navigate the wider Western contexts where potential Islamophobia could arise at any time towards them or their communities (Keddie et al., 2021).

Emotional labour is a concept coined and defined by Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* (1983, 2012) as the act of projecting one emotion while feeling another, such as choosing to remain silent and unaffected (displayed emotions) when in reality one is intimidated and hurt (actual emotions). In her book, Hochschild mostly refers to the way employees in the workforce managed their own emotions to produce a wanted state of mind in others. She refers to the way employees in emotionally burdensome situations, such as nurses, cashiers, or cabin crew, needed to manage their own emotions to regulate the emotions of their customers. Emotional labour, however, is not limited to employee experiences in the workforce. It is, in reality, something that many people do, but it is especially more common among women (Hochschild, 2012; Theodosius, 2008; Ward, 2016).

According to Hochschild (1983, 2012), emotional labour involves two different ways of managing one's emotions: deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting refers to when a person tries to shape their personal emotional state into an emotional state that is expected

of that person within a social context. Surface acting is when a person only puts on a face that reflects the emotional state that is expected of that person within a social context. Emotional labour is something in which we, and women in particular in accordance with gender roles, often unknowingly engage in our relationships with others, whether that is with family members, friends, colleagues, or others (Huppatz, 2012). Women are usually expected to be caring, nurturing, gentle, nonconfrontational, to keep the peace, and to soothe others, which are all traditionally meant to be feminine traits. We tend to continuously emotionally regulate ourselves to reflect the emotional states that are expected of us in any given social context.

Although emotional labour is something that we perform in our daily lives, it can become especially arduous and difficult in certain circumstances and in those situations that require us to continuously engage in managing our emotions and managing the emotions of others. Islamophobia is an example of a situation that requires the continuous engagement of emotional labour. The entrenched nature of Islamophobia in the wider society, spanning from the micro to macrolevels, mean that Muslims are likely to come across situations in their everyday lives that could potentially be Islamophobic. This is of course contextual, as well, but in general, it means that Muslims in such situations engage in some sort of emotional management to meet the expectations of the social context in which Islamophobic aggressions occur. Examples of such emotional management would be smiling in situations deemed potentially hostile or expressing an exaggerated friendliness and compliance while at the airport. Depending on the situation, Muslim women engage in emotional labour using different techniques to achieve either of the above: either the management of other or to appear unaffected outwardly although impacted internally.

Considering the nature of gendered Islamophobia that targets Muslim women specifically because they are both Muslim and women, Muslim women are likely to engage in everyday emotional labour in their daily attempts at avoiding or minimising the intersecting racist and sexist emotions of others within the wider society (Pauha, 2015; van Es, 2019). Their experiences of Islamophobia, and their responses to it, are specifically shaped because of their gender. Muslim women respond to gendered Islamophobia in gendered ways, considering themselves the ambassadors of their faith, thus trying to fit into the ideal of what it means to be an acceptable Muslim woman according to the parameters of their faith and Western expectations. Taking on the burden of representing their faith

community as best as possible to the wider public as the visible, embodied members of their community, Muslim women self-present to emotionally manage the wider public's perception of and reaction to themselves and their community. It is a typical gendered response. Their aim is to soothe the wider public into greater acceptance of Islam and Muslims and to dismantle through this process existing stereotypes held about themselves, their faith community, and Muslim men. The gendered emotional labour of the Muslim woman in this situation is double; she works at dismantling the representations of herself as meek by exercising the exact opposite, and in doing so, attempting to dismantle negative representations of Muslim men as oppressive and threatening.

This gendered response is exercised due to power disparities that Muslim women experience in the wider public and the gendered social expectations that are put on them both from within their faith communities and from Western expectations of acceptable belonging. It can potentially be combined with other forms of responses to manage gendered Islamophobia in more productive and intersectional ways.

Intersectionality

As Muslim women experience gendered Islamophobia in embodied ways, at the intersections of their gender, faith, and class, it is from these social positionings that resistance, activism, and other responses against gendered Islamophobia occur. A critical intersectional approach is needed to unpack these types of responses.

Intersectionality was coined by African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). However, in practice, intersectional approaches and thinking precede Crenshaw, dating back to 1960s critical inquiries on the lived experiences of Black and South American women (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and social theory explores the impact of class, ethnocultural background, 'race', gender, disability, religion, and migration status, among numerous other characteristics, on the experiences of discrimination. These multiple overlapping and intersecting layers of identities or characteristics influence a person's experience of discrimination and oppression (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hill Collins, 2019). An intersectional approach helps to explore how various intersecting oppressions, like sexism and racism, are organised within the wider domain of power.

Intersectionality was a useful tool to help explore Australian Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia and to identify the nuances in the women's narratives. It is a practice-oriented approach also used in activism against various forms of discrimination and therefore is also relevant to Australian Muslim women's responses to and activism against gendered Islamophobia. As Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) wrote,

> Intersectionality's critical praxis can occur anywhere, both inside and outside the academy . . . Rejecting this scholar-activist divide suggests that intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis can occur anywhere. Critical thinking is certainly not confined to the academy, nor is political engagement found solely in social movements or community organizing. (pp. 32–33)

Intersectionality is also embodied, meaning that Muslim women's faith, ethnoculture, class, and gender, among other characteristics, shape how Islamophobia is experienced and where agency and resistance manifest in embodied ways (Mahmood, 2005). Embodied intersectionality was defined by Mirza (2013) as follows:

> Embodied intersectionality as a feminist critical theory of race and racism shows how gendered and raced representation is powerfully written on and experienced within the body, and how Muslim women's agency challenges and transforms hegemonic discourses of race, gender and religion in transnational diasporic spaces. (p. 5)

These frameworks help to explore how everyday gendered Islamophobia impacts the lived and emotional experiences of Australian Muslim women. This framework also helps analyse the way Muslim women respond to Islamophobia in their everyday lives and how gendered Islamophobia is contested specifically from their individual intersections.

Embodied intersectionality combined with a decolonial spirit may help produce knowledge on Muslim women that steps away from Western stereotyping and misrepresentations (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Mirza, 2013; Ramadan, 2013; Razack, 2005; Zine, 2002). Such efforts focus on diverting from the male Eurocentric knowledge production on Muslim women. An embodied intersectional approach in analysing Australian Muslim women's experiences helps to produce alternative knowledges from within the diverse, contextual, and embodied Muslim women's perspectives. Such efforts provide other perspectives on the experience of Muslim women than the Islamophobic stereotypes and misrepresentations that dominate some mainstream White,

governmental thinking. This research tracked the governmental and nonpassive modes of belonging exhibited by Australian Muslim women. But most importantly, an intersectional framework helped highlight the subjective experiences of the Muslim women and the ways these are expressed in activist efforts.

Embracing the subjectivities of the Australian Muslim women, and speaking from within their specific structural situations, helps challenge contemporary Islamophobic representations of Muslim women in Australia by shifting the narrative from being spoken about to listening to Muslim women speak. Therefore, it provides a unique gendered insight into their lived experiences from their individual positioning within wider Australia. This is especially important, as although there is a lot of academic research on Islamophobia, there is much less research on Muslim women's unique and embodied intersectional experiences of everyday gendered Islamophobia.

The intersectional approach of this research also contributes to the emerging academic literature on Muslim women's gendered experiences in Western contexts (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Keddie, 2018; Mirza, 2013; Najib & Hopkins, 2020; Zempi, 2020). While Muslim women's embodied intersectional experiences of gendered Islamophobia are growing in academic literature, this theorising is still in its fledgling stages as most of the previous literature on Muslim women's experiences of Islamophobia theorises it only in terms of race and racism, with little attention to gender. But conceptualising Islamophobia 'as a gender-neutral form of racism underestimates the centrality of gender as an ongoing, co-constitutive axis of power that structures Islamophobia' (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 649). In this way, a gap remains in the literature on Muslim women's diverse and nuanced experiences across various Western contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter put forward the argument that the systemic, historically contextual, and ongoing form of racialisation of Muslims indicates Islamophobia is a form of racism. This is because Muslims from diverse intersectional positions are racialised into one homogenous group that are then disciplined, policed, and oppressed within different domains of powers in wider Western contexts.

For Muslim women within the Australian context, Islamophobia takes on a gendered element and targets Muslim women at their intersection of both religion and gender from which they not only experience everyday embodied Islamophobia but also contest gendered Islamophobia in agentic intersectional ways. Therefore, the application of gendered Islamophobia as a form of gendered racism is used in the analysis of Australian Muslim women's experiences with particular attention to Muslim visibility. Their experiences are analysed from their embodied intersectional positions, providing insight into how they feel the impact of gendered Islamophobia on and within their bodies and how they then respond to it in intersectional ways.

These combined conceptual frameworks work together to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of gendered Islamophobia on Australian Muslim women's lives, as well as how and why these women contest gendered Islamophobia. Within a wider structural context in which gendered Islamophobia is generally entrenched across different levels of society, these conceptual frameworks combine to provide an understanding of how Muslim women negotiate their sense of self to enable a form of agency, resistance, and activism against Islamophobia.

Chapter 4. Methodology

The key objective of this study was to explore Australian Muslim women's experiences of and responses to Islamophobia. This research was undertaken by an Australian Muslim woman, with Australian Muslim women, with the primary aim to foreground the experiences of Australian Muslim women. This was an opportunity to take an approximation of a decolonising approach in an attempt to produce research that was conducted *by* a Muslim woman, *with* Muslim women, *about* Muslim women (Smith, 2012).

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section establishes the suitability of using a qualitative methodology approach in this research. The second section discusses the research procedures used in this research, including the two data collection methods in the form of in-depth interview and focus group interview, and analysis methods. The third section of this chapter provides an overview of all the women participants in this research, together with a pen portrait of each woman.

Qualitative Research Approach

Compared with quantitative methodologies, qualitative methodologies often generate large amounts of data from a lower number of participants. With an appropriate analytic approach, qualitative research can allow for rich, detailed data and in-depth insight, exploration, and interpretation of the research topic (Taylor, 2016). The focus of qualitative research is to generate meanings and understandings from the rich data (Kvale, 2009). The flexible structure of qualitative methodology allows researchers to be adaptive during the research process to meet research goals. Likewise, this flexibility allows for the critical acknowledgement of researcher positionality and subjectivity and the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the participants. A qualitative approach supports the decolonial research approach of this study that steps away from 'objective' observations of 'Others' to embrace the subjectivities of both the researcher and participants. Qualitative methodology allows for a narrative approach in the interviewing process through which participants share their stories of lived experiences of the research phenomenon (Marshall,

2016). Qualitative methodology can also be a powerful research tool for activism and social change when research results are disseminated through effective channels (Hays et al., 2015).

Reflexivity

This decolonial research approach to being, doing, and learning as detailed by Smith (2012) requires continuous, active effort, which begins by acknowledging the need to be reflexive. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's positionality, including the researcher's own beliefs and judgements during the research process and the awareness of how these influence this process and knowledge production (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Gouldner (2004, pp. 381–383) pointed out that reflexive sociology steps away from the dualism of the researcher versus the researched as two distinct entities. He stated that by trying to see research participants as we see ourselves as researchers, we develop a way to mitigate the power relations between the researcher and participants and cease to view ourselves as superior to the 'alien' Others, or the participants. However, it is important to note here that nobody, not even the most reflective, possesses perfect self-awareness; hence, there will always be an element of partiality, as reflected in Chapter 1 of this thesis on my social positioning in relation to this research. I am also aware that one of the risks of this research as a Muslim woman who has experienced Islamophobia, I may have construed and articulated the questions in such a way that reflects my own responses to Islamophobia. Reflexive sociology recognises that the internal and external knowledges of the researcher are inseparable, and therefore, the knowledge produced through research is not value neutral. Thus, reflexivity is not simply about stating awareness but *being* aware of the complexities of our inner and outer worlds and how these motivate and shape our individual and collective values.

As Chapter 2 highlighted, Muslim women still experience Islamophobia through various epistemic and power hierarchies. Islamophobia in the Australian context may be encouraged by the multiple political agendas, including CVE and national security measures (Kumar, 2012; Kundnani, 2007b). While these measures do not explicitly target Muslim people, they are often used as a justification for the continued policing and global political intervention of Muslims and Muslim communities. Inspired by Smith's (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, the Muslim women in this research by

virtue of participating, the Muslim women and I attempt to speak back to institutional and systemic forms of Islamophobia that harm my/our communities and others who find themselves oppressed by systemic and institutional structures of power.

Insider/Outsider Positioning

I am simultaneously an academic researcher and a practising Muslim woman of mixed ethnic origin. Some decolonial scholars have written on the issue of navigating insider/outsider dichotomy in research (Harding, 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Similar to Moreton-Robinson's (2000) *Talkin' Up to the White Woman* that promotes minority bottom-up research, Harding's (2004) *Is There a Feminist Method?* values the bottom-up research approach. Harding argued that feminist research recognises that the researcher is living the experience of the research participants and therefore engages in bottom-up versus top-down research. Thus, she maintained, the researcher appears as an individual with a visible voice and specific interests and agendas within the research. This acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity and how they may influence the research. This is a valuable part of the study. However, Harding continued, this does not mean that a researcher who does not share lived experiences of the research subject cannot make a valuable research contribution, such as in the case where men conduct research with women participants. This is because being different to research participants can sometimes also bring valuable insights to the research. Furthermore, being an outsider could mean different things. It could, for example, mean that the researcher does not hold the same intersectional identity as the participants. It could mean that the researcher holds certain academic and other class privileges that account for their outsider positionality. The determinant of what makes one an insider or an outsider is rather fluid and dependent on the given research context and each individual participant. This is where researcher reflexivity and awareness come into play, where the researcher is attuned to insider and outsider dichotomies and how these may change during individual interviews and across the research process.

As a Muslim woman researcher, I may be considered an insider by the participants, in terms of both my gender and religious affiliation and my other intersectional experiences and identities. This may allow me certain privileges as a researcher and make initial contact with participants a smoother task. Such cultural understanding shared with the research participants can be a strength but also may prove problematic as an insider status may

cause the researcher to make assumptions rather than to question, construing and articulating the questions in such ways that reflects the researcher's own experiences Also, the researcher as insider/outsider encounters the challenge of navigating one's intersectionality including belonging to two or more cultures and identities. Therefore, it is important to be critically reflexive and refrain from being too optimistic regarding this insider status as it has the equal potential to create barriers, such as when participants feel a cultural or personal obligation to not reveal their lived experiences—or their dirty laundry, so to say—to another 'community member' (me). In some cultural, ethnic, or religious communities, this withholding of negative lived experiences is more common, which is important to keep in mind when doing research and being aware of the potential areas that are purposely not brought up for discussion by the participants. While the point of research is to reveal as much rich data as possible from research interviews, it is also important to be culturally respectful and allow the freedom to participants to comfortably discuss what they see fit for discussion. Research should not be intrusive but be an open space where Muslim women can freely share their experiences and opinions. Nevertheless, this insider status may provide insights into the interpretation and explanation of phenomena discussed in this study that otherwise appear stereotypical to non-Muslims and thereby is often an important interpretive tool in analysing the research findings. As an insider, my status as a woman along with my Islamic affiliation did ensure a strong connection to the participants.

In terms of general affiliation to Islam, I consider myself, and was considered by the participants, as an insider. I share the identity as an Australian Muslim woman with all the participants, which was indicated by their usage of 'sis' or 'sister' when talking to me by most of the women. Referring to other Muslim women in this manner means that there is acknowledgement of shared faith belonging. Yet, despite the value of the insider status as an Australian Muslim woman in this research, I tried not to be naïve and assume that a common religious and gender background would eliminate barriers and tensions in the field as Muslims are made up of numerous ethnic and cultural backgrounds and hold diverse interpretations of the Islamic faith. Thus, there was a recognition that my connection to the Muslim participants in this study spanned the spectrum from an insider to an outsider. The varied intersecting identities that positioned me as insider, outsider, or both influenced my level of connection to the participants. For example, I interviewed Muslim women with different levels of Muslim visibility, where some of the women were not visibly Muslim

unless they 'outed' themselves as Muslim, while others were very visibly Muslim due to wearing a niqab.[5] Equally so, some of the Muslim women were Sunni Muslim, like my own sectarian affiliation, while others were Shia. Some other intersecting identities included my observation of Islamic dress codes, political affiliation, ethnicity, social class, marital status, educational status, employment status, and generational citizenship status in Australia. However, in terms of the numerous intersecting identities of each participant, I was often simultaneously an insider and an outsider. This insider/outsider position varied with each participant. My different intersecting identities were embraced in this research and acknowledged during the interviews and focus group. It added an analytical and interpretative value to this research and reaffirmed the intersectional diversity that exists among Australian Muslim women.

Research Procedures

Research Setting

This research occurred in Sydney, Australia's most populated city, that has a sizeable and diverse Muslim population. Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2016) state that 42%—so between a third to a half of Australia's Muslim population—reside within Greater Sydney (253,436 of 604,240). The Muslim communities in the Greater Sydney area are diverse and geographically spread, with mosques being key areas to maintain and promote interactions within and across each community. In addition to mosques, there are numerous other Muslim initiatives within Greater Sydney that are Muslim run, including Muslim charities, Muslim schools, religious schools focusing on Islamic sciences, Muslim student organisations and businesses, and Muslim youth organisations, among others. Thus, the geographical area of Greater Sydney met the research needs and timeframe allocated to this research.

Greater Sydney houses mosques of different sizes, some able to accommodate large numbers of worshippers while others only a small number. Masjid Ali Bin Abi Taleb in Lakemba, for example, which is also referred to as Lakemba Mosque, and Gallipoli Mosque in Auburn, welcome a large number of worshippers daily—both men and women. There are also smaller worship places, or what many Muslims call *musallah*, around Sydney, as well as

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[5] Face veil

other Muslim organisations that also include in them a musallah. A musallah is a place set within a structure, not a traditional mosque structure, that is specifically built and intended for prayers. A musallah could, for example, be a room within a university campus, a level within a business building, or an area within a larger organisation where Muslims congregate to pray or engage in numerous other religious, educational, and social initiatives. A mosque, on the other hand, is specifically built and intended for prayer, although sometimes other activities do occur in mosques. Merkez Imam Ahmad (MIA) in Liverpool and United Muslims of Australia (UMA) in Padstow are examples of organisations that include within them a musallah. Many of these mosques and other Muslim organisations provide numerous services for the wider Muslim community that cater to their various needs including religious, educational, social, and gendered needs, among others. There are many activities and initiatives that specifically cater to women that occur at these mosques and Muslim organisations. These include faith-based initiatives in the form of religious education classes as well as other activities aimed at nurturing Muslim women's needs that target various areas such as mental health, spiritual wellbeing, physical health, parenting, sports, volunteering, nutrition, and art, among others. In addition to mosques and Muslim organisations, there are also several Muslim primary and high schools in the Greater Sydney area, including Al Faisal College in Auburn, Al Noori Muslim School in Greenacre, Malek Fahd Islamic School in Greenacre, Australian Islamic College of Sydney in Mount Druitt, and Unity Grammar in Austral, to mention a few.

The wide variety of Muslim mosques, schools, and other organisations in Greater Sydney enabled me to access participants from a wide variety of ethnocultural and class backgrounds. Muslim women from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds between the ages of 21 and 50 were recruited. No women beyond the age of 50 expressed interest in participating in this research. This may have been due to the reason that this research was solely conducted in English, and my recruitment phase used social media platforms, both of which may have been less accessible to older Muslim women, especially those with language and technology barriers. This is something to consider in future research on Muslim communities to ensure that the research data capture the experiences of the age spectrum representative of the Muslim demographic in Australia. Another important note to mention is that most recruited women held educational capital at the level of university education, and most women were professionals. Nonetheless, recruiting Muslim women

from Greater Sydney (and one from Melbourne due to the snow-balling effect) was useful in ensuring intersectional diversity among the Muslim women participants to meet the needs for this research. However, future research should consider exploring impact of both class and age on Muslim women's lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia in the Australian context.

Recruitment of Muslim Women

Being an outsider, specifically an academic researcher for a Western institution, initially made it difficult to access the targeted population. The Muslim organisations, groups, and women that I approached were initially hesitant to participate. Some did not respond to my written communications. I realised I needed to contact key people from various Islamic communities in Sydney to ask for help in sharing information on my upcoming research with their affiliated Muslim organisations, social networks, friends, and family. This involved locating Muslim organisations and groups in Sydney, such as mosques, Islamic community centres, Muslim schools, and other Muslim groups, including social media groups. Having little previous involvement in Sydney's Muslim communities, I worked on establishing positive relationships with key informants and groups to prepare for fieldwork and to promote levels of trust prior to seeking research recruits. A smoother recruitment process was possible once I had been introduced to the community via an established and known person and avenue.

Having identified Muslim institutions in the Western Sydney region, I first contacted different groups via email to introduce myself and the purpose of my research. An online invitation letter was sent, detailing the study, participant selection criteria, my academic background and contact details, and a link to the online registration form. The institutions and groups initially engaged were also encouraged to share the research information with their members and staff. A secure, online registration form was created where Muslim women aged 18 and over could submit their interest in participating in this research, including their contact details, age, and other demographic information.

The research population included women living in Australia aged 18 years and over who identified as Muslim. The research focus was initially limited to the Muslim women population in Greater Sydney for practical feasibility purposes. At a later stage, a woman

from Melbourne was also interviewed via a recorded phone call as she had been recommended by a Sydney participant as an important contributor to the research.

The online registration form was also widely shared via WhatsApp to various Muslim women I had met before fieldwork had commenced. The women were asked to share the research flyer and registration link on their individual or group social media outlets. A flyer with a link, and a quick response code (QR), to the online registration form was printed and displayed around Western Sydney University Bankstown Campus, which has a large population of female Muslim students. Other individuals whom I had met through social and religious gatherings from different Muslim communities in Sydney were also approached, briefed about the research topic, and asked to share the research information with other Muslim women in Sydney. As women registered to participate and were interviewed, a snow-balling effect (Marshall, 2016) occurred that helped to recruit other Muslim women. It is important to note here that this self-selection method resulted in this sample to reflect only those practising Muslim women who were visibly Muslim to the public in different ways whether via their dress, other Muslim markers, or via declaring their faith publicly. Thus, this research is only limited to Muslim women who were practising and more visible to the public as Muslims, and future research should certainly consider exploring the experiences of Muslim women who are not visibly Muslim. Over the span of 6 months, data from 21 interview participants and a focus group (of six participants) were collected. The interviews occurred across numerous suburbs in Sydney, most in the Western Sydney area.

Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by Western Sydney University Human Ethics Research Committee (approval number H12515). All participants involved in this study were provided with a participant consent form that detailed the nature of this study and included the researcher's and supervisor's contact details. Participants were asked to sign this consent form prior to partaking in this study. Participants' consent forms were collected and stored securely in a locked cabinet at Western Sydney University premises. For participants engaged in phone interviews, verbal consent was taken, and signed consent forms were emailed back to the researcher following interview.

Data Management

Data (audio files and field notes) were labelled and organised in a logical, retrievable manner on a password-protected cloud storage system. A research journal was kept where all field notes were noted, including initial negotiations of entry into the field and interview observations if any. These notes later aided in analysing and interpreting the research data. A voice recorder was used to record the interviews. As audio files were transcribed, they were deleted from the cloud storage system as many participants had expressed unease with having their interviews stored following transcription due to the identifiable information contained within these recordings. All participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, and all the transcripts had sensitive information removed to deidentify participants and protect them from being reidentified by readers.

Data Trustworthiness

The credibility of a qualitative study depends on the qualitative methods used, purposeful sampling, the analysis process, the rigorous methods of fieldwork, and the researcher's credibility (Patton, 2015). A research project is credible within the parameters of the setting and population being studied and the limitations of theoretical frameworks and design applicable to the study (Marshall, 2016).

The data gathered in this study came from in-depth individual and focus group interviews. The data provided are subjective and have been analysed and interpreted through the researcher's subjective lens, using relevant and topic-specific theoretical frameworks. The data and conclusion are limited to the participants in this study and the Muslim communities in Sydney in which they are themselves involved. It cannot be generalised to all Muslim women and communities across Australia. Future research focusing on Muslim women across Australia and other global settings may be useful in creating a more detailed understanding of Muslim women's gendered experiences with various forms of other oppressions such as sexism and ableism that may also intersect with racism.

Limitations and Future Research

This research, despite the valuable findings, is also limited in many ways that should be considered by future research on Muslim women. Other limitations of the research aside from a certain age demographic and a sample of only practising Muslim women is most of

the Muslim women participants in this study were either enrolled as students at a university during their interview or were university graduates with professional degrees, even if they were stay-at-home mums during the time of the interview. All spoke English, and all lived in Sydney except one who lived in Melbourne, and all were aged between 19 and 50 years.

While this research indicates the powerful agency of Australian Muslim women in the face of their varied experiences to gendered Islamophobia, it raises questions of the impact of age, English language proficiency, and lack of visibility on Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia in Australia. Based on the findings and conclusions in this research, future researchers should consider exploring how young Muslim girls as well as older Muslim women experience gendered Islamophobia. I would also suggest that future research considers exploring less visible Muslim women's experiences of and responses to gendered Islamophobia. Furthermore, expanding future research to include other Australian cities and states would make a valuable contribution to understanding Muslim women's lived experiences and agentic power in Australia.

Method

Data Collection

The data in this study were collected in 2018 over a time span of 6 months via 21 in-depth interviews and one focus group session involving six participants. The focus group session and in-depth interviews were audio recorded. Notes and observations were taken during and following interview sessions. This assisted in capturing body language, moods, and other observational data not specifically captured in the audio recording and later helped inform the data analysis.

Interviews

The in-depth interviewing sessions were not time limited and lasted between 1 to 3 hours, each depending entirely on the number of topics discussed by the participants. The interviews were semistructured in nature, and probing questions such as 'How did that impact you?' and 'Why do you think that was?' helped the conversation flow when needed. Otherwise, the participants were free to discuss each topic of interest without a set time limit. The idea was to draw out in-depth information from the participants, and therefore, it was decided that interview time limits and structured interviewing would be too restrictive for the purposes of this study.

The interviews with the Muslim women were initiated by asking broadly if they could share their experiences of being Muslim women in Australia. Probing questions, for clarification and elaboration, were used to gain detailed accounts of certain topics and to prompt further discussion, reflection, and interpretation.

Once the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and the audio recordings were deleted. Then all participants were contacted via email, and their transcript was sent to them with an invitation to review it, to comment further, to edit, and to participate in a second interview for clarification purposes if they felt that this was needed. Of all participants involved, only one participant asked to amend her transcript and made minor edits to the original transcript by adding additional information to topics discussed. All other participants were comfortable with their initial interview and did not request to edit their transcript or engage in further clarifying interviews. The data were collected from the participants in natural settings in line with participants' preferences. In-depth interviews occurred in participants' homes and in cafés, parks, mosques, restaurants, and meeting rooms at Western Sydney University. Two in-depth interviews were conducted over the phone for practical purposes.

Focus Group

The focus group discussion was attended by six participants and lasted 3 hours. The focus group interview occurred at a private residence in Sydney. Despite much energy invested in the recruitment process, simply being a Muslim woman made the actual focus group and interviews a natural conversation and a relaxed sociable, enjoyable experience despite the many difficult and controversial topics discussed. Many participants did mention after the interviews that they had truly enjoyed the conversation and wished to have such conversations more frequently. In these ways, being a Muslim woman, myself has been beneficial to this study. It has served the purpose of this study to highlight Australian Muslim women's voices from the shared contextual understanding of being a Muslim woman in Australia rather than being presented by an observing outsider oblivious to what it actually means *to be* an Australian Muslim woman and what it *feels like* to be at the receiving end of Islamophobia. Despite the initial hesitation in the recruitment process, simply being a Muslim woman set the platform for a level of respect, trust, and flowing discussion during the interviews and focus group session.

Data Analysis

The contents from the interviews and the focus group were explored using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach fit the purpose of this study in which the primary aim was neither to discover nor prove a theory but rather to explore in detail the experiences and responses of Australian Muslim women. Existing scholarly literature and theories were used to illuminate themes derived from the data and to highlight the participants' experiences of and responses to Islamophobia in Australia. This approach provided both theoretical freedom and flexibility in the analysis of the data.

As thematic analysis is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79), it was deemed suitable for the purposes of this research. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guidelines to thematic analysis, my first step was to read and re-read all the transcribed data from the in-depth interviews and the focus group to familiarise myself with the data. This was an active reading process in which I immersed myself in the data, searching for patterns, meanings, and relevant points (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

Next, the data were subject to initial coding that highlighted patterns and relevant points. For the purposes of this research that sought to explore Muslim women's experiences and responses to Islamophobia, the coding was data driven and approached with specific questions in mind related to both the participants' experiences of and responses to Islamophobia.

Many thematic codes emerged relating to visibility or lack of visibility as Muslims in the wider community; the degree of visibility as a Muslim woman; feelings of hostility via stares, verbal abuse, and physical abuse; systemic and structural racism; self-regulation to decrease or eliminate Islamophobic situations; public pedagogy to break down stereotypes on Muslim women and provide meaningful information to others about Islam and Muslims; and anti-Islamophobic activism, among other initial codes.

Once all the data had been subjected to initial coding, the analysis moved on to sort these codes into the broader themes. Two themes emerged. The first theme was Muslim women's experiences related to their visibility or less visibility as Muslims and the resultant emotional management of their self and others within the broader community. The second theme was their unique responses to Islamophobia in their everyday lives. Also, as

suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89), visual representations, mind maps, and colour coding was used in the organisation of the codes into the broader themes. The codes that did not fit within the broader themes were put into a temporary miscellaneous theme to be revisited at a later stage if needed. The codes were also renamed or merged through this active process of creating a more coherent image.

Next, the themes were revised and refined so that the data within each theme were cohering together meaningfully, creating 'identifiable distinctions between the themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). At this stage, all the codes, with exception of those in the 'miscellaneous' theme, were organised under the two main themes: 'experiences' of and 'responses' to Islamophobia.

At this stage of having a satisfactory thematic image, the data were revisited and reorganised within each theme to create a 'coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92).

The final step involved a final analysis of the themes and writing up the overall story that these themes told within Chapters 5 and 6 in this thesis.

Women in This Study

Overview of Women in This Study

The aforementioned limitations of this research, relating to the self-selecting sample of participants, is important to bear in mind when reading the women's experiences in the following two discussion chapters.

Table 1.

Individual Interview Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Data collection method
Amina	28	Lebanese	University graduate: teaching Currently on maternity leave	Interview
Asma	29	Lebanese	Year 12 graduate Stay-at-home mum running a small home business	Interview
Anita	49	Indian	University degree: multiple Currently business owner in beauty industry	Interview
Bella	23	Dutch Maltese	TAFE diploma: dental hygienist Stay-at-home mum	Interview

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Data collection method
Bushra	50	Indian	TAFE diploma: computer science Stay-at-home mum after voluntary redundancy	Interview
Dalia	22	Syrian	University degree: medical science	Interview
Farah	49	South African mixed heritage	University degree: teaching STEM teacher and librarian	Interview
Hana	26	Lebanese	University degree: prefers not to mention Works for a large Australian organisation; prefers not to mention. Also spoken word artist and activist	Interview
Iman	31	Palestinian	University degree: Chinese medicine Working as Chinese medicine practitioner in her home clinic	Interview
Jamila	43	Lebanese	University degree: PhD Academic researcher	Interview
Justine	37	Anglo Australian	University degree: master's (preferred not to mention) Currently stay-at-home mum	Interview
Linda	41	Anglo Australian	TAFE: diploma Community engagement officer	Interview
Maryam	34	Bangladeshi	Stay-at-home mum	Interview
Nadia	33	Palestinian	University degree: social worker	Interview
Nida	22	Syrian	University student: master's in diagnostic radiography	Interview
Reema	39	Palestinian Egyptian	University degree: PhD Academic researcher, writer, activist	Interview
Sarah	39	Anglo Australian	University degree: PhD Academic researcher, writer, media spokesperson, activist	Interview
Sawsan	30	Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian	University student: master's Activist and spoken word artist	Interview
Sheila	31	Bangladeshi	University degree: PhD Academic researcher	Interview
Yusra	21	Iraqi Turkmen	University student: occupational therapy	Interview
Zainab	30	Lebanese	University degree: law Lawyer, artist, activist	Interview

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 2.
Focus Group Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Data collection method
Ilham	50	Iraqi Turkmen	University student: social work	Focus group
Khadija	27	Iraqi Turkmen	University degree: teaching Highschool teacher	Focus group
Mona	36	Egyptian	University degree: fashion designer Currently a medical receptionist	Focus group
Raniya	27	Palestinian	University degree: social work Social worker at mental health department at a Sydney hospital	Focus group
Samra	30	Palestinian	University degree: teaching Currently stay-at-home mum	Focus group
Sana	33	Pakistani	University degree: audiology Currently audiologist	Focus group

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

Pen Portraits of Women in This Study

Reflecting the diversity in the Muslim community in Sydney, the women varied in age, level of education, occupation, family status, and other aspects. The highest educational qualification held by some of the women was a PhD in various fields, including social sciences and humanities. The lowest educational qualification held was Year 12 certificate. The age range of the Muslim women participants spanned from 21 to 50 years. The participants were ethnoculturally diverse, being of Lebanese, Indian, Dutch Maltese, Syrian, Palestinian, Anglo Australian, Bangladeshi, Turkmen (Turks of Iraq), South African Malay, Palestinian Egyptian, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, Egyptian, and Pakistani backgrounds. The participant group included students, stay-at-home mums, activists, poets, authors, media spokespersons, and other professionals. The women were either first-generation, second-generation, or third-generation Australians: First generation means that they were born oversees and immigrated to Australia at some point in their lives, second generation means that they were born in Australia to parents who immigrated to Australia, and third generation means that they were born to parents who also were born in Australia but whose parents were born overseas. Pen portraits of the Muslim women have been included below as a deliberate part of this methodology to provide the context for these

women's experiences, foreground their voices, and contrast their everyday experiences with the Islamophobic abuse that they endure. The pen portraits also provide class background, educational capital, and other intersecting factors regarding the participants that are vital in the analysis and discussion of the research findings. Below is a description of each of the women participants, carefully worded to exclude any identifying information:

Amina

Amina was a practising woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 28-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Lebanese background, residing in South Western Sydney. She had completed her university degree in teaching, had been working for some time, and was on parental leave when I met her. Amina was married and a mother to two young boys. She was quite active in the wider Muslim community both leading and participating in spiritual circles and other educational groups led by women for women in which she discussed contemporary issues relating to faith, society, and politics. She was passionate about creating positive change in both her local and global Muslim community. Amina spent a significant amount of her time attending spiritual and intellectual conversation circles and lectures in which she learnt about and had a chance to discuss everyday relevant topics in relation to Islam and Muslims—spanning from the spiritual to the political. She also spent time in her attempt to learn the art of Quran recitation and to memorise the entire Quran. Amina also enjoyed yoga and a healthy lifestyle. Most of Amina's engagement was with Muslims within the larger Muslim communities in Sydney. Besides work and everyday engagement such as shopping and other errands, Amina did not engage much with the general Australian public.

Anita

Seema was a practising 49-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Indian background who chose *not* to wear the hijab. Seema had migrated to Australia with her parents as a child and grew up in rural Australia before settling in North Sydney. Seema had worked in engineering and human resources but had changed her career and was running her own business in the beauty industry when I met her. She was married and a mother to four children. She was articulate, intelligent, friendly, spiritual in nature, observant of her surroundings, and reflective. She particularly enjoyed connecting with nature, going on walks, and reflecting on her position within the larger scheme of things in the universe.

Asma

Asma was a practising Muslim woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 29-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Lebanese background. She was a home-schooling mother to three children, single, and ran her own business selling various handmade items online. Asma was a well-spoken and vibrant woman residing in the Western Sydney area. Asma was active in the wider Muslim community and especially in the Muslim home-schooling community in Sydney. She was very passionate about various types of charities in which both she and her children got involved. Asma was a driver for holistic health and living, a bookaholic, and quite artistic, enjoying getting her hands stained with paint while spending time with her children. Asma had completed Year 12 and a few semesters at university before she married and refocused her energy on her family. Asma never graduated from university.

Bella

Bella was a practising woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 23-year-old third-generation Australian woman of Dutch Maltese background residing in Western Sydney, married, and a mother to a toddler son. She had been a Muslim for 2.5 years when I met with her but had been exposed to Islam and Muslims since she was 5 years old attending school. She was involved in the larger community, particularly other Muslim convert women who met frequently via social media or in person for social gatherings and spiritual nourishment. Most of her friends were from these circles and were converts to Islam. Bella also facilitated monthly gatherings in her home or local parks that were both social and spiritual in nature, where Muslim sisters met over food to discuss uplifting topics related to Islam and Muslims. She was a fan of UMA and Sheikh Shady who had been part of inspiring her journey to Islam and attended Islamic lectures both at the UMA and other Muslim organisations across Sydney. Bella was gentle and softly spoken; she was passionate about being Muslim and found her new way of life uplifting. She also found her role as a Muslim woman a positive experience and found the hijab, particularly the niqab (although she was not niqabi herself), very beautiful.

Bushra

Bushra was a practising woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 50-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Indian background, married, and mother to two adult

children, one who still resided with her at home. She was from a large, well-established family, residing in South Western Sydney. She had completed a college degree in computer science and had worked for many years before recently accepting voluntary redundancy from her job and enjoying a year at home while thinking about her next career steps. Bushra was softly spoken and friendly and was considering getting involved in volunteer work, especially in roles combating Islamophobia and promoting community development. Bushra was also active in the larger community and involved in spiritual motivational circles with other Indo Pakistani women globally who met weekly via Skype. Bushra was also active in the local community, facilitating mothers' groups that focused on the foundational parenting skills tailored to the experience of being Australian Muslim parents.

Dalia

Dalia was a practising woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 22-year-old second-generation Australian woman of Syrian background residing in South Western Sydney. She had completed a bachelor's degree in medical science and was on a gap year awaiting acceptance into medicine at the university when I met her. Dalia was single and had never married. She enjoyed ballet, martial arts, and socialising with friends and family. She was also passionate about various global and human rights issues and participated in human rights demonstrations in the city when these occurred. She was family oriented and extroverted and spent a significant amount of time with her family and friends.

Farah

Farah was a 49-year-old Muslim woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a first-generation Australian woman of mixed cultural heritage, born in South Africa. Farah migrated to Australia with her family when she was a child and settled in Sydney. She completed high school and tertiary studies, graduating with degrees in the arts and education and was pursuing further studies. Farah had worked as a teacher in the private and public education sectors for many years. Farah was married, had four children, and resided in Sydney's Inner West. She was well connected to the larger Muslim community in Sydney and was involved in various community development projects. She had a love for books and learning and volunteered her time to facilitate young women's study circles on a weekly basis during the school term. She was empathetic and passionate about finding ways to create better futures for the next generations of Muslims living in Australia. Farah was

hopeful that the next generation would feel a strong sense of belonging and would contribute positively to the progress and sociocultural cohesion in society. Apart from fulfilling responsibilities of work and family life, she spent much time reading and reflecting on spiritual matters, connecting these reflections to contemporary issues within the broader Muslim communities in Australia.

Hana

Hana was a 26-year-old first-generation woman of Lebanese background residing in Western Sydney who chose to wear the hijab. Hana was a poet and Muslim activist and spent a significant amount of her time writing and performing poetry around Sydney, especially within Muslim or multicultural spoken word communities. The theme in her poetry was often Islamophobia in which she found creative and emotional ways to describe it, respond to it, and actively fight it with her eloquent words. Hana also held a job in the corporate world in which she spent time engaging with her non-Muslim colleagues and friends to try to find creative ways to break down stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

Ilham

Ilham was a 50-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Iraqi Turkmen background. Ilham chose to wear the hijab. She had arrived with her husband and four young children in Australia nearly 20 years ago as refugees. At the time of the focus group conversation, Ilham was divorced and had five children, two of whom had married and moved out of the house. The other three children were still living with Ilham in their rental house in the Western Sydney area. Ilham had not finished her education beyond Year 10 as she had married during her teenage years. Ilham had managed to complete a diploma in community services from TAFE and had recently enrolled to study social work at a university in Sydney. Her passion was to complete her degree so that she could use her education and life experience to reach out to and help other woman experiencing difficulties. She had great difficulty expressing herself fluently in English and therefore did not speak during the focus group conversation. However, as the other women shared their experiences and opinions, Ilham made a point of nodding her head in agreement and making other remarks against or for what was being said. Ilham did not fully contribute to the focus group conversation because of her social positioning as an older immigrant Muslim woman with a language and educational capital barrier and sat among younger Muslim women, all of

whom had educational capital at tertiary level at the least and were able to articulate themselves fluently in English. Nonetheless, observation of Ilham's difficulty in contributing to the conversation begs for further research into older Muslim women's intersectional experiences in Australia as suggested to fill the wide gap in current research. This is something that future researchers should take into consideration in their data collection.

Iman

Iman was a practising woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a 31-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Palestinian background residing in South Western Sydney. She was married and a mother of three young children. She had completed her degree in Chinese medicine and naturopathy and was practising in her private clinic in Sydney. Passionate about community education and development, especially holistic healthy living, she was active in educating the larger Muslim community about holistic lifestyle, diet, and health. She appeared in talk-show radio programs and held seminars and workshops on related topics in different Muslim organisations across Sydney. Passionately opinionated and extroverted, she spent time with likeminded friends on her quest for better health and living.

Jamila

Jamila was a 43-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Lebanese background who chose to wear the hijab. Jamila was a loving wife and mother, an academic researcher, and a passionate spokesperson for the Muslim community. Jamila engaged in activist efforts to dismantle stereotypical representations and misinformation about Muslim women and Islam. Despite her research rigour and passion, Jamila had to continuously combat Islamophobic attacks in her everyday life that she often faced due to her research topic and her visibility within the larger Australian society. Despite this Islamophobic targeting, she persisted in her intersectional activist efforts against Islamophobia on behalf of Muslim women.

Justine

Justine was a practising convert who chose to wear the niqab. She was a 37-year-old Australian-born woman of Anglo Australian background residing in South Western Sydney. She had been a Muslim for 7 years when I met with her. Prior to her choice to convert to Islam, she lacked knowledge of the Islamic religion and was primarily nonreligious in her

day-to-day life. Her interest in Islam stemmed from being interested in books and study. When looking at scientific research, she came across Islamic materials that widened her interests. Beginning to question her own identity and the world around her, she began exploring more deeply into religion. At the time I met her, she was married and mother to two children. She had completed three university degrees—a bachelor's, a postgraduate diploma, and a master's-level qualification—but preferred not to share further information on this matter. She had also commenced study through Islamic courses, both through local mosques and at university level. Family commitments had put these on hold. After nearly two decades involved in her professional career (which she also preferred not to discuss), Justine had taken a break to enjoy being a stay-at-home mum. Justine was interested in helping the community to break down the barriers often associated with Islam (such as that women have no voice, women are forced to wear niqab, etc,) and was often willing to talk with community members about Islam so that they could see that people who wore niqab still had their own sense of self and determination. Socially, she tended to interact with other Muslim women in the small gatherings at the local mosque and spend time with her family. Her background meant that she had maintained respect for the Australian way of life (with her family being non-Muslim), and she continued to 'find balance' with her Muslim and non-Muslim friends as she stated—meaning that she continued to dedicate time to both her new Muslim friends and her old friends.

Khadija

Khadija was a 27-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Iraqi Turkmen background, single, and residing in Western Sydney with her family. Khadija chose to wear the hijab. She was a high school teacher and had worked for a number of years. She was actively involved in the larger Muslim communities, both facilitating and attending talks and educational circles focused on relevant topics related to Islam and Muslim both in Australia and globally. She had a firm grasp of the structural racisms existing within both the larger Australian and Western context. She had arrived in Australia as a young refugee child with her family and had grown up in Australia, experiencing a difficult and complex navigation between two cultures in which Islamophobia was always prevalent. Despite this, she had maintained a close connection to her faith and had sought inspiration and motivation from her faith to grow resilience in opposition to the Islamophobic experiences.

Linda

Linda was a 41-year-old practising convert who chose to wear the hijab. She was an Australian woman of Anglo background residing in Western Sydney. She was married and mother to three children. At the time I met her, she was working as a community engagement officer and was quite involved with Muslim 'convert sisters' groups. She facilitated various convert sisters' groups, play groups, and mothers' groups, encouraging convert sisters to come together and discuss issues relevant to their experiences of being Australian Muslim convert women. Linda was very much invested in her work and the Muslim community, especially the Muslim convert sisters' community in Sydney. She was a convert to Islam herself and had been Muslim for 10 years when I met with her.

Maryam

Maryam was a 34-year-old practising Muslim woman who chose to wear the hijab. She was a first-generation Australian woman of Bangladeshi background residing in Western Sydney. She had arrived in Australia as a 12-year-old with her highly educated father who held a double university degree and her mother who was a full-time stay-at-home mother. At the time I met her, she was married and a mother of four children. She had completed university-level education and was a stay-at-home mum at the time I met her. Maryam was well connected to the larger Bangladeshi community and was engaged in informal social work with her community. In addition to caring for her family and children, she spent a significant amount of time with the larger Muslim community, especially the Bangladeshi Muslim community, attending lectures, seminars, and workshops on topics related to Islam and Muslims. She was also connected to various Muslim groups via social media and felt a sense of belonging through such online networking. Maryam was passionately concerned about certain topics, such as women's rights in Islam media representations of Islam and Muslims, which she discussed with other likeminded Muslim women in her wider networks. She was a spiritual person and well connected to her religion; Maryam found soothing ease in remembering a particular verse from the Quran—*Inna ma'al 'usri Yusra* [Indeed with hardship is ease] (94:6). She held onto this verse in all her daily affairs as a reminder.

Mona

Mona was a 36-year-old first-generation woman of Egyptian background who chose to wear the hijab. Mona was single and residing in the Western Sydney area with her

mother. Mona had newly arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa. She had previously been heavily involved in the recent revolution in Egypt, and it was unsafe for her to return to Egypt as her life would be under threat. Upon meeting her, she was awaiting a result on her visa application to stay permanently in Australia. Since arriving in Australia, Mona had found a job as a medical receptionist, had learnt English, and had made many friends. Mona had joined sports groups in which she was heavily involved. She spent a considerable amount of her free time with these groups, biking and rollerblading. She had also joined a taekwondo martial arts team working towards a black belt and spent every morning exercising outdoors. Mona worked as a receptionist full time. Whenever able to, Mona dedicated her time to the community, engaging in volunteer work. At the time of writing, Mona's visa application was still undecided. Her life remains under severe threat should she be deported to Egypt.

Nadia

Nadia was a practising 33-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Palestinian background residing in South Western Sydney who chose to wear the hijab. She was married and a mother of two young children. Having completed university-level education in social work, she was working as a professional social worker for a government department when I met her. Nadia was extroverted, passionate, opinionated, and friendly. She was involved in various aspects of community development within the larger Australian community. Social work was a big part of her life and her purpose. She appreciated that she was in a position to help the most marginalised in local communities, and while this could often be challenging, it was something that she found personally and professionally rewarding. It concerned her that social issues such as disability were still something that people from all backgrounds, not just culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community, still had trouble discussing openly.

Nida

Nida was a practising 22-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Syrian background who chose to wear the hijab. She was residing in South Western Sydney. She was single, had never married, and was completing a master's degree in diagnostic radiography. She also held a bachelor's degree in arts with a double major in English and political economics. Nida was a bookaholic and spent much time listening to Islamic lectures

online by both Arabic- and English-speaking popular religious figures. Nida had a warm and welcoming personality and was very articulate. She was a spiritual person and passionate about Islam and various topics related to her religion. She was also involved in the larger community, connecting to other Muslim women and organisations to meet her various needs intellectually, spiritually, socially, and emotionally.

Raniya

Raniya was a 27-year-old second-generation Australian woman of Palestinian background who chose to wear the hijab. A while after the interview had occurred, Raniya had chosen to take the hijab off for various reasons, one of which being that she felt she no longer identified with it and felt it was not a reflection of her inner self. She also attributed the decision, in part, to feeling a sense of disappointment with the Middle Eastern Muslim community in her area and, consequently, wanting to disassociate by way of appearance. At the time of writing, Raniya had decided to wear the hijab again. Raniya had completed her university degree in social work and was working professionally as a mental health social worker for Sydney's South Western local health district. Raniya was an intelligent, brilliant, and well-spoken woman and very passionate about her experiences of being a Muslim woman in Australia. Being a deep thinker and sceptic, Raniya spent much of her time engaging with social sciences—that is, psychology, philosophy, and sociology—and described herself as being somewhat obsessed with understanding the human condition, including suffering and how to mitigate it. Raniya expressed she was disheartened by the current psycho–social–spiritual and political state of affairs that she described as 'soulless' and 'Orwellian'. In her spare time, she indulged in various forms of 'escape attempts', including spending time alone in the company of her cats and houseplants, reading, researching, writing poetry, and playing video games. She aspired to advance in her career and continue to make a positive impact on individuals with mental health issues by working with them and towards destigmatising mental illness.

Reema

Reema was a 39-year-old second-generation Australian woman of Palestinian Egyptian background who chose not to wear the hijab. She was married and a mother to four children. Reema had completed her PhD and was working as a writer and academic when I met with her. She was an artistic, creative, and dedicated person, having produced

numerous creative writing pieces on the experiences of Muslim women. She was also an academic and had engaged in research and written much about Islam and Muslims in Australia. Reema was reflexive of her situated being within the larger settler–colonial Australian context and was strongly passionate about human rights and justice issues, connecting Islamophobia and other oppressions occurring within the Australian context—such as the oppression against Indigenous communities—to the wider sociopolitical and colonial contexts of the world.

Sarah

Sarah was a 39-year-old Australian woman of Anglo background. Sarah chose to wear the hijab. She was married, a mother, an academic researcher, an author, an activist, and a spokesperson for the Muslim community. She was passionate, bold, and brilliant with her words; she focused her energy on combating both Islamophobia and misogyny against Muslim women, recognising that Muslim women—like women from all cultures—were vulnerable to experiencing both racism and sexism and, in the case of the Muslim woman, often racist sexism, which I refer to as gendered Islamophobia in this research. Sarah's vision for the improved experiences of Australian Muslim women involved recognising and fighting against both the internal and external oppressions against Muslim woman, including misogyny occurring within Muslim communities. Sarah boldly argued that Muslim women's lives would not significantly improve if our focus was only to combat anti-Muslim racism—we must simultaneously fight our own problems within our own communities, including that of misogyny.

Sawsan

Sawsan was a 30-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian background who chose to wear the hijab. She was an extremely well-spoken and intelligent woman, reflexive of her situated being within the larger sociopolitical context and passionate about social justice, human rights, and the fight against Islamophobia. Sawsan was a Muslim activist, poet, writer, and a key community figure; she spent much of her time engaged in antiracism work in creative ways, including spoken word poetry, seminars, conferences, and creative arts. She was a confident, well-read, and well-educated woman and very passionate about educating and improving the experience of Muslim communities within the larger Australian society, especially Muslim women communities.

Sheila

Sheila was a 31-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Bangladeshi background residing in Western Sydney. At the time of doing the interview with her, she was wearing the hijab turban style and shortly after chose not to wear it any more. Sheila was married, an academic researcher, and a Muslim activist. She spent her time within the field of academia engaging in antiracism research, writing, and activism.

Samra

Samra was a 30-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Palestinian background who chose to wear the hijab. She had been born outside of Palestine to parents who tried to settle in several countries but eventually migrated to Australia and settled in the Western Sydney area. Samra was studying a degree in information technology and was volunteering at a community centre. She was married and a mother of two young children. Samra spent much of her free time attending lectures, seminars, and spiritual circles in which topics relevant to Islam and Muslims were discussed and presented, including topics on racism, structural injustices, and historical colonialism that had shaped and continue to shape the experiences of Muslims in Australia and worldwide.

Sana

Sana was a 33-year-old second-generation Australian woman of Pakistani background, who chose not to wear the hijab. Sana was married, had three young children, and was residing in the Western Sydney region. She was working full time as an audiologist and spent much of her free time with her immediate family and friends. Sana was a spiritual person and particularly found enjoyment in performing the five ritual prayers. She found strength in prostrating during prayer, connecting her heart and soul with the divine, and speaking to God about her daily affairs, tribulations, and blessings.

Yusra

Yusra was a 21-year-old first-generation Australian woman of Iraqi Turkmen background who chose to wear the hijab. Yusra had migrated to Australia with her family as a young child and had initially settled in Adelaide before settling in South Western Sydney as a teenager. Yusra was doing her university degree in occupational therapy when I met her. She was a well-spoken, funny, sarcastic, and intelligent woman. She passionately shared her strong opinions and did not hesitate to stop and ask many questions, recognising the

limitations in her knowledge, too—which showed her reflexive nature. She enjoyed socialising with family and friends and dressing up in elegant dresses during occasions.

Zainab

Zainab was a 30-year-old second-generation Australian woman of Lebanese background residing in Western Sydney. Zainab chose to wear the hijab. She was married, a mother, a lawyer, an artist, a writer, and an activist. Zainab frequently attended various seminars and talks where she shared her unique experiences of being a Muslim Australian woman. Zainab had experienced the traumatic murder of her mother by her father and had to find ways to build resilience, not only against her overwhelming emotions related to the loss of her mother but also to the waves of Islamophobic media representations that followed the event, in which the media sometimes framed the occurrence as a 'Muslim problem' despite Zainab's father not being a very religious Muslim. To cope with this tragic situation, Zainab resorted to art and began pouring her emotions on the canvas. Eventually, her artwork resulted in a beautiful collection that was displayed in various galleries around Australia and won awards.

The above pen portraits provide a significant insight into the different women's intersectional backgrounds and contexts, highlighting the great diversity existing among them in terms of ethno-culture, religious sectarian affiliation, educational capital, class status, migration status and their general self-presentation during the interviews. This information provides the reader an opportunity to situate participant quotes and the relevant discussion supported by these quotes within these particular contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the qualitative methodology approach as inspired by Smith (2012), using narrative semistructured interviews and focus group with a thematic analysis as a suitable research approach. The research design attempted to foreground the Muslim women's voices in this research and to engage them a second time via re-reading their transcripts and giving the opportunity for them to reach out to me again if they wished to clarify or further elaborate their shared experiences. This was done by drawing inspiration from Smith's (2012) *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. However, I also note that the rules of PhD production prevent 'real' decolonising

approaches—and that I only attempted instead to come as close to such an approach as the rules allowed. This methodology adopted a reflexive approach that accounted for researcher positionality in producing this research and how this positionality could impact the data analysis. The next two chapters discuss the data findings from these interviews and focus group. The theoretical and methodological approaches discussed in these two chapters are used in the analysis of the research data and to illuminate Australian Muslim women's experiences of and responses to Islamophobia within the Australian context.

Chapter 5. 'Oh My God, They're Going to Think What a Stupid Muslim Woman': The Burden of Gendered Islamophobia

> Here, when I'm driving, if I do the slightest road mistake I think 'Oh my God, they're going to think what a stupid Muslim woman'. Everything I do, I think oh they're going to think I'm this or I am that . . . I feel like anything I do, it will reflect badly on me as a Muslim woman. (Bella, 23, Dutch Maltese, jilbab, dental hygienist, currently stay-at-home mum)

As Hochschild (2012, p. 1083) argued, and as Bella exemplifies in the above quote, putting on a particular emotional performance is emotional labour and is valued differentially across different contextual fields. These fields can be in public—for example, the workplace or in private such as in domestic settings when dealing with family. While there is no clear separation between public and private sphere, for the sake of analysis, Hochschild distinguished between the value of emotional management in private and public spheres. Emotional management to create a facial and bodily display is either sold for a wage in the workforce and therefore has exchange value, or it is expressed in the private sphere and therefore has use value. Hochschild distinguished between the two in that emotional exertion expressed in the workplace is termed emotional labour, whereas the same exertion expressed in private spheres is termed emotion management or emotion work. This thesis is concerned with the latter emotional work or emotion management in Muslim women's daily lives. While recognising the different ways these terms were used by Hochschild, and Hochschild's particular focus on people in the workforce, for simplification purposes, emotional labour, emotion work, and emotional management are used interchangeably in this thesis. They all refer to Muslim women's management of their emotions and self in their daily lives that also include experiences in the work, public, and private spheres.

All three terms refer to the way a person manages their emotions to regulate the emotions of other people, often practised by women. It is often gendered in nature and that

women frequently do to manage the emotions of those around them, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (Hochschild, 2012; Iszatt-White, 2013; Theodosius, 2008; Wharton, 2009). Importantly, emotional labour is also an embodied experience, where emotions are experienced within the body, processed, managed, and expressed from the body in efforts to mitigate the external surrounding.

In the findings from this research, the participants appeared to carry out emotional labour as a self-protection strategy: in situations that were anxiety provoking, invoked fear, or were disturbing for women. The women worked hard to diffuse potential Islamophobia from occurring, as they recognised that Islamophobic public narratives in the wider society generate negative emotions in racist individuals. And it is a dynamic that was commonly experienced by the women, being a gendered response mechanism that aims at regulating the emotions of others to mitigate one's own situation. This dynamic certainly happens for women and girls in their day-to-day strategies, but also in relation to abuse as children, domestic violence, psychological abuse within marriages or intimate partnerships, and sometimes with violent or abusive children (Huang & Yeoh, 2007). The fact that Muslim women are doing this in connection with racist abuse adds a racist dimension to their experienced emotional labour while also being on a continuum with women more broadly, who process risks of violence differently to men and are also more exposed to violence and abuse than men. In the case of Muslim women, it is the daily attempt at avoiding or minimising the Islamophobic emotions of others within the wider society as further illustrated in this and the following chapter. Muslim women's daily emotional labour and silent endurance of gendered racism highlights the imperative for academics to further explore the psycho–emotional embodied implications of everyday gendered Islamophobia and to examine the power dynamics differences and nuances between chosen silence and enforced silence.

This chapter first details the impact of visibility on Muslim women's experiences of everyday gendered Islamophobia in the wider public, bringing attention to how increased visibility impacts their experiences of being racialised and targeted by gendered Islamophobia, which also impacts their governmental or passive belonging. The chapter then shows how frequent experiences of racialisation of and racism against Muslim women normalises gendered Islamophobia for the women, where they become expectant of such racism occurring in Muslim minority geographical context and therefore also become

increasingly vigilant against Islamophobia in their everyday lives. The chapter ends by demonstrating how Muslim women emotionally manage their surroundings constantly in efforts to dissipate or prevent gendered Islamophobia from occurring.

Muslim Women's Visibility

Impact of Visibility on Australian Muslim Women's Everyday Experiences

> When I used to teach English at the university, so many times when my colleagues used to see me there, they used to say 'Oh, you speak good English!' Why wouldn't I!? Like, you know, they always have this idea that you're foreign, you're not capable of mastering this language. And I would be walking around with the roll, and other teachers would not even think that I am a teacher until they see the class roll in my hands and realise that I am teacher. (Khadija, 27, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, high school teacher)

As detailed in previous chapters, Muslim women's bodies and their visibility often prompt Orientalist assumptions. This section details the impact of embodied visibility on Muslim women's vulnerability to everyday Islamophobia, focusing on the experiences of individual expressions of Islamophobia towards the women, which are entangled with wider systemic and structural forms of Islamophobia.

While recent research has found that visibly Muslim women are more vulnerable to Islamophobic targeting in their daily lives (Iner, 2019; Najib & Hopkins, 2019; Perry, 2014), the participants in this study experienced Islamophobia in more complex ways; some were very much affected by everyday Islamophobia, whereas others were less impacted. This resonates with Fanon's findings on Algerian women under French colonial rule (Fanon, 1980). In the Australian context, it was clear that women who did not obviously stand out as Muslims were better able to navigate the wider community without being directly targeted by everyday Islamophobia. However, the women were not immune to other forms of Islamophobic experiences, such as witnessing everyday Islamophobia expressed in opposition to other Muslims in the wider society in public, on social media platforms, in government and media rhetoric, and via institutional measures targeting the wider Muslim community (Aly, 2007; Amath, 2013; Briskman, 2015; Colic-Peisker et al., 2016). By virtue of being less visibly Muslim, the women were also less vulnerable to being directly targeted as

individuals by everyday Islamophobia, as was the case with Reema, a less visibly Muslim woman:

> I have the safety of anonymity in my everyday life because there's no hijab. So, I don't encounter prejudice in my everyday life because of the marker of Muslimness, unless I'm in a situation where my Muslimness is exposed, so that's the difference. I've gone through that in my teenage years when I wore it [hijab], so I know what it feels like. But the everyday life prejudice, the Islamophobic attacks are not there now. Because the visibility on everyday basis is not there, that's why. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

Another example was shared by Anita, a Muslim woman whose faith was not visible to others: ‘I'm very blessed living in a country and an environment that allows me to practise what I believe. I haven't witnessed anti-Muslim hostility [directly], but it sickens me to hear about it happening to others’ (Anita, 49, Indian, no hijab, business owner).

In fact, Anita, who was of Indian background and did not have a stereotypical Muslim-sounding name, lived in Sydney’s North Shore, owned a successful beauty business, and had numerous non-Muslim, Anglo Australian friends. While discussing her experiences as a Muslim woman in Australia, Anita could only recall positive or neutral experiences. She was certainly aware of Islamophobia in the wider society manifesting in everyday individual attacks, as well as in other forms on social media platforms and in government and media rhetoric. The widespread presence of Islamophobia in the Australian context, especially in online contexts, resulted in Anita engaging in challenging this dominant racist narrative and promoting an alternative one on social media platforms against what she called ‘racist keyboard warriors’.

Anita’s successful beauty business in a predominantly non-Muslim area involved quite a bit of social interaction in which she mixed widely with non-Muslims. She also had numerous non-Muslim friends with whom she spent time and was connected to via her social media platforms. This likely gave Anita the opportunity to interact widely and engage with a range of views that well positioned her to reach a wider audience on her social media platforms and have some influence at this level against Islamophobia. Although she often felt obliged to respond to Islamophobic materials on her social media platforms, outside these platforms, she was less visibly Muslim unless she declared her faith to others.

Therefore, she did have a sort of anonymity that helped decrease her vulnerability to everyday Islamophobia if she chose to remain anonymous. Other women who were also less visibly Muslim shared similar experiences to Anita in which they had the privilege of anonymity in their everyday lives, and therefore they were not necessarily direct targets of everyday Islamophobia but did occasionally experience racialising as other due to their backgrounds. This was highlighted by Sheila, who chose not to wear the hijab after many years of wearing it, and could see a difference in her everyday experiences with Islamophobia:

> People can't tell that I'm a Muslim by looking at me, or from my name. I don't like that because it means that I can fly under the radar. On one hand yes, it gives me a sense of protection, or safety, or security, because I no longer have to experience that kind of everyday Islamophobia that I used to experience before, because people don't know by looking at me that I am Muslim. But I do feel like a fraud, I feel like that I shouldn't be benefiting from that. Not because I want to experience Islamophobia, but I feel like why should I be exempt from it, when other friends of mine, especially Muslim women [who wear the hijab], they have to bear the brunt of that?

Thus, feeling like a fraud and undeserving of going unnoticed, Sheila put in effort to make herself visibly Muslim:

> So, I've realised that I've kind of tried to make a point of outing myself as a Muslim as soon as I meet someone new. I want people to know so that, if there is someone who is going to have problems with Muslims or if there are someone who is going to be Islamophobic, they know that from the outset. So, it's like a screening process, and they'll kind of drift away and I won't continue that relationship. (Sheila, 31, Bangladeshi, no hijab, academic researcher)

What Sheila appears to be doing here by way of resistance is actively creating a space with new people that she meets to tease out their views on Islam and Muslims. By doing so, she is holding out the possibility for these new people to engage with her strong and courageous 'here I stand' declaration. Sheila appears to be offering a gentle invitation for a challenge to accept her as she is and, if accepted, to also make space for new understandings to emerge from her engagement with these people. By doing so, Sheila recognises that some people may walk away; however, she actively creates the space for

people to engage with her as a Muslim woman should they choose to enter a genuine discussion after she has declared her faith belonging. This indicates that Muslim women feel they need to justify themselves to the wider public in contrast to those considered belonging, as expressed by Hage (2000b), and who therefore simply fit within the national space.

The above example shared by Sheila provides insight into the internal struggles of identity against representation (Hall, 1990), but also the resistance that some less visibly Muslim women may face at the embodied intersections in which they find themselves (Mirza, 2013). While anonymity secures a form of protection against everyday Islamophobia, witnessing Islamophobia in the wider society creates an everyday dilemma for some less visibly Muslim women and internally impacts on their Muslim identity. For some women, like Sheila, speaking up was a way to counter Islamophobia in their everyday surroundings by actively making themselves visibly Muslim or 'outing themselves' as Muslims, thereby, using Stuart Hall's (1990) idea, continuously reshaping their identity to assert Muslimness in a context were such representation could be lacking. The act of some women being vocal about their Muslim identity by this outing process and identifying as a Muslim in the wider community, can be conceptualised through Fanon's observation of Algerian Muslim women's experiences (1980), as a counter-response to Islamophobia and as an effort of sisterly solidarity with more visibly Muslim women targeted by everyday Islamophobia. There was a recognition among the women that Muslim women are especially ostracised when more visible, through the hijab. This indicates how Muslim women are racialised and targeted by everyday Islamophobia, often underpinned by racist meanings associated with their visibility (Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Perry, 2014).

The significance of the hijab and the meanings widely associated with it have a marked impact on Muslim women who wear the hijab (Ahmed, 1992, 2011). Since most women in this study fell into this category, the rest of the findings illustrate a different experience to the ones outlined by the nonveiled women. For example, Samra, a Palestinian Muslim woman who looked Anglo Australian but wore the hijab, often experienced comments from the wider public with regard to her identity and visibility. During the focus group conversation, she stated,

> I've had instances where I speak English to someone and they tell me 'Oh, you're so well spoken!' Like, why would you assume that I don't speak good English!? And, the funny thing is that I actually look Anglo, so that's a whole other area of discussion. The majority just see the hijab and then they judge you. I think they compartmentalise all Muslims. (Samra, 30, Palestinian, hijab, teacher, currently stay-at-home mum, focus group conversation)

What is interesting to note here is that Samra also recognised how Anglo Australian she looked, and if she was to be in the public without her hijab, she would have easily fit in. However, it is the hijab, the visible marker of her faith, that rendered her different and caused others to be so surprised by her fluent English. Such questions as posed to Samra indicates how many in the public compartmentalise Muslims as nonbelonging to the Australian nation and are then surprised by the accumulated national capital such as that of speaking fluent English. It also indicates that an increase in national capital does not guarantee national belonging (G. Hage, 2000). This is because, as Hage (2000b) argued, a person's acquired national capital increases only the level of tolerance towards that person, but as long as Australia is imagined as a White nation, true national or governmental belonging is only provided to those who are Anglo White and fit within the White nation fantasy. So regardless of how much national capital Samra had accumulated, as a Palestinian Arab, she did not fit within the parameters of the White nation fantasy, and furthermore, her hijab acted as a marker of nonbelonging in the public's mind.

As Samra and I were engaged in a conversation during the focus group, I also remembered how the hijab, the marker of Muslim faith, had previously played out in my own and my sister's personal experiences a few years after September 11 as we were travelling to the United States:

> I remember while travelling to the US a few years ago with my family, we were stopped by the security at JFK [John F. Kennedy Airport] and taken to another room for interrogation. They asked us why I was wearing the hijab and my younger sister, who looks Anglo European, was not. They just couldn't comprehend that two sisters from the same family could look physically different to each other, and why one sister was wearing the hijab and the other was not. We had to literally explain to them that part of our family looks very Anglo European, and my sister had inherited those genes, whereas the other part looked very Mediterranean and darker in skin tone, and that's why I was

> darker. We also had to explain to them that I had chosen to wear the hijab and she had chosen not to, as simple as that. Yet they kept asking 'but why?' It was just odd to be stopped and interrogated about differing skin tones and hijab choices between siblings. There are bigger security threats in the world. (Interviewer, focus group conversation)

The significance of my above experience is that Muslim women usually must explain themselves and justify their existence. Muslim women must also often justify their choices of dress to the public that continuously compartmentalise Muslim women into one homogenous category and has difficulty accepting the great lived and expressed diversity among Muslim women.

This sort of racialisation that categorises Muslim women as Others based on their exhibited marker of Muslimness through their hijab or dress is especially evident in the experiences of Muslim Anglo Australian converts who experienced a sudden difference in Islamophobic targeting once they chose to become more visibly Muslim by adhering to certain dress styles. Although these women looked Anglo Australian, the visible Muslim markers on their bodies overpowered all other markers of their identities. Their identities had reshaped in response to external representation (Hall, 1990), whereas now their Muslimness overpowered all other intersections of identity. To explain this further, I refer to Ahmed's (2004) notion of stickiness to illustrate the persistence of how such markers impact Muslim women's bodies. I use Ahmed's concept in very general terms to illustrate how the persistence of dominant narratives that continuously mark Muslim women's dress as oppressive and backwards, among other things, thereby resulting in these meanings, emotions, and associations to stick to her dress and body. These meanings and associations 'stick' to create assumptions of Muslim women as oppressed, threatening, and 'un-Australian', among other things, thus increasing their vulnerability to everyday Islamophobia in very gendered ways.

Hence, Muslim women's daily experiences of gendered Islamophobia is very much entangled with the way dominant, racially inflected governmental narratives represent Islam, Muslims, and Muslim women and the way that the resultant symbols emerging from these narratives become associated with the visible markers on their gendered bodies impacting on their individual identities (Ahmed, 2003; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014). Unable to escape such stereotypes and racist meanings, many visibly Muslim women find themselves

experiencing everyday forms of gendered Islamophobia. Khadija's reflection on her teenage years in post-September 11 Australia illustrates Muslim women's common experience of racist abuse:

> Like when I was in Year 8, I was at the station—this was two years after 9/11—waiting for the train. A man from the train chucked a cup of hot coffee at me, on my hijab. The coffee went everywhere. (Khadija, 27, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, high school teacher)

The act of throwing a cup of hot liquid specifically on the hijab of a young teenage girl in a public space speaks loudly of the racist meanings and emotions that are associated with the hijab and Muslim women's dress in Western contexts. It also shows how Muslim women are the embodiment of their faith and culture and therefore carry on their bodies markers that make them vulnerable to such hostility. In Khadija's case, the hot coffee had gone everywhere and scalded her, inducing physical pain, yet she told me that she had just brushed off the coffee with her hands and pretended she was not impacted. This also signifies the emotional labour involved in her embodied response to such hostility as she displayed a publicly visible emotion on her body that was very different to her actual internal feelings. The emotional labour exerted here is by way of deep acting. As entrenched societal Islamophobia impacts Muslim women's daily lives, surface acting such as smiling and pretending to be okay for a short time does not suffice for some women. Instead, a deep acting takes over where they continuously pretend to be okay and tell themselves that they are okay by minimising the impact of the hostility to finally synchronise their actual feelings with that of being okay. It is also a form of resistive response where these women speak back to their perpetrators by showing via their bodies that they are unaffected by the hostility. Such everyday experiences of the Muslim women in this study are consistent with previous research on Muslim women's experiences with gendered Islamophobia in both Australian and other Western contexts (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Iner, 2019; Keddie, 2018; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006).

Racialisation, Belonging, and White/Anglo Australian Muslim Converts

These experiences occurred frequently in the women's daily lives and often in public places where men were usually the perpetrators. Justine, an Anglo Australian Muslim woman, spoke of her visit to a local coffee shop in a Western Sydney suburb:

> Really, you get the comments or the expression on people's faces that lets you know that they are uncomfortable with you. I walked into a coffee shop once, and there was a man there. He looked at me and slammed his hands on the table and said 'Oh my!' He must have been a regular there, because I saw him there a few times in a row, and he started changing from just making gestures to saying things like 'Oh, here comes trouble!' Like here is the trouble-maker. (Justine, 37, Anglo Australian, niqab, postgraduate, currently a stay-at-home mum)

The man, who was Anglo Australian, felt entitled to make gestures and comments regarding Justine's presence in the coffee shop, indicating how his actions illustrated his taken-for-granted governmental belonging. He felt entitled to manage the space around him; although he himself was just another regular customer, he wanted to remove Justine from this space. Such management of public spaces expressed by individuals with a White nation fantasy was also evident in Khadija's earlier experience of having hot coffee chucked at her by another train passenger. This is made further evident with the following women's experiences.

Going back to Justine, such experiences were quite common in Justine's everyday life. Despite this, Justine continued to drop into this coffee shop for her daily cup of coffee, ignoring the daily insults from the other customer and showing extra friendliness towards the barista, indicating the emotional labour involved in Muslim women's everyday experiences, which are further elaborated later in this and the following chapter.

The barista who worked at the coffee shop had also noticed the way that Justine was treated and would roll her eyes and make facial gestures to Justine whenever the other customer began his remarks, as if to indicate to Justine, 'Here we go, the idiot is talking again'. I also would like to note that the barista, another woman, was also engaging in emotional labour as she attempted her best to manage the potentially hostile situation that could occur between her two regular customers. These daily eye contacts, subtle smiles, and facial gestures suggesting the racist idiocy of the whole situation was what Justine explained as a form of solidarity, an understanding between the barista and herself. Justine was also suspicious that other regulars at the coffee shop had grown tired of this customer's daily remarks, although no one had yet dared to speak in her defence. His remarks were uncomfortable, but it was not the remarks that bothered her as much as the change in her perceived identity as soon as she became visibly Muslim. With this change, and quite a

dramatic change in her case as she put on the niqab, she was suddenly rendered a nonbelonging Other from previously being a belonging Anglo-Australian, showing how identities are shaped and reshaped within contexts of representation (Hall, 1990). She was being subjected to the aggressions of the White managers, while she was White herself. She was racialised as a Muslim but then resisted by not feeling as though she only passively belonged:

> I have people regularly look at me and shake their head as if they don't believe that I would choose to do that [wear the niqab]. Or that they talk to me as if I don't understand English. And then I start speaking, and they kind of get taken aback by my really fluent English! Then they just say things to me like ‘Oh, I thought you were from Saudi Arabia’. (Justine, 37, Anglo Australian, niqab, postgraduate, currently a stay-at-home mum)

Despite such occurrences being part of Justine’s everyday life, she was also resistant by actively challenging the wider public’s assumptions about her identity, showing that identity is a continuous process, impacted by external representation but also by internal resistance and reframing of the self (Hall, 1990). She provided those who engaged with her in discriminatory ways in her everyday life opportunities to reflect on their assumptions and think about Muslim women differently. Making clear her Anglo Australian identity to those who assumed her nonbelonging provided them an opportunity to rethink their perceptions about Muslim women as well as Muslim women’s dress. Within this intersectional positioning that also rendered her visible via clothing choices, she both experienced and responded to gendered Islamophobia in resistive ways that challenged the status quo. She should not have to challenge it just as much as those who are immigrants should not have to challenge it. While emotional labour was involved in this type of response, as the women managed the emotions of those around them, attempting to dissipate gendered Islamophobia to protect themselves because they were both visibly Muslim and women, there was also active choice involved in choosing to continue to wear the niqab despite the consequences of choosing to do so. In choosing to be visibly Muslim as an Anglo Australian Muslim woman, she was challenging stereotypical perceptions held about Muslim women. Thus, like the Algerian women that Fanon observed (Fanon, 1980), clothing choices became a resistive force to reshape their Islamic identity and counteract racism.

Like Justine, other Anglo Australian women converts who chose only to wear the hijab, without adhering to other additional dress styles and looked and sounded visibly Anglo Australian, also experienced the same gendered racist targeting once they became visibly Muslim. Linda, who converted to Islam and decided to wear the hijab, experienced an instant change in how she was treated after she became visibly Muslim: 'You're still the same person, but people don't see that, people see the hijab and that's all they can see' (Linda, 41, Anglo Australian, hijab, community engagement officer).

Although Linda did not register herself as changed after her conversion, she had in fact, by becoming Muslim, changed by adopting an alternative set of values, identity, and even structural positioning within wider Australia. This was echoed by Sarah, another Anglo Australian woman who had converted to Islam and was visibly Muslim as she chose to wear the hijab. While previously she had not experienced racism, after converting to Islam and choosing to wear the hijab she now frequently experienced gendered Islamophobia. Frustrated with the whole situation, Sarah exclaimed,

> How much do we have to do to show you that we're human? Why doesn't the rest of society take responsibility for that? Why do we have to—like how can you not register, how can you think 'I don't see these people as people'? I don't understand it! (Sarah, 39, Anglo Australian, hijab, academic researcher and author)

The persistence of such stereotypical meanings associated with these women's dress represented them as nonbelonging despite them being born and raised in Australia, indicating strongly the White nation fantasy that underpins Australian multiculturalism (G. Hage, 2000). It is like the women's common humanity was called into question by social hostility and demonisation as they became publicly and visibly Muslim. Their experiences differed to those of non-Anglo Australians who were born Muslim and had experienced this sort of othering all their lives in Western contexts, as tensions arose for those women in particular who had always belonged and never had reason to question it until they became visibly Muslim and saw their public identity reshaped to that of less belonging. Anglo Australians experienced this with more of a jolt as they became visibly Muslim and thus experienced the push towards passive belonging from their previous governmental belonging. As they resisted gendered Islamophobia, they also resisted this new experience of being rendered nonbelonging in a nation in which they had always belonged. Their

experiences also tie in with emotional labour involved in their responses to such experiences of racism and belonging. This is a clear example of how Muslim women are racialised due to being visibly Muslim and thereby exposed to gendered Islamophobia and thus experiencing the reality of exclusion/inclusion within the wider Australian nation. The main overlapping interest with these vital women's experiences is in the boundary of exclusion/inclusion in their experiences of governmental and passive belonging. Also, the significance lies in these Muslim women who by virtue of their triple disadvantage (religion, gender, and culture) are too often treated in practice as if they do not belong, thus racialised as Others.

The racialisation and racism evident in the women's experiences are consistent with Meer's (2013) conceptualisation of Muslims as a racialised category and further proves that Islamophobia is synonymous with anti-Muslim racism. This was particularly exemplified by the experiences of women who chose to no longer wear the hijab and removed visible Muslim markers from their bodies. These women significantly decreased their experience of being racialised and exposed to gendered Islamophobia even if they still experienced sexism and misogyny among other forms of oppression. Conversely, Anglo White women and women of other ethnocultures who had converted to Islam experienced the inverse (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Keddie, 2017, 2018; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006).

The role of visibility in relation to gendered Islamophobia calls attention to Muslim women's belonging in Australia and their responses to negotiate their exclusion/inclusion within wider Australia. Their responses in opposition to gendered Islamophobia were not limited to individual incidents but also to the wider structural narratives about Muslim women that dominate public discourse. The emotions and meanings associated with Muslim women's dress in dominant discourse motivate everyday targeting of visible Muslim women, as exemplified by Yusra's experience of witnessing her mother being attacked: 'I was with my mum who wears the niqab, and someone started screaming at my mum and chucked a bottle at the car. That was very scary' (Yusra, 21, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, university student).

Similarly, Asma shared stories of her Muslim friends being abused because of their visible dress:

> I've heard of my friends being spat at, having their scarves pulled off, having comments thrown at them from across the road . . . like reverts being told to go back to their country, and they're like fifth generation Australians. So, stuff like that. (Asma, 29, Lebanese, Year 12 graduate, hijab, currently stay-at-home mum)

This sort of gendered Islamophobic targeting are examples of what Hage (2000, p. 28) described as a nationalist act, the act in which the White Australian racist expresses who is excluded and who is included within the wider nationalist space: the 'White nation fantasy' that is perceived as culturally White and therefore unaccommodating for all that fall outside the White parameter. However, the lived experiences of many Muslim women go in opposition to this White nation fantasy and show how multiethnic and diverse Australia really is, at least in the greater cities like Sydney and Melbourne. By recognising their lived reality of diversity, the women push back against the White nation fantasy by embracing their Australian Muslim identity and continuing to wear the hijab and its variants despite the gendered racism that they experience. These are acts of agency and resistance for inclusion in Australia's multicultural space.

Thus, in accordance with other studies (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Iner, 2019; Meer, 2013; Perry, 2014), this research shows that the more visibly Muslim women wearing the hijab or its variants were racialised and therefore experienced more racist hostility. Muslim women who chose not to wear garments associated with Muslimness, and were not visibly Muslim in other ways, were able to feel a degree of anonymity that rendered them less vulnerable to everyday gendered Islamophobia.

Normalising Islamophobia

Personal Visibility, Geographical Spaces, and the Expectation of Hostility

While previous research and the current study show that more visibly Muslim women are increasingly vulnerable to gendered Islamophobic targeting, this research also shows that Muslim women experience gendered Islamophobia in complex ways, where visibility does not always result in increased vulnerability to everyday gendered Islamophobia. Geographical contexts and demographic factors appeared to play a role in Muslim women's everyday experiences.

One marked finding within participants' accounts was an internalisation and normalisation of gendered Islamophobia. This resulted in participants expecting

Islamophobic experiences in their everyday lives within certain contexts where a majority Muslim population was not the norm. Visibly Muslim women residing in highly Muslim and multiculturally populated Sydney suburbs, and who usually did not venture out of these suburbs for work and leisure, did not report significant personal experiences of everyday gendered Islamophobia. As Farah reflected,

> I've never felt, I shouldn't say never, but I've hardly ever felt open hostility. I've been very fortunate, Alhamdulillah. Through all the difficulties that the world has experienced, particularly 9/11, Australia has been a very, you know, a safe haven. I don't think there were many incidences where women felt threatened by going out in hijab. (Farah, 49, hijab, South African mixed heritage, STEM teacher and librarian)

Farah, who had lived in the suburbs of Lakemba and Punchbowl since arriving in Australia as a teenager from South Africa, had not experienced much open hostility. Living and working in multicultural areas with a high Muslim population, most of Farah's friends and colleagues were ethnoculturally diverse, and many were Muslim. She felt mostly comfortable and unaffected by everyday gendered Islamophobia, although she was aware of Islamophobia manifesting within the wider society in other forms, especially in government and media rhetoric. This did not stop Farah from venturing out of these suburbs as she usually spent most school holidays camping with Muslim family and friends at various camping and holiday sites in NSW. Her experience resonated with Bushra, who also felt largely unaffected by everyday gendered Islamophobia:

> I suppose because I live in Greenacre, which is 70% Muslim as I understand, and my friends circle is predominantly Muslim, yeah, so I've not experienced Islamophobia, but I've heard of it, a lot. I've heard of it from the media, I've heard of it from that Islamophobia Register, I've heard it first-hand from some community members. There was that Ride with Me campaign that was happening. So, I know that it's out there. (Bushra, 50, Indian, hijab, computer scientist)

As the most recent ABS (2016) census data indicate, most residents in these suburbs were born overseas, and only about a quarter or less of the population had completed a bachelor's degree or higher tertiary education. Many residents were also first-generation migrants speaking languages other than English as their first language. Visibly Muslim women felt that they blended and felt more at home within these environments. As Hana

reflected, ‘People, when they migrate, they leave everything that they know behind. So, they naturally gravitate towards the familiar [on arrival]. It's a natural human instinct of survival, to go towards what they know’ (Hana, 26, Lebanese, hijab, manager at a large Australian company).

Although Hana lived in a Muslim majority suburb but worked in the city, many of her colleagues at work were Muslim. She therefore felt a sense of comfort working at this company as she was ‘not the only hijabi there’. The choice of gravitating towards the familiar, living and working within multicultural suburbs, also helped maintain faith and cultural traditions as well as a sense of belonging for migrants (Hage, 2002; Yeğenoğlu, 2012). As Maryam said, ‘We like to live near the Muslim communities because it's helpful with practising the religion, and you know, you feel like you have a connection with people of your faith. There is a sense of belonging’ (Maryam, 34, Bangladeshi, hijab, stay-at-home mum).

The sense of belonging in a majority Muslim populated and highly multicultural area was positive for Maryam and added great value to the way she practised her faith. This confidence in navigating the wider society with little worry of becoming targeted decreased for some of the women; however, when they found themselves outside of Muslim majority populated and multicultural geographical areas.

Some of the women named Bondi, Cronulla, and the Northern Beaches as examples of areas where they became hyperconscious about their surroundings and potential Islamophobic targeting, as evident in Iman’s experience: ‘When I do go to places like Bondi, I do feel stared at. I do shrug it off, but it's not nice’ (Iman, 31, Palestinian, hijab, Chinese medicine practitioner).

As reflected in her statement, Iman, a visibly Muslim woman who lived and worked in the highly Muslim populated and multicultural suburb of Bankstown, felt discomfort in geographical spaces that were not highly multicultural or with a high Muslim population. Although Iman told herself that she shrugged it off, it clearly impacted her as she became hyperaware of her embodied presence within a space in which she was now the visible minority. Iman’s experience is interesting because Bondi is a multicultural area where only 64.8% speak only English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and Russian (ABS, 2016). What is significant about Bondi is that very few people speak Arabic; hence, Iman’s experience was not really about multicultural spaces but about spaces in which she was able

to connect to others like her—Arab Muslims. As one participant mentioned, people tended to gravitate towards the known, and as there was not much that Iman could gravitate towards while in Bondi, she felt out of place and became hyperaware of her embodied presence in that space.

This, however, was not the case with all visibly Muslim women as some felt more comfortable in such geographical spaces. By contrast, Linda, a visibly Muslim convert woman of Anglo Australian background was happy to enjoy the beach in Muslim minority areas:

> Some Muslims always like to go to where all other Muslims are; I still go to Northern Beaches and all those places and whatever . . . like, I go to these places. Sometimes you feel like you stand out in your burkini, but then you think people are just going to get used to it. (Linda, 41, Anglo Australian, hijab, community engagement officer)

Linda, an Anglo Australian woman in her 40s, who had for many years frequented Northern Beaches and other places that some of the other visibly Muslim women found uncomfortable to navigate, chose to continue to visit these places. She found it odd that some Muslim women would avoid these spaces. Although Linda, too, was a visibly Muslim women, she did not feel like she did not belong. This relates to Hage's (2000b) governmental belonging in that Linda, who was born and raised in Australia from a multigenerational Anglo Australian lineage, perceived herself as entirely belonging in Australia and therefore free to venture anywhere she pleased. While she had accumulated a different set of values and embodied a different faith, she was confidently Australian. She sometimes felt that she stood out due to hear head scarf, but she assumed that people would simply get used to it. However, Bella, another Muslim woman convert, felt markedly less comfortable:

> I do feel nervous going to the city sometimes. Like to Manly and stuff. I really don't feel comfortable at all and try to avoid those places. A few weeks ago, we were in Newcastle, and I just felt like people were staring. I think of what they're thinking, I make up their thoughts in my head, I imagine they're thinking, so I make it worse for myself. Because I'm always in my jilbab,[6] this is what I'm comfortable in. And they're

[6] A long hijab that covers the entire upper body and sometimes to the knees or ankles.

> probably thinking 'Oh, look what she's wearing'. (Bella, 23, Dutch Maltese, jilbab, dental hygienist, currently stay-at-home mum)

Bella, who had previously looked like an Anglo Australian (although she was not) and felt that she had fit in more naturally in public, felt by virtue of becoming a visibly Muslim woman less comfortable in public for reasons that may or may not relate to her cultural capital as a Muslim woman and also prior to being a Muslim woman.

Bella's example is interesting as although she felt out of place due to her clothing when in Muslim minority places, the jilbab gave her great comfort otherwise in other areas with a higher Muslim population. She could have chosen to a wear a small, fashionable hijab, yet she chose to wear the jilbab because she connected with it strongly and also found it comfortable to wear. Thus, the jilbab for Bella could vary as a determinant of belonging or of exclusion or inclusion, depending on the geographical and demographical spaces in which she travelled. Going back to Stuart Hall's conception of identity as something that is in continuous process (Hall, 1990), always being reshaped within contexts of representation, Bella experienced these shifts as she moved between suburbs with different demographics. Internalising external experiences and representations in relation to her Muslim visibility, Bella's comfort with expressing her Islamic identity would shift across contexts.

Awareness of embodied presence was common among all three women, Iman, Linda, and Bella, who although felt hyperconscious about their visibility in such geographical areas, their responses to it varied greatly. Linda, who was an Anglo White woman in her early 40s, took active steps to go to geographical contexts with low Muslim populations such as the Northern Beaches despite the awareness of her visibility as Muslim. Acknowledging her Muslim visibility, she also assumed that people around her would just get used to it and therefore did not give it any more thought. Iman, on the other hand, observed that others stared at her. She claimed to shrug off the feeling, but 'it was not nice', indicating that awareness of her visibility in a low Muslim populated area in which she stood out as different continued to play with her internal emotions while still in the area. Bella, on the other hand, who was a younger Muslim convert of Dutch Maltese background and wore the jilbab, tried to avoid going to these areas altogether as she felt out of context and targeted. While both Bella and Linda had previously enjoyed recreational activities in these

geographical spaces before converting to Islam and becoming visibly Muslim, only Linda was able to continue going to these places confidently for enjoyment. This could perhaps be, from an intersectional analytical standpoint, that Linda, who was born here, did not question her belonging in the same way as the other women. It could be surmised that Linda was not made to question her belonging prior to becoming a Muslim and felt a more grounded belonging in Australia and was thus able to continue navigating such spaces more confidently despite being more visibly Muslim. Linda also had the added capital of more mature age, being educated, and having a managerial career, one that had equipped her with people skills and, potentially, more confidence to deal with conflict. Bella, who was a child of immigrant parents, was younger, had lower educational capital, and felt out of place and targeted once she had made the choice to become visibly Muslim. She therefore avoided geographical spaces in which she felt she would be especially 'othered'. Iman a first-generation immigrant woman and a professional in her early thirties, was often hyperconscious about her Muslim visibility in her everyday life but more so in less Muslim populated areas. Both Iman and Bella felt they needed to monitor their environment continuously when outside Muslim majority areas and to manage potential threat and risk, signifying the everyday emotional labour involved in their movement across geographical spaces.

These findings are in line with previous research on Muslims' experiences of Islamophobia within different geographical spaces where Muslims create 'mental maps' of geographical spaces where they believe Islamophobia is likely to occur (Itaoui, 2016, p. 262). As Muslim women perceive and feel safety risks different to men (for example, many Muslim women would not feel comfortable going to the city on a Friday night, whereas Muslim men might feel more comfortable doing so), they perceived 'a geographical distribution of Islamophobic spaces across Sydney, focused in the regions of Sutherland, Sydney's North Side/Eastern Suburbs, and the Upper North Shore' (Itaoui, 2016, p. 261). In gendered ways, these women restricted their movements to certain suburbs because they felt safer in those locations where Muslim populations were higher, also indicating how Muslim women may internalise Islamophobia and therefore self-regulate in efforts to avoid conflict.

The findings in this research further add to previous studies showing that ethnocultural belonging, as well as class and age, impact visibly Muslim women's personal

experiences of gendered Islamophobia within various geographical spaces in Australia. These individual experiences are also evident of how Islamophobia is an embodied and gendered experience.

The above-mentioned women's experiences show how gendered Islamophobia has become normalised, and regardless of whether they care or not as much about being stared at in public, they have come to expect it.

Vigilance and Retreat

Women who found themselves outside their comfort zones and in their 'mental maps' of Islamophobic spaces often implemented a heightened vigilance and readiness for retreat in opposition to potential Islamophobic hostility (Itaoui, 2016, p. 262). Continuously on the lookout for potential hostility, they navigated their surroundings cautiously, describing both experiential and perceived expectations of hostility, as illustrated in Bella's everyday experiences:

> Even when we were looking for a new rental place, I was scared that they would be rejecting us because we're Muslim. Everything that we're doing I always think 'we're Muslim'. Because I see how they used to treat me before I was Muslim, and how I'm treated now. I see the difference, and that's why I always think 'It's because we're Muslim'. (Bella, 23, Dutch Maltese, jilbab, dental hygienist, currently stay-at-home mum).

When Bella became visibly Muslim, she began to notice a change in attitude and behaviour from people in her family and workplace. Her male manager at a Sydney dental clinic who had treated her well for the past couple of years that she had worked there told her upon learning that she was going to become a Muslim, 'Just don't put that thing on your head'. She did however put on that 'thing'—the hijab— which resulted in her manager no longer communicating with her. This prompted Bella to send a resignation letter to her manager who never responded to her. She never showed up to work again after that.

Her interaction with her male manager evidences the way Islamophobia is gendered and how visibility plays a role in Muslim women's everyday experiences, which are entangled with structural and nationalist acts of governing the Other (Essed, 1991; G. Hage, 2000; Perry, 2014). Furthermore, the comment directed at Bella by her manager shows the fine line between White multiculturalism and White racism that differs in terms of tolerating

the Other. Bella's manager was ready to tolerate her new faith identity as long as she did not make it visible in his clinic, and when she went in opposition to her manager's order, this tolerance disappeared altogether as her manager exercised governmental belonging, managing her out of his space by way of exclusion.

As a result, Bella eventually came to accept that such experiences were expected to occur in her everyday life in the wider community and especially in her 'mental maps' of potentially Islamophobic spaces (Itaoui, 2016, p. 262). The expectation and normalisation of different and more negative treatment became embedded in Bella's everyday routine and choices. Yet despite the level of discomfort that resulted from being so visibly Muslim, she chose to continue wearing the jilbab. What did change for Bella was that she began to avoid as much as possible going to places where she would visibly stand out as Muslim. In a way, she created a mental map or a geographic bubble of Muslim majority suburbs that she considered safe for her to confidently navigate as a visible Muslim woman. She also changed the group of friends that she spent time with, leaving former friends and forming new circles of friendship, most of whom consisted of other young convert Muslim women. Within these spaces, Bella had grown to lead these convert social circles in an organised way, creating both a social and spiritual platform for others in a similar situation to her. Within these spaces that resonated with her new way of life, she was becoming both confident and popular.

Bella's self-consciousness and hypervigilance in public was also common among many of the women who were not converts. For example, Yusra, a young Iraqi Turkmen university student, felt continuously aware of her visible difference in university settings:

> Certain people they create a wall, a barrier between you and them because of the hijab. Sometimes, like in tutorials at the university, especially if it's the first tutorial, I feel like I have to go out of my way to introduce myself. Nobody comes up to me to introduce themselves. Nobody initiates that, I have to initiate that. I have to introduce myself all the time. I think that's because of the hijab. (Yusra, 21, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, university student)

Yusra's response to this is worth noting as she was always the one reaching out in attempts to bridge the gap and make connections with other peers. As she experienced distancing from others in response to her hijab and visibility as a Muslim woman, she

engaged in extra work than should be needed to make these connections in the form of emotional labour, having to overcome the lack of welcome while being extra friendly and approachable. This frustrated Yusra very much, yet she needed to continue with performing 'extra friendliness' in similar situations within her university context where Muslim students were a small minority. Yusra blamed her experience in tutorials on her visibility as a hijab-wearing Muslim woman among non-Muslim majority students. Among the non-Muslim majority space, she interpreted not being approached as potentially Islamophobic and therefore felt she needed to exercise emotional labour to reach out and connect.

In varying ways, the hijab was an important point of discussion for many of the women who, because of their visibility due to their dress choices, were more self-conscious and aware of their surroundings after incidents in which there was increased (negative) media focus on Muslims:

> I remember when the Lindt Café incident happened. We were down in Newcastle at the beach with the family. Everyone there were being nice. I don't know if they were being nice because they thought we would blow them up, you know [laughing]! But they were super, super nice actually, and it was weird because I was thinking that we're going to have a hard time, we're in Newcastle, it's not a Muslim area obviously and people are going to hate on us because we're hijabis. But everyone were actually more nice than usual. And I even remember joking about it with my sister, and we were talking about it and we were like 'How come everyone's too nice these days, are they scared of us?' (Nadia, 33, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

In line with other Muslim women's experiences in other contexts, the women appeared to be using humour as resistance to try to make sense of their experiences (Kantor, 2019). The use of humour can be an effective way of owning a narrative and taking charge in challenging situations that can feel out of control, such as the period immediately after the Lindt Café incident. Humour can prove effective in both managing emotions of self and others and in resistance, where humour is used to challenge dominant institutionalised forms of racism in wider public forums (Kantor, 2019).

Nadia seemed to experience the kindness and public smiles in two different ways. While she used humour to comment on the possible Islamophobia beneath the public smiles directed towards her and her hijabi friends as she joked that these people were terrified of them, she also appeared to consider that these smiles might have been a form of

solidarity and positive recognition from others, a gesture of friendliness towards them as visible Muslim women during a challenging time. Nevertheless, humour was used to make light of a situation that was indeed difficult for Muslims.

These Muslim women's levels of visibility influenced their inward and outward attitudes and behaviours in which they self-regulated their behaviour in the wider community to avoid potential everyday Islamophobia from occurring, while simultaneously demonstrating a fundamental form of resistance. They did not retreat and choose to continue to remain visibly Muslim in the wider public. Despite some of the discomfort they may have felt, they went on with their everyday lives and enjoyed holiday trips to places outside these comfort zones, using humour as well as emotional labour to navigate these contexts to make light of challenging situations if need be.

The widespread racialisation of Muslims, the resultant Islamophobia, and the gendered Islamophobic targeting of visibly Muslim women have put many Muslim women on edge, vigilant of potential Islamophobic targeting in geographical spaces falling within their 'mental maps' of Islamophobic spaces. To prevent being targeted by gendered Islamophobia, or to prevent a potential Islamophobic situation from escalating, many women in this study engaged in some sort of emotional labour and management as both a self-policing mechanism and to manage the emotions of others. Glimpses of this have been seen in some of the women's experiences outlined thus far. The next section details Muslim women's emotional management in detail.

Emotional Management

As shown so far in the women's examples, and in line with previous research on Muslim women's responses to gendered Islamophobia, the women in this study engaged in various forms of self-regulation to prevent or mediate Islamophobic situations (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Green, 2011; Keddie, 2017; Najib & Hopkins, 2019). Similar to previous studies, the 'burden of association' (Keddie, 2017; Keddie et al., 2021) that many of the Muslim women experienced with being so visibly Muslim translated into various forms of self-regulation, the most common being silence, smiling or laughing, and self-regulating to project a perception of an approachability, agency, and non-threat (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Green, 2011; Keddie, 2017; Najib & Hopkins, 2019). These Muslim women's responses, by way of deep acting via emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012), often had to do with the

continuous breaking down of dominant stereotypical representations held about them, preventing potential Islamophobia from occurring and overcoming some of the resulting barriers in society between themselves and others. These self-regulatory practices are further discussed next.

Silence: A Chosen and Enforced Response in Oppressive Structural Hierarchies

By virtue of Muslim women's visibility a lot of the time, 'Islamophobia was a daily and inevitable struggle' (Keddie, 2017, p. 84). Sometimes these struggles necessitated silence as a chosen coping mechanism or as a situational response to the existing power dynamics. Nida illustrated this sort of strategy in describing an interaction with her university lecturer:

> I had a uni. lecturer, in my master degree, he was lecturing us in science, in radiography and how to find pathology and diseases on a radiograph and how to know the differences between hernia and I don't know what—this is what he was lecturing us about, yet he had the audacity to constantly joke about this other hijabi girl in the class who had dropped the class, and he would say 'Oh where is your nun friend? Did she leave you?' Or he would come and tell me 'It surprises me that you Muslims are so smart, you do your PhDs and you're so smart, yet you believe in a God, haha! Maybe the ants believe that I'm God!' And he would come close to me and whisper to me 'Don't pray, no one will know, I won't tell anyone'. He really used to get on my nerves. Whatever you do you're not going to shake my religion. Keep away, this is a no-go zone. (Nida, Syrian, hijab, university student in Master of Diagnostic Radiography)

In this example, Nida perceived her lecturer's attack on her to be a result of her being visibly Muslim. Nida saw the lecturer's remarks as a response to her dress but also to her as a Muslim believer.

> I remember asking him how to do a rib x-ray, so you position the patient obviously when they come into the x-ray room, you tell them to stand in a certain way, and you show them, you put their arm up or, you position them. And I was letting him position me, because we had a practical exam and I needed to see how to do it. He showed me the first time, and I said OK, and then a bit later I asked him to show me again because it was a bit confusing and he said 'Oh now you're imaginary God is going to send us a lightening on me and kill me because I am touching you' you know. He was very rude

> about it to be honest. And he was a uni. lecturer. (Nida, Syrian, hijab, university student in Master of Diagnostic Radiography)

Although Nida perceived this experience as racism, this example seems to be as much about atheism and sexism as it is racism, and these expressions do not confine themselves to Muslims.

> I actually wanted to go back and complain about him after I finished my degree, because I was too scared to complain while I was doing the degree because I thought that he is going to be marking my work and I don't want him to have anything against me and get caught up in trouble. I just wanted to get my degree over and done with. Graduate safely. But to be honest I haven't gotten around to it, but I should. That's the thing, when someone is being racist against you, you don't always have the ability to speak out because of position and hierarchy. (Nida, Syrian, hijab, university student in Master of Diagnostic Radiography)

Nida recognised her teacher's general dissent towards religion; however, as a young Muslim woman at an institution where she felt she had little power to speak up and where she felt racism towards Muslims was normalised, Nida chose to remain silent.

Nida's example, in line with other research on Muslim women, shows how intersectional positioning greatly impacts Muslim women's experiences and how they perceive them (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Aziz, 2012; Mirza, 2013; Zempi, 2020). Nida, who was a young first-generation Arab woman from a large working-class family, visibly Muslim and clearly stood out as different, and in need of successfully completing her studies, was made a vulnerable target to overlapping oppressions. Her lecturer clearly exhibited annoyance towards religion as well as an abuse of power in the form of sexism. Thus, it was not just her racialised and visible Muslim body that was targeted but also her sexed and cultural body. This was an attack on her gendered Arab Muslim identity expressed in Islamophobic terms and therefore highlights that being a visible, observant Muslim woman of colour constitutes a triple jeopardy.

The women's testimonies regarding these Islamophobic attacks treat religion, culture, and gender as effectively inseparable, indicating the complex ways that gendered Islamophobia targets Muslim women in which racism, sexism, and other -isms intersect in its oppressive force. Gendered Islamophobia is thus much more than racism; it is the

forceful intersecting of multiple oppressions against Muslim women that Muslim women in return choose to respond to and resist in different ways, as shown in this research.

The choice not to respond to some instances of oppression is often common when someone is victimised within an imbalanced structural and power hierarchy. From an intersectional analytical standpoint, it is also a common gendered response to oppression in which victimised women respond with silence from their relative position in the hierarchy (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Fernandez, 2009). Some Muslim women, like Nida who found herself in a less powerful position in the lecturer–student relationship, chose not to respond to discriminatory or racist situations as a protection mechanism to avoid or mediate the situation. The specific targeting of Muslim women, illustrated in Nida's experience with her university lecturer, and the silence chosen as a response mechanism is indicative of how gendered Islamophobia affects Muslim women at the intersections of gender, faith, ethnoculture, among other things in embodied ways (Fernandez, 2009; Iner, 2019; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014). Nida's subjective and gendered interpretation of her experience with her teacher, coupled with the power imbalance between her and her teacher, and normalisation of and expectation of Islamophobia at her institution, was expressed with silence from her intersectional social positioning as a Muslim woman of colour.

Although she was treated in an unacceptable manner and ridiculed, Nida's position of power relative to her university lecturer prevented her from speaking up and against the gendered and racist commentary. Being fearful of punitive measures such as failing the course or having her grades significantly lowered by her lecturer if she defended herself, she remained silent as a response because of the power dynamics of the situation. This is a common gendered response to discrimination and oppression (Fernandez, 2009; Zine, 2006), as illustrated with Hana's experience:

> There was another time [at a large well-known company in Australia]. Eid al Fitr[7] was about to happen. I sent out an email to the entire floor, probably over 200 staff. It was this beautiful email that had a gorgeous picture of the crescent moon. It was an email explaining what Ramadan is, what it means to Muslims, what Eid al Fitr is and what it means to Muslims. There were other Muslims who worked on the same floor, so I

[7] Celebration to mark the end of the lunar month of Ramadan, the month when Muslims fast.

> wasn't the only Muslim or the only hijabi. It wasn't like I was an anomaly or anything. At that time, I had reached a level of seniority as well. I sent it out to everyone, and I had a lot of positive responses. 'Wow, I didn't know.' 'Thank you so much, what a beautiful email.' 'Eid Mubarak!' or 'Mubarak Eid!' [laughing] like they would get it wrong. I had ended the email by saying that you can say 'Eid Mubarak' to Muslims celebrating Eid. It was adorable. And then, not even a couple of days later, my manager takes me to the meeting room. She was so reluctant, she did not want to have that conversation with me, I could tell. She loved the email that I had sent. But someone had sent it to HR in Head Office saying it was inappropriate. (Hana, 26, Lebanese, hijab, manager at a large Australian company)

Hana's experience as a manager within a large, well-known Australian company is indicative of how silence is sometimes enforced on Muslim women (Afshar, 2013; Fernandez, 2009). It is also illustrative of what Hage (2000b) referred to as governmental belonging versus passive belonging, as exemplified by some of the other women's experiences in this research.

> The managers had discussed it behind my back in a managers' meeting. Some were in agreement to talk to me. One person had stood up in my defence and lost his mind, saying 'This is a place of diversity and this is Islamophobic! She didn't say anything wrong. There's a lot of Muslims who work for this company'. So, when my manager spoke to me, she told me that someone had made a complaint and were not happy about the email, and in the future, I was not allowed to send anything like that. I turned around and said, 'I could easily complain about Christmas emails, Christmas-themes competitions, like I don't celebrate Christmas, I don't celebrate Easter, there's so much I could say that feels exclusionary to me, but I don't because it's beautiful and I love celebrating with everyone'. But I didn't get any outcome. It ended with that conversation. Don't send it again. I remember being so hurt. I didn't expect it from that diverse workplace. (Hana, 26, Lebanese, hijab, manager at a large Australian company)

Here, Hana exercised passive belonging, and when she attempted at exercising governmental belonging by way of management of her workplace in terms of sending out the Eid cards, she was disciplined into silence. The management and rejection of alternative contributions to Hana's multicultural workspace reflects Hage's White nation fantasy in the multicultural nation. There always remains the issue of tolerance, and what is tolerated of

the multicultural Other must not deviate from the White cultural norm. Hana perceived that the response to her Eid card and its message, was not accepted. Hence, what Hana experienced made her feel like she had stepped out of the boundaries of multicultural tolerance (Abdel-Fattah & Krayem, 2018). So, when Hana had assumed some participatory parity in contributing to workspace conversation and social interactions of daily life on an equal footing with her peers, she was shut down. Her attempt at contribution was soon followed by a recognition, by Hana, that she was not seen by some of her peers and management to have the right to do what others in the same workspace took for granted. This is strong evidence of what Essed (1991) called everyday racism, where institutional and structural racism is manifested in everyday interactions between people. Institutional Islamophobia is particularly evident in the way the management dealt with the Islamophobic complaints. Instead of addressing the colleague who had raised the complaint, Hana was silenced, where her freedom of expression was curtailed in the service of the myth of studied neutrality that demonstrably was not neutral in multicultural settings (G. Hage, 2000).

Further demonstrating the White fantasy in the management's exercise of governmental belonging (G. Hage, 2000), Hana's workplace engaged in numerous similar gestures where they had Christmas- and Easter-themed messages, cards, and events circulate that were all endorsed by the workplace. Yet Hana's message was unwelcome, and she received a clear warning not to repeat this gesture and remain silent on matters related to her faith. The tolerance of certain groups and practices and intolerance of others has been widely discussed in previous studies, indicating that while Australia is multicultural in theory, some cultures and faith groups are more tolerated than others (Aslan, 2009; Celermajer, 2007; Dunn, 2001; Ewart & Chrzanowski, 2018; Ghassan Hage, 2000; Poynting & Mason, 2006). The discriminatory treatment and enforced silencing of Hana evidence the reality of Australian multiculturalism, as well as how gendered Islamophobia prevents Muslim women from voicing their perspectives to the wider public. When they do speak, they are disciplined, otherised, and enforced into silence, not dissimilar to the case of Yassmin Abdel-Magied ('Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia', 2018) as mentioned earlier; therefore, some Muslim women choose not to speak and remain silent in many situations in which they feel aggrieved.

As illustrated in the above examples, gendered Islamophobia combines with nationalist and misogynist narratives and uses the embodied Muslim woman as a topic of discussion in its racist and nationalist agenda, preventing her the space to speak up to the wider public on issues pertaining to her own experiences (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Fernandez, 2009; Ho, 2007). While Hana was a younger Muslim woman and spoke English fluently, and may have been able to articulately defend herself, other Muslim women experiencing similar hostility may have less of a chance to defend themselves or less opportunity to speak up from their relative social positions. Thus, choosing to remain silent in situations of power and structural imbalance is often a typical gendered response of women marginalised or victimised within a power hierarchy. The enforcement of silence upon Muslim women who attempt to speak up is evidence of how gendered Islamophobia is experienced in racist and misogynist ways.

Smiles and Laughter as a Management Technique

> When I go to the city to rollerblade or donate blood, I find that most of the people there are friendly. Maybe they don't know enough about Islam, they sometimes get too close or touch me, exceeding the limits of personal space. But usually, Australian people are friendly. There have been some racist encounters, but I usually just laugh about it. (Mona, 36, Egyptian, hijab, medical receptionist)

Another method of self-regulation that many of the women in this study used frequently was smiling or laughing in response to racially demeaning comments or behaviours. These responses become emotionally arduous when accompanied by insecurity, hypervigilance, and perceived or real threat. This emotionally arduous self-regulation method was used as a way both to de-escalate potential Islamophobic situations and to form connections with the wider public, by means of humanising themselves and being ‘perfect’ because they perceived themselves as being held up to a higher standard of behaviour. This again indicates the normalisation of Islamophobia and the idea that they need to be representative of their faith and community in positive ways. In contrast to silence, smiling was often used as a calming strategy and brought some control and normalcy into hostile situations, as recalled by Farah:

> I think I have been very blessed, alhamdulillah. I haven't sensed danger, but I have sensed an intense dislike. This is when I go camping in Northern New South Wales or

> Southern New South Wales. I could only recall an incident when an elderly man was driving a ute, and when he saw my husband and I and our child at that time, he had a very angry look on his face, and I just responded with a smile. I wouldn't let that angry look affect me negatively. (Farah, 49, hijab, South African mixed heritage, STEM teacher and librarian)

By smiling and bringing about an outward normalcy to a potentially negative situation, Farah was able to both de-escalate a potential hostile situation and maintain an outward feeling of control and a positive self-image for her family. This sort of behaviour in which women smile and maintain positive outward behaviour to de-escalate potential harmful situations while protecting their loved ones is a typical gendered emotional labour response (Fazlalizadeh, 2020; Fischer & LaFrance, 2015). But not all smiles and laughter were to de-escalate potential Islamophobic situations and instinctively done to regain control of potentially hostile situations. Some women chose smiling and laughing as an agentic method to foster connections with others, as reflected in Raniya's example: 'I think smiling is a big one. Smiling is everything. Smiling is resilience. Because when you smile at people, you show them that I am confident, I'm resilient, I'm approachable, and I have no problem approaching you' (Raniya, 27, Palestinian, hijab, social worker).

Raniya's response, too, was a form of emotional labour as she was displaying emotions that did not always necessarily reflect what she was feeling at the time. However, being a social worker and understanding the communicative effect of body language and expressed emotions, she combined her knowledge with emotional labour to her advantage, putting on an approachable and happy personality.

Research has highlighted how emotional labour, although taxing (Hochschild, 2012; Iszatt-White, 2013; Theodosius, 2008; Ward, 2016), is also an agentic mechanism in the response to our social environment (Humphrey et al., 2015), depending on the way it is consciously used. Emotional labour was sometimes mixed with other resistive acts in their daily lives as a way to navigate the wider public, as illustrated in Asma's experience:

> People are looking, and staring, and following you with their heads. But I just look back. If they are staring in a rude way, I stare them out until they look away, just kind of show them I'm gonna stare at you. But if they're staring—and you can tell they're only curious from their face—I tend to smile at them and then they tend to snap out of it and just

> smile back, and then they're just like—cool, you know, she smiled. (Asma, 29, Lebanese, Year 12 graduate, hijab, currently stay-at-home mum)

Observation of others in the wider public and acting out expressive emotions such as staring people down was an act of resistance, while smiling or laughing was a gendered strategy of emotional management in response to incivilities. In these responses, Asma attempted to humanise herself as she perceived that people in the wider public possibly thought of her as some sort of an anomaly. These forms of responses are common among women who engage in it, often without realising that they do so, or as a result of a social expectation that is put on women to manage themselves in relation to the wider context. While it can be an agentic response mechanism, as indicated by Humphrey et al. (2015), it is for the most part a defensive mechanism utilised in situations of vulnerability to prevent or minimise problematic situations from arising. It is a mechanism used in the attempt to unstick the 'sticky' signs, meanings, and emotions associated with one's Muslim visibility in the wider public in an effort to reassert alternative signs, meanings, and emotions onto one's body. It is an embodied response to an embodied situation experienced within, and expressed from, one's personal social position.

Self-Regulation and the 'Muslimah Excellence': The Burden of Representation

> It's really annoying when you've been born here, or you've been here for so many years, but you constantly have to like sit there and prove to people all the time that yes I am a good person, yes I don't believe the same thing as those terrorist people or whatever, it's just constantly having to prove yourself, it's just exhausting, like come on. You just want to be. (Sana, 33, Pakistani, no hijab, audiologist)

More demanding than being silenced or silencing oneself, or the continuous smiling and laughing in public, is the act of self-policing one's identity. This response was common among many of the more visibly Muslim women interviewed in this study. Concurrent with other research on Muslim people self-regulating (Pauha, 2015; van Es, 2019), the women perceived their visibility synonymous to being an ambassador of their faith and community and therefore self-policed into a role model of their faith and community. This meant that they would self-regulate their identity to present an image of themselves that dismantled stereotypes held about Muslim women and attempt to show the wider public the exact opposite of what was perceived about them. This of course would not mean that how they

represented themselves did not resonate with their relaxed self—but it meant that they put in extra energy and effort to showcase this image of themselves to the wider public. This resonates with Stuart Hall's discussion on identity (Hall, 1990), where the women expressed themselves in selective ways to dismantle stereotypes.

While all the women in this research engaged in some form of emotional labour, those who engaged in this type of self-policing exemplified the deep impact that emotional labour had in their everyday lives (Hochschild, 2012). This was due to the burden of representation or the pressure of being an excellent image of Islam because of their visibility, as discussed in Chapter 3 and further discussed in the following chapter. The burden of being visibly Muslim added the extra pressure to act out an exaggerated positive image to prevent the public from using their flaws to reflect badly on the wider Muslim community. They needed to be perfect all the time to protect not only their own self-image ,but also the image of their faith and their community, from negative hegemonic representation, which was clearly demonstrated by Bella:

> Here, when I'm driving, if I do the slightest road mistake I think 'Oh my God, they're going to think what a stupid Muslim woman'. Everything I do, I think oh they're going to think I'm this or I am that. I always try to drive good and do everything good. When I'm walking in the street I try not to do anything bad. I feel like anything I do, it will reflect badly on me as a Muslim woman. If I wasn't as visible I wouldn't care as much what other people are thinking, but I am. I feel like any action I do will influence that person's view on Islam. It stresses me out sometimes. I feel like people don't only judge me as a person, but they judge Islam. (Bella, 23, Dutch Maltese, jilbab, dental hygienist, currently stay-at-home mum)

The perception these women had of themselves as the standard bearer for their group reputation meant that they felt they were always on show and could never be completely at ease. Their inner critic was overactive to forestall the external critic(s). Such self-policing was not just limited to themselves but extended to others within the women's surroundings, where they were hyperconscious of how others within their circles presented themselves to the wider public, as exemplified by Nadia:

> I think Muslim men don't feel the need to prove themselves because they're not visible Muslims. We're visible Muslims. When we walk, with my brother or someone, I'm very conscious that he is using the appropriate language, that he isn't rude, he isn't silly. And

> if he does that, I'll put him in line and say look I'm visible, I'm wearing the hijab, and if you act that way people will say 'look at those Muslims'. I don't think men are as conscious as the way that they come across as we are. I'm very conscious when I go out, especially in the city or when I go to very White areas. (Nadia, 33, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

While Muslim men can be quite visibly Muslim via their Muslim-sounding names, certain clothing choices, and keeping long beards, visibly Muslim women are hypervisible via their hijab and various other forms of religious dress. This visibility, combined with longstanding historical misrepresentations of the Muslim woman as oppressed, on the one hand, and threatening on the other, renders Muslim women particularly vulnerable to gendered Islamophobia (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Mirza, 2013; Perry, 2014; Razack, 2004, 2005). A Muslim woman's awareness of this imagery results in her emotionally laborious public-facing image as the exemplary Muslim woman, the nonproblematic, the nonoppressed, and the nonthreatening. The same regulatory strategy is also used against Muslim family and friends in her surroundings who may possibly tarnish her exemplary image and is an exhausting everyday reality for many Muslim women. Hence, while Nadia was managing herself, she was also managing the men around her. This is something that Hochschild (2012) observed as common in women. By managing the outward behaviour of their men, the women were managing the wider public's behaviour that was directed towards their Muslim identity.

An important finding in this study, and one concurrent with other research on Muslim women, is that the burden of representation that impacts Muslim women is experienced in intersectional ways. It impacts Muslim women at their axis in which their gender, faith, ethnicity, and class, among other things, intersect (Aziz, 2012; Mirza, 2013; Zempi, 2020). It is also from this intersection that women form their outward behaviour in response to the burden of representation and respond to Islamophobia in embodied ways (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Zempi, 2020; Zimmerman, 2015). Those who are more visibly Muslim are particularly impacted by the burden of representation, and therefore, many alter their outward appearance, language, body language, and behaviour as a response mechanism (Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Hall, 1990). This response mechanism of personal self-regulation is especially a gendered response that women often do to project

an acceptable self-image of themselves to the wider public. This was highlighted as a problem by Sawsan:

> There is also the expectation that I have to be excellent all the time, you know, this exceptionalism, we call it the 'Muslimah Excellence' you know. And that's great, of course I hold myself to high standards and all of that, and in our *deen* it's about being the best version of yourself—but ultimately the way that it is represented is that if you're not excellent, you're not the good Muslim in the 'good Muslim–bad Muslim' dichotomy, then you're the 'other'. So, when you fit in, you fit in by White mainstream parameters, you fit in in the illusion of being accepted, in the illusion of freedom, but actually ultimately this is a neoliberal illusion, and the parameters are already set for you and you cannot breach those parameters. So, I think why do I have to be excellent? Why do I have to work 10 times harder to be accepted, to be taken seriously, to be taken legitimately, why do I have to work 10 times harder? Why can't I just be average? Why can't I be mediocre? Why can't I suck? I'm not allowed to, you know, it's true. You know, there are many, many people out there that are mediocre, but by virtue of 'isms'—you know capitalism, White privilege, that sort of thing—are in positions that they shouldn't be. So, there is a double standard there as well, that you feel as a woman, that you feel as a Muslim, and that you feel triple as a Muslim woman.
> (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

As Sawsan mentioned, her *deen*, or what Muslims refer to as their Muslim way of life, encouraged individual personal growth and excellency in all areas of life, including excellency of spirituality, character, manners, and behaviours. This strive for excellency is an integral part of the Muslim way of life of individual Muslims, which may be one of the reasons Muslim women increasingly have normalised the strive for perfection in the public eye (van Es, 2019). This strive for excellency, being a lifelong spiritual journey for many Muslims, is simultaneously a daily struggle between the inward and the outward manifestation of character.

For more visibly Muslim women, this daily engagement works in dual ways where the Muslim woman is modelling a flawless character to the wider Muslim community, as well as *on behalf of* the wider Muslim community. Through her striving for character excellency, she is projecting both a self-image of a pious Muslim woman to her own Muslim

community and an image of Islam and the Muslim community to the wider society. Again, this daily self-projection of character excellency is an emotionally arduous task (Hochschild, 2012).

As Sarah mentioned, striving for individual excellency is an integral part of a Muslim individual's way of life and can be a meaningful and spiritually nourishing engagement. However, Muslims in the wider society are also expected to embody a 'good Muslim' or 'moderate Muslim' character, due to negative hegemonic representation (Hall, 1990), within an Islamophobic context that enforces the 'good/moderate Muslim'–'bad/extreme Muslim' dichotomy (Abdel-Fattah & Krayem, 2018). As shown through the women's voices in this chapter, this was an emotionally arduous task for them as they negotiated their daily lives and identities so as not to fall victims to stereotypical labels outside of the good/moderate category, which could further exacerbate their daily experiences. This meant that daily expressions of their Muslimness had to be delivered in a way so as not to cause such stereotypes from occurring against them. This is what Sawsan referred to as the 'Muslimah excellence', a gendered and embodied response to a wider Islamophobic context most often motivated by their own faith:

> Because I'm Muslim, I have ethics, I have morals. I know that a lot of other people have that who are not necessarily religious, but to me, because I am Muslim, I want to do my best. It's not just about earning money, yeah, you're paying me, but I want to make a genuine change. Even if a little change in someone's life, because they will look at me and think that person is a Muslim and she helped me. So, they can take that message on in their life and if someone says to them 'Muslims are this and Muslims are that' they'll say 'No, no, I had this caseworker and she was Muslim and she did me a world of difference'. I guess that's what I am conscious of when I'm doing my job. It's about being a role model for Islam and especially women because men can blend it. Especially if their names don't have Ahmad or Mohammad in them, it's very easy for them to blend in. Whereas for us, I feel like it's a burden, not in a negative way, but the fact that I have to try a little bit harder than everyone else because of the fact that I am a Muslim and I wear the hijab. For example, if I worked with someone who was Muslim and she practises and did all those things but she didn't wear the hijab, that [Muslim] would not be her first identifier. So, when someone thinks of 'Khadija', for example, they would say 'Oh, this is Khadija my caseworker', they would never describe her as someone who wear a hijab. Whereas for me, because of the hijab, when someone describes me, they

> would most likely say 'oh she is a young, Muslim woman who wears the headscarf' before anything else, before she did this, or she achieved this, that would be their first thing [description]. That's why I feel like I need to be extra careful of what I do, because at the end of the day, despite what I do for them that [the hijab] is what they remember and the fact that I am a Muslim. It could be a good thing for them if I had good outcomes or if I haven't had such good outcomes, and it was out of my hands, that is what they will remember, that a Muslim girl didn't do her job properly. That exactly why I put in an extra effort. (Nadia, 33, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

Linda, too, expressed the same sentiments with regard to Muslim visibility:

> After I put the hijab on I just had to watch myself a little. For example, I'm a very impatient person, I get cranky on the road and stuff. But wearing the hijab, I don't want to portray a bad image of Islam to the public. So, I would try to be more patient now. Wearing the hijab is not just covering your head, it's about having this whole mannerism, everything, so I have to make sure that my character is in check as well. That's what I always try to keep in mind, that people will pick on every little thing. You can do 10 things good, but if you do one thing negative, that would be the thing that people will pick on. (Linda, 41, Anglo Australian, hijab, community engagement officer)

The women's reasoning for wanting to excel by attaining the 'Muslimah Excellence' was especially evident in situations where they were visible in Muslim minority contexts and thus felt the burden of representation more intensely. Retreating to their own faith, they gathered both strength and motivation for agency and resistance in acting out their Muslim excellency in the public.

This is an example of both Hall's (1990) representation theory in which negative hegemonic representation has real impact on people's identity formation and Hochschild's (2012) deep acting involved in emotional labour. It didn't suffice to put on a face—they worked hard to create an inner self that matched the outward expectation of an exemplary Muslim character that they were trying to achieve. This form of embodied emotional labour, however, was fluid and changing depending on which context the women found themselves in. Usually quite heightened in Muslim minority areas, the pressure was lessened in Muslim majority areas. As Asma said,

> Yes, because you always kind of stand out. So, I try to put in extra effort, which I guess is kind of good, because I try to be better from all aspects, but it's something you're

> conscious of. The only times I'm actually relaxed is when I'm around Muslim areas like Lakemba, Bankstown, you know. But in other areas, I feel like I'm on my best behaviour. (Asma, 29, Lebanese, Year 12 graduate, hijab, currently stay-at-home mum)

While emotional labour may not have been as intense in response to Islamophobia in Muslim majority areas, further research is necessary to explore how emotional labour is experienced for Muslim women in such contexts and how the intersections and their faith and gender expose them to other situations where emotional labour occurs.

Conclusion

The findings in this discussion chapter indicate the significant impact of visibility in Muslim women's everyday lives. The findings show that more visibly Muslim women are racialised and are therefore more vulnerable to everyday gendered Islamophobia. It was especially evident the way Islamophobia also merges with sexism and other forms of oppressions, and therefore highlights that being a visible Muslim woman of colour constitutes a triple jeopardy. Furthermore, this vulnerability was perceived to increase in geographical and demographical contexts with lower Muslim and multicultural populations, coinciding with the 'mental maps' of geographic spaces considered Islamophobic. This demonstrates that Islamophobia in non-Muslim majority areas was taken for granted by the women and normalised—it was something that they felt they needed to individually manage. Visibly Muslim women reported hyperawareness and vigilance in those situations against everyday gendered Islamophobia, and they also felt they more frequently had to engage in emotional labour to mitigate situations of potential threat. Using different strategies to manage the racially hostile emotions of others such as silence, smiles, laughter, humour, and self-policing into a 'Muslimah Excellence', these women responded to gendered Islamophobia and navigated the wider Australian context in gendered, agentic ways.

One of the core findings in this chapter is that emotional labour was entangled with the burden of representation. This was fed by a normalisation of the feeling that they did not belong to the national space in which a White nation fantasy worked to limit their governmental belonging and contribution. More research is suggested to further explore less visibly Muslim women's experiences of and responses to other forms of -isms to account for their holistic intersectional experiences within wider Australia.

Chapter 6. Muslim Women as Their Own Defenders

> I get so frustrated and annoyed when Anglo Whites tell non-Aussie people 'go back to where you came from'. I'm like 'YOU go back to where YOU came from!' How can they say things like that when this country belongs to the Aboriginal people to begin with? They should go back to where they came from . . . How do the Aussies have the audacity to tell people to go back to where they came from when you and your ancestors came and took somebody else's land? . . . So, when White Aussies tell us to go back to our country, I'm like I was born here, same way you were born here. We're all immigrants to this country, some earlier than others, that's it. So, you can go back to where you came from too. (Dalia, 22, Syrian, hijab, Bachelor of Medical Science)

The previous chapter focused on the burden of representation that arose from and fed into governmental or passive belonging that these Muslim women experienced by virtue of being visibly Muslim and therefore the embodied image of Islam in public. It stressed that the women managed the emotions and reactions of those around them in order to minimise or eliminate potential Islamophobia from occurring and engaged in forms of emotional labour in their everyday lives.

While the experience of emotional labour as one of the responses to racist hostility was a reality for all the Muslim women in this research, some of the women were equipped with social capital to use emotional labour more consciously and productively to navigate Islamophobia in agentic and creative ways. This chapter explores the women's agentic and creative responses to Islamophobia that sometimes also involved emotional labour. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates the importance of not just pigeonholing the public self-representational effort of Muslim women as one of emotional labour but recognising that it is a form of resistance and of reclaiming the narrative (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Faiza, 2021). It is also noteworthy to highlight that this form of resistance was collectivist in nature. Activist efforts that may be considered as individual efforts, such as that of academic activism, was done with a collectivist spirit, often in collaboration with other academic activists fighting for social justice. This collectivist context is important to

highlight here for the reader to keep in mind while reading this chapter. The women's efforts illustrated here were part of a wider collectivist effort for social justice. Arendt (1972) argued that the power for social change and the capacity to act comes from being in plural with others and 'acting in concert' with them. As Arendt said, power is 'never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (p. 24). This chapter demonstrates this power to act for social change through the women's activist expressions done with collectivist spirit.

This chapter also focuses specifically on roles adopted by Muslim women as their own defenders in sharp contrast to the persisting dominant narrative and representation of Muslim women as meek and incapable. It provides an alternative understanding of Muslim women that differs from Orientalist and stereotypical representations while emphasising their courageous, creative, and agentic responses and resistance to gendered Islamophobia.

It was striking that most of the women who were engaged in public self-representation and activism held high education capital, regardless of their current employment roles during the research interviews. This signifies, in comparison to Chapter 5, that Muslim women with more educational capital may be better equipped to stand up in powerful, agentic, and activist ways in opposition to racism and other forms of oppression. This of course does not mean that Muslim women with lower educational capital are not capable of, or do not engage in, productive activism. However, it does mean that a critically oriented formal education can promote capacity to recognise and analyse systemic patterns of injustice and, hopefully, to recognise systemic patterns of resistance and possibility. Thus, for Muslim women, the higher the educational capital, the better the conceptualisation of Islamophobia within a wider historical Australian context in relation to other intersectional oppressions exerted onto other vulnerable populations.

This chapter first addresses the Muslim women's involvement in educating the wider public about their faith and communities in not only accommodating efforts to dismantle stereotypes and find more belonging, but also speaking up to White mainstream narratives and creating meaningful information about Islam and Muslims. It then considers the reasons that motivate the women to engage in such public outreach. Following this, the chapter explores the many ways that Muslim women engage in more structured forms of anti-Islamophobic activism via different platforms, recognising the power of their agency and creativity.

The key findings in this chapter are that Muslim women are well aware of the way Islamophobia is entrenched in the wider society and how they are specifically targeted by gendered Islamophobia that translates into various forms of racist expression from incivility to hate mail and death threats. Yet, despite this, they work hard to find ways to reclaim the narrative from the mainstream public and represent themselves in efforts to educate the wider public on their experiences to dismantle stereotypes. Furthermore, and especially significant, is the finding that Muslim women work in creative and activist ways that include forming solidarity with other grassroots organisations initiated by other minorities and marginalised peoples against discrimination and injustice.

Muslim Women's Self-Representation

> But I think we do have a responsibility to show them who we really are. (Mona, 36, Egyptian, hijab, medical receptionist, focus group conversation)

> No! They have a responsibility to open up their minds and not assume everything about people! (Khadija, 27, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, high school teacher, focus group conversation)

> I think that some people put in a lot of emphasis to put on a face for others, to show them this and show them that. We don't need to go out for others to show them this and that about Islam. We don't need to change ourselves to show people who we are, we should just show them who we are without putting on a face, without changing. We are who we are: good role model Muslims. We shouldn't put on this facade. If we were to follow Allah's way, then we don't have to change a thing. So, when people tell me to set a good example—I am doing that, trust me! (Raniya, 27, Palestinian, hijab, social worker, focus group conversation)

Chapter 5 provided a few examples of how the burden of representation as experienced by Muslim women feeds into their emotional labour to manage the wider public. This chapter analyses Muslim women's lived experiences where they, aware of their burden of representation, respond to gendered Islamophobia in more agentic and creative ways. These responses also work at refocusing some of the negative pressure from the burden of representation into more positive measures, as further explained below.

As a result of the widespread gendered Islamophobia (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Perry, 2014), Muslim women have felt an increased pressure to

dismantle Islamophobic stereotypes, especially those that target Muslim women as meek, submissive, potentially threatening, and generally oppressed by their faith and Muslim men (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; van Es, 2019). The harms inherent in racist assumptions about Muslim women also put them at the additional risk of being reluctant to report gender violence within their own communities so as not to fuel such assumptions further. When gendered violence did occur in their community, they often engaged in some form of public outreach to ensure that this was not seen as a Muslim problem but for what it was: violence against women.

Pressure for Public Self-Representation

Consistent with recent research on Australian Muslim women's experiences (Zeweri, 2020), an obligation to educate others about Islam and Muslims in some form or another was experienced by many women in this research. Some wanted to share meaningful information on Islam and Muslims with the public, whereas others wanted to prove themselves as empowered women contrary to the image of Muslim women as victims. Because Muslim women experience gendered Islamophobia in multiple ways, they respond to this experience from the different intersection of faith, gender, class, and ethnicity, among others. Thus, while it is common for Muslim women to feel the pressure for public representation, their motivations and methods for outward representations of themselves and of their faith differ depending on each woman's lived experience of gendered Islamophobia and faith.

The Muslim women's lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia differed in complex ways, yet some experiences seemed to be common among all the women who participated in this research. One such experience was the shared obligation they felt to dismantle Islamophobic assumptions. They felt that this pressure was put on them from the wider public imagery around Muslim women, consistent with Hall's (1990) theorising on how hegemonic representation impacts people's identities. Also, this pressure was partly felt from their faith that encouraged showing a good image (Muslimah excellence) and doing good on Earth as the *khalifa*,[8] which is further explored in Reema's quote later in this chapter. The women were often asked by media, for example, to speak on stereotypical

[8] Steward/stewardess on Earth

issues associated with Islam and Muslims, such as Muslim women's dress, gender violence, terrorism, radicalisation, and so on. Muslim women who are provided platforms to speak are expected to have some expertise on these broader issues and asked to publicly comment even if these issues have nothing to do with what the women were supposed to talk about in the first place. When they speak out in authentic ways on issues pertaining to their own lived experiences, they are often silenced (Carland, 2012; 'Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia', 2018). Because as Stuart Hall argued, the media is a powerful entity that is concerned with maintaining a hegemonic representation of people and issues in ways that maintain the wider socio-political power structures. Although the women are invited to "speak" - their words beyond that which the media outlets want to hear, are silenced. While they attempt their best to dismantle stereotypes and bring forth an alternative understanding of the Muslim woman into mainstream discourse, they are continuously faced with persisting stereotypes or silencing of their genuine contribution to these discussions. This naturally impacts on their identity formation, which endures a forever process of reshaping to meet the Muslimah excellence standards while dismantling wider stereotypes. =

The invitation to speak, which is limited mostly to stereotypical representations, also shows the power dynamic between Muslim women and the multicultural space. Embedded in this invitation is first the assumption that Muslim women do not have a voice unless one is given to them by non-Muslims, and second, the advertisement of Australia as a tolerant, multicultural nation in which such voices are permitted to speak. This invitation is indicative of White nation fantasy beneath Australian multicultural tolerance that only tolerates the Other within the parameters of White boundaries (G. Hage, 2000). This boundary pressures Muslim women to constantly 'account' for and justify themselves and their choices, which those on the other side of the boundary markers do not have to go through. This troubled Sawsan, who found this pressure to speak on stereotypical issues problematic:

> The other thing that I find problematic with the perception of Muslims is the exceptionalism, and this is something that I have experienced individually as well. So, yes, the racist encounters, the questions, the assumptions, the fact that there is an onus on you to prove that you are not violent or that you know, when I wore the hijab, that it was my choice. There is an expectation that I need to tell people and educate them on

> that. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

As Sawsan engaged in such public education and representation of herself, she was sometimes perceived as the exception rather than the norm, which Sawsan referred to as exceptionalism. Her voice was welcomed so long as she stayed within White parameters, similar to Yassmin Abdel-Magied's experience in Australian media who was perceived as the 'moderate' and 'good' voice of Islam until she voiced an authentic opinion and thereby shunned ('Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia', 2018). This is again an example of hegemonic media and public representation that silences alternative voices and experiences (Hall, 1990).

Sawsan described how she felt the pressure of public expectation to explain and prove that she was not violent, that she wore the hijab freely and was not coerced, and thus, that being a practising Muslim was her *choice*. This coheres with neoliberal governance that casts responsibility onto the individual or group to address the problem as their responsibility rather than tackling structural and institutional racism. Here, it is Muslim women working at challenging dominant public narratives about Islam and presenting alternative narratives. In concordance with Archer's (2009) research on the experiences of Muslim men in the United Kingdom, it appears Sawsan, too, felt that she needed to justify and rationalise to the wider public her Muslim identity, an identity freely chosen yet in need of continuous justifications through public education and self-representation. Throughout this experience, her identity is in the process of persistent reshaping, tugging between the fight against racist representations that targets her Muslim body and being, and desire for spiritual and personal excellence.

Public education and self-representation, however, was not just the result of such pressures. It was sometimes brought about by everyday interactions between Muslim women and non-Muslims that involved relationship and connection. This was not because of Islamophobic stereotypes necessarily, but because of the lack of meaningful understanding about Muslim women as 'ordinary' human beings and the objectification of Muslim women as cultural relics (see Dunn et al., 2015). This form of public education and self-representation was exemplified by Nadia who was approached with questions from a colleague at her work:

> Someone actually asked me about the hijab, and I knew that she was genuinely ignorant. She probably had very minimal contact with Muslims all her life, and she asked me. I was very sarcastic, and I said that I never take off my hijab and that I don't even have hair. I was joking with her, but she took me seriously! Then afterwards, one of my colleagues said to me 'She believed you'. I am like she can't possibly have believed me, she can't be that ignorant. This is someone I had worked with for a while. I thought she knew me. So, I went up to her and said, 'you do realise that I was just joking? I was kidding? I have showers without my hijab, I have hair, I can show you if you like' [laughing]. That is when I realised that some people are genuinely ignorant of Islam despite the fact that the media blasts us any chance they get. Some people just don't know any better and it amuses me, I just don't understand how that is possible. (Nadia, 33, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

Nadia's attempt at public education and self-representation was motivation from her assumption that her colleague was 'genuinely ignorant'. However, when she had been posed with the question, Nadia had responded sarcastically and impatiently, believing that her colleague had understood the sarcastic undertone of her answer in relation to her question about the hijab and therefore had her question answered. However, when confronted by another colleague regarding this incident, Nadia decided to approach her colleague again to explain to her ignorant coworker that she was a 'normal' human being who did ordinary things just like everyone else, and that she, too, like most other women had hair.

Nadia's experience is but one illustration of the wider public's ignorance about Muslim women's lived experiences. It also shows how Orientalist assumptions still linger in the wider Islamophobic representation of women and in questions wanting to 'know' what is behind the veil, both physically and metaphorically. This is evidence of ongoing coloniality, which still exists and expressed in power dynamics where Muslim women of colour are questioned about their veil and what's behind it (Andreassen, 2018) and, by extension, about their positioning as 'ordinary' within a wider multicultural Australia (Dunn et al., 2015). Therefore, it required emotional work on Nadia's behalf to return to her coworker to correct misassumptions about her as a Muslim woman and manage her colleague's emotions, which concurs with other research on Muslim women (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017). Nadia, a young Arab woman of Palestinian background, a professional social worker, and a

government employee was indeed 'normal': She had hair and took showers just like anyone else and was prepared to remove the veil for her colleague to see. This was also an act of resistance, first through sarcasm, and then through humour, hacking away ignorant assumptions one step at a time.

Nadia's experience is not dissimilar to previous research on public ignorance about Islam and Muslims despite the saturated attention given to Muslims in the media (Amath, 2013; Calfano et al., 2016; *You See Monsters*, 2019). One reason is perhaps that while mainstream media does frequently comment on issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims, such comments do not provide a realistic representation of or inform the public about Islam or Muslims where the audience learns about Islam and Muslims in a meaningful and valuable way (Barlas, 2007; Carland, 2012; Kabir, 2008).

Similar to van Es' (2019) study on Muslim women in Holland, other women in this study who were aware of the potential impact of media misrepresentation and the resulting exacerbation of existing stereotypes about Muslims felt obliged to take it upon themselves to reach out to non-Muslims in their surroundings to educate them about their Islamic principles in an attempt to break down or even prevent such stereotypes from reaching the media in the first place. This is illustrated by Farah, who previously had witnessed talks within parts of the Muslim community in Sydney forbidding Muslims from wishing non-Muslims a merry Christmas. Farah became increasingly worried at the time that this talk would escalate, reach the wider public, and possibly fuel stereotypical media representations of Muslims and exacerbate Islamophobia. She therefore took it upon herself to reach out to non-Muslims in her vicinity in an effort to counteract that type of discourse. Remembering this incident, Farah said,

> A few years ago, there was a big brouhaha in our community about Christmas, where some Muslim groups came out and said, 'It's haram[9] to wish your Christian friends a merry Christmas, and it's haram to exchange gifts with them, it's haram to do this, it's haram to do that'. So, I started reading about what the Islamic rulings are on that. I had never given my neighbour a Christmas gift before. But that year, when all this was happening, I made an extra effort to take her a gift. And I said to her, 'Look, I don't celebrate Christmas. My beliefs are very clear that Jesus is not the son of God. In fact, in

[9] Forbidden

> Islam he is a prophet. I am offering you this gift as your neighbour. Not to celebrate Christmas, that is your celebration'. And I gave it to her. I told her about Jesus in Islam, that he is a prophet, that his mother gave birth to him miraculously without a father. That this is mentioned in the Quran. And she was so happy, she said 'Thanks love! I hope your imams don't label you for this as a wayward Muslim'. And I said, 'You know what, whatever we do, we do it for God, we do it for Allah. I try to have good relations with my neighbours, and I try to do what my religion asks of me. So, you know that I don't celebrate Christmas, that's not part of my religion. But this is like a peace offering, a good neighbourly exchange'. So, now she brings me and my kids a box of chocolates on Eid after Ramadan, and she will say happy Eid. One year she brought me an orchid. (Farah, 49, hijab, South African mixed heritage, STEM teacher and librarian)

Farah's experience can be read as promoting an intercultural understanding in a situation that potentially could become ugly if the wider public had been made aware of the internal discussions among some Muslims in regard to Christmas wishes and gifts. While all women in this study aimed at promoting intercultural contact, in Farah's case, this was especially important to foster and maintain.

In response to some groups within Sydney's Muslim community forbidding Muslims from wishing non-Muslims a merry Christmas, Farah returned to trusted faith sources and responded to those declarations by using the Islamic rulings in these sources. Farah stood up in resistance to defend both herself, her faith, and her community through interaction and genuine connection with non-Muslims via gift exchanges to manage her neighbour's feelings and responses towards Islam and Muslims. She showed neighbourliness via the gift-giving and in witness to her faith as one that must show good conduct towards neighbours. She also showed her neighbour (who thought that she might be forced to into line by 'your imams') that Muslims are thoughtful, not homogeneous in views, and like others in a democratic society, they can disagree civilly, and Muslim women can courageously recover the living tradition of Islam to reach out and promote neighbourliness. Pressured by the burden of representation from hegemonic stereotyping (Hall, 1990; Keddie, 2017, 2018; van Es, 2019), her emotional labour was not just in managing her non-Muslim neighbour and the risk involved in that outreach, but also seemed related to the fact that she had to manage her own community's pressure through re-encounter with and re-interpretation of her faith. Simultaneously, and in line with other findings on Muslim women's lived experiences, Farah

was exercising a form of resistance by taking charge of the narrative and leading the conversation with her neighbour (see Ash et al., 2019; Barlas, 2007; Faiza, 2021; Najib & Hopkins, 2019). Through this process of self-reflection and identity process, she managed the expectations of her Muslim community as well as non-Muslims.

Emotional labour is nonetheless a highly gendered response, something that women often do as mothers, partners, and professionals, to mention a few, to manage the emotions of others and mitigate their situations (Bartos & Ives, 2019; Hartley, 2018; Hochschild, 2012). In the situation of Farah, who was visibly Muslim and living among non-Muslim neighbours, taking charge was both necessary and gendered. Farah, the visible Muslim woman, felt the need to reach out to her neighbour as the embodiment of Islam and the Muslim community to secure a form of connection and compassion, and to steer the narrative and set the ground for a continuing and caring relationship. Farah's example also shows the power imbalance between her and her neighbour because Farah was from a minority group that is often feared and distrusted, while her neighbour was not, and therefore the labour came from Farah. Yet since the non-Muslim neighbour seemed to respond empathically to Farah's gesture of neighbourliness, the possibility of further reciprocity and intercultural understanding seemed to open up from such intercultural connections.

As shown so far by these women's lived experiences, it is evident that Muslim women both experience Islamophobia differently to men, as discussed in Chapter 5, and respond to it in gendered ways. In comparison to Australian Muslim men's condemnation of terrorist attacks and incidents in which Muslims are blamed, aimed at distancing the event from Islam and Muslims (Abdel-Fattah, 2017), Muslim women's public outreach for connection, education, and relationship goes beyond just distancing their religion from negative impressions. It appears that while Muslim men are concerned with defending their faith and larger community, Muslim women are, in addition to that, concerned about *defending themselves* from potential gendered Islamophobia as their own defenders. Just as in Farah's case, Muslim women are increasingly vigilant of potential and existing gendered Islamophobia and utilise various methods to speak up, educate, and connect with the wider public. In their everyday lives, their efforts may be unrecognised by the wider public, yet such grassroots outreach and connections can be very successful, although not always.

Whether Muslim women are heard, and heard correctly, depends on each individual context in which the Muslim woman is speaking from. As Spivak (1988) clearly argued, the subaltern speaker often speaks but is rarely ever heard. On the other hand, they may be heard in ways that they do not wish to be heard so as not to further the interest that is antithetical to what they are trying to articulate. Speaking up is really a complex task for Muslim women who have for a long time been (mis)represented in ways that continue to paint them as victims of their faith and menfolk (see Abu-Lughod, 2001, 2006, 2013, 2016; Razack, 2004, 2005). Muslim women speaking up on issues pertaining to their intersectional oppressions, such as sexism or gender violence in their communities can be a difficult task, often used by anti-Muslim voices to further Islamophobic (mis)representations. Therefore, the act of speaking up for Muslim women is gendered and much more complex than the experience of Muslim men speaking up, although both are not always heard or heard correctly.

However, speaking up, and engaging in public self-representation, connection, and interaction of other kinds could also be a form of positive resistance (Barlas, 2007). It is important not to pigeonhole the public self-representational effort of Muslim women as one of just emotional labour but also recognise it as a form of resistance and reclaiming the narrative (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Faiza, 2021). Although Spivak (1988) correctly identified the great difficulty marginalised women of colour experience in having their voices heard, and while this is still a reality for Muslim women in the wider picture, there is also a great deal of Muslim women-led grassroots resistance and activism occurring across multiple domains. Seemingly small acts of resistance and grassroots activism can sometimes lead to widespread sociopolitical changes.

Muslim Women's Incentives for Self-Representation

> I have many non-Muslim friends from many different ethnic backgrounds. One of my close friends is a non-Muslim from Thailand. When I first met her, she thought us Muslims just like to keep to ourselves. I talked to her, and we became friends. If people ask her about me now, she refers to me as her sister, not even a friend. That's how close we are. She didn't know much about Muslims. For example, she asked me about the hijab and if we wore it 24/7. I told her no, of course not. I invited her to our house, and she got to see how we live our personal lives too. So yeah, I think part of the problem is that it is our mistake, not just their mistake [for being ignorant of Islam and

> Muslims], because they're afraid from us, because of the media. (Mona, 36, Egyptian, hijab, medical receptionist, focus group conversation)

> It would depend on who the person is. A person for example who deals with Muslim clients all the time has a responsibility to learn about the culture or cultures of whom they're dealing with. (Khadija, 27, Iraqi Turkmen, hijab, high school teacher, focus group conversation)

While Sawsan in an earlier quote expressed concern around public self-representation in the sense that Muslim women were being pressured to provide counternarratives against Islamophobic stereotypes, other participants recognised some value in this form of public engagement despite it being occasionally burdensome or draining. Because these women found that the dominant representation of Islam and Muslims did not fit their embodied experiences, they found self-representation a useful tool to share their authentic and intersectionally unique experiences with the wider public to provide a more heterogenous understanding of Muslim women.

This section explores the various incentives that the Muslim women raised to justify their involvement in public self-representation. The recurrent theme among these women was that public self-representation in the form of community outreach was an important resistive tool against Islamophobia but especially against gendered Islamophobia. According to these women, public self-representation was about reaching out to the wider community as embodied and vocal Muslims. It was primarily about connecting to and engaging the non-Muslim community in order to contest Islamophobia via offering alternate narratives as 'outed' visibly Muslim women and creating meaningful exchange and understanding, as Linda emphasised:

> To change people's perception of Islam we really need to engage with the community you know, not just stick together. I find that a lot of Muslims just stick together and stick to what they know. They need to go out into the community, through work and you know, interfaith events, that sort of thing. (Linda, 41, Anglo Australian, hijab, community engagement officer)

Resonating with previous research on Muslim women's community outreach and antiracist activism, one reason for engaging in community outreach, the women claimed, was to educate the wider community about Islam as they recognised that there was a lot of

misinformation and misrepresentation about Islam and Muslims circulating in the wider community (Keddie et al., 2021; van Es, 2019; Zempi, 2020). Such outreach in whatever form would help clarify the difference between culture and various interpretations of faith (Barlas, 2007; van Es, 2019) and bring attention to the historic contribution of Islam to gender rights. As Nadia explained,

> You know, in every religion, in every culture there is always that one bad egg that needs to ruin it for everyone else. What makes me even more frustrated, is that we are the only religion, and I could be wrong, but we are the only religion that people confuse between culture and religion. They don't understand the differences between cultural practices and cultural norms, and then they go and say that's the religion when in fact that is the person's interpretation of religion. It's not Islam. Our *deen*[10] doesn't tell us to oppress our women. A woman has rights. Women had rights in Islam before Western women had rights. That's why when people like Yassmin Magied says things like 'Islam is a feminist religion' people laugh because they don't get it. Even before Western women were acknowledged as humans, you know, they were possessions, but in Islam we had some of the greatest female scholars. (Nadia, 33, Palestinian, hijab, social worker)

The women in this study, like Nadia, felt that it was important for Muslim women to rail in opposition to racism and misogyny (Carland, 2017; Liebmann & Galal, 2020; Navarro, 2010). Through such intercultural encounters, these Muslim women were inviting others from the wider community to see the 'real face' of Islam, reducing fear and increasing empathy and perspective taking. Bushra emphasised the importance of dialogue:

> We should have a lot more interaction with non-Muslims, having people come to our houses, eating our foods, go to their houses. We need more interaction, learning about each other so we can accept ourselves. So, they don't think 'Oh my God, these people probably run a terrorism cell in their house or something'. (Bushra, 50, Indian, hijab, computer scientist)

The role of meaningful contact and nurturing connections between diverse cultural groups in reducing discrimination, fear, and prejudice is strongly substantiated (Tausch &

[10] Religious way of life

Hewstone, 2010). Similarly, Farah expressed the need for Muslims to get out of their comfort zones and reach out to non-Muslims to communicate what Islam was really about:

> And often, I don't know if this is a fair statement, but as Muslims, I think we need to keep the doors of communication open. Give people a chance to see what Islam is. Rather than you staying in your comfort zone and not wanting to bother anybody, keep that way open for them to come and see what Islam really is . . . There would be more acceptance of Islam and Muslims as a way of life. But Muslims are unfortunately, and again I am generalising here, we've gone so far from the essence of what Islam is. We have forgotten that or neglected that. If we come back to that, I think there are a lot that we can offer an ailing society, that is a pain in itself. (Farah, 49, hijab, South African mixed heritage, STEM teacher and librarian)

In Chapter 5, Farah recognised the presence of Islamophobia in Australia but stated that she had not experienced any serious personal targeting. Yet she recognised that while she had not yet been personally targeted, this did not rule out potential future incidents. Aware of the presence of Islamophobia in the wider Australian community and the influential way that government rhetoric and media played a role in possibly exacerbating Islamophobic feelings in the public, Farah, like Linda, stressed the importance of community outreach as a resistive force against Islamophobia. She maintained that Muslim women needed to step out of their comfort zones and reach out to non-Muslims in the wider community. This could be done through individual interactions, such as when Farah approached her neighbour with a Christmas present, or it could be done as part of a larger, organised interfaith initiative.

Farah spoke from Islamic tradition as a woman about rediscovering the essence of Islam and sharing an understanding of this essence with an ailing racist society. Farah appeared, like Nadia, to be making a clear distinction between culture and faith. She recognised the power of being able to refer back to traditional faith sources and grasp the essence of her faith that she perceived to be different to both the dominant representation of Islam and the current way that some Muslims practised Islam. She referred to this as the 'real Islam', which was her gendered interpretation of her faith's essence.

The usage of the notion 'real' is interesting, as it appeared Farah was also engaging in an internal reclaiming of the narrative of Islam's essence. Despite using the term real Islam, she was not stripping away her religion in pursuit of fundamentals. The women were

not trying to systematise their faith but respond creatively to a dynamic, challenging intercultural situation through religious wisdom sought for the purpose of engagement. Both the rediscovering of the essence of their faiths and their activist efforts in speaking up against racist representation involves an ongoing reshaping of their identities as Muslim women, to more confident, active Muslim identities.

Thus, by reaching out to educate non-Muslims about Islam in an anti-Islamophobic effort, Farah was simultaneously role modelling, both to the wider public and to the Muslim community, her gendered interpretation of real Islam. There was also recognition of 'an ailing society' plagued by its own pain and racist narratives that may slowly be healed by the conversations, connections, and understandings stemming from Muslim women's gendered interpretations of the essence of their faith. Farah judiciously highlighted outreach as the first step towards anti-Islamophobic resistance as most solutions to human problems required both connection and communication (L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; McGinty, 2012). Such community outreach was about connecting to others from Muslim women's gendered intersectional experiences, as emphasised by Zainab:

> The point is that if we want to speak out about our authentic experiences, the things that we've suffered, because we have experienced patriarchy, we have experienced abuse—we're human beings—we need to be able to do that without everything we say being used to feed into an Islamophobic stereotype. I guess that's the way I navigate my advocacy. I want to own my Muslim identity. (Zainab, 30, Lebanese, hijab, lawyer)

Throughout this identity reshaping process, Muslim women feel that they need to be bold in their community outreach and pedagogic efforts (Barlas, 2007) to navigate a system that is programmed to feed stereotypical representations about them. To steer counternarratives successfully, women feel a need to find common ground with others from the wider public, both to educate others about the self and to reclaim the self from Islamophobic misrepresentations (Faiza, 2021). In a social context where their voices may not be properly heard, the participants in this research felt that they needed to continue to strive to break down barriers through interpersonal relationships and community outreach. The efforts of the women around an anti-Islamophobia cause were perceived by them as both exhausting and liberating. Within this context, small-scale grassroots community

outreach was perceived as progress as Muslim women gained an increased foothold in these community spaces, as illustrated by Jamila:

> I'm thinking going back to when I was growing up, the voices of the community were largely male, you know, in the public discourse the community was almost defined by male voices. I think that has shifted significantly now. I think we have got some really strong and powerful Muslim women who articulate beautifully the position of Muslim women's voices in Australia. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

The slow yet steady appearance of Muslim women in such community spaces is crucial as it provides a gendered lens to the experiences of Muslims in Australia and addresses Muslim women's positioning within wider Australia from their own diverse perspectives. The increased visibility of Muslim women in these spaces undermines traditional stereotypes as visibility can be a form of power. This, however, is no easy task. 'Speaking up' as a woman, professional or not, within a wider Australia in which racism still underscores mainstream narratives is a tough and emotional task, as Jamila highlighted:

> The other experiences that I have experienced more generally and more broadly in the community, is interesting because although I have those experiences, but if I was to rank them they do not compare to the experiences that I have to endure in the public discourse. I'm not taking away from the experiences of Muslim women who go through Islamophobia on a daily basis. But personally, for me, the experience that I have encountered that every time I engage in a public discourse with my research, it's far more difficult to deal with than anything I've experienced at a more personal level. Because I'm not just giving an opinion about what Islam is or what Islam says, you know. This is my academic work, and if it wasn't rigorous, and respected, I wouldn't be where I am today in terms of being at this university, this institution, and doing the publications that I do, and the research that I do. But all of a sudden, because of the topic, because of the arguments that I make, it's suddenly dismissed, or worse still, being seen as threatening or incompatible, right? And it's almost like 'Don't dare to enter the public space'—that is frightening! Because we can't impact change, and we can't be contributive to society if we're not able to enter the public space. By definition the public space should be for all of us. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

As Jamila exemplified, public speaking comes with a cost. While Muslim women have, since September 11 at least, been put under the spotlight and expected to speak up in

opposition to stereotypical representations of their faith and communities, they are also in some cases, like Yassmin Abdel-Magied, ridiculed, silenced, and threatened when they do share their genuine experiences that fall outside of the common stereotypes ('Yassmin Abdel-Magied opens up about why she left Australia' , 2018). This is especially painful and insulting when the engagement in public speaking is based upon and backed by the Muslim women's professional knowledge and research in a particular field, yet they are not taken seriously or are belittled. The role of academic institutions may also affect their experiences as it is familiar for women, and especially women of colour and other minority group status, to find that they are not backed up by their institutions (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017; C. S. V. Turner, 2002). To an extent, this shows that the academic work of women like Jamila is less respected and valued.

So, the Islamophobia and sexism that target professional Muslim women may feel more emotionally burdensome as it does two things: First, it targets their gender identity via sexism, rendering their professional backgrounds, positions, and contributions insignificant, which is a common experience for many professional women, and second, it targets their faith identity via gendered racism, rendering their personal being threatening or problematic. Yet, the targeting of their professional standing motivates these women to continue to speak up. As discussed in Chapter 5, the targeting of Muslim women, and especially professional Muslim women, in public spaces is intense and involves gendered Islamophobia as well as sexism in the forms of hate mail, slander, stalking, ridicule, verbal abuse, and death threats (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Perry, 2014; Sahar, 2019). Despite this emotionally burdensome situation, these women insist on continuing to speak up in public discourse spaces. Their words and their voices are acts of resistance.

As it is common for Muslim women to experience complex challenges and discrimination targeting their gender, faith, and ethnoculture within professional work places, intersectional resistance becomes necessary for the effective navigation of and growth within such professional spaces (Ahmad & Sardar, 2012). Research shows that some employees are less accommodating towards Muslim women (Ahmad & Sardar, 2012; Ahmed, 2012). The added Muslim visibility for some women makes them hypervisible as Muslims and, depending on the type of Muslim dress or other Muslim markers that they exhibit, they may experience increased discrimination and gendered Islamophobia. This may trigger persisting racist and sexist stereotypes that are associated with Muslim women's

bodies. Thus, the overlapping oppressions in opposition directed towards their gender, faith, and ethnoculture, together with institutional Islamophobia and institutional sexism, result in Muslim women potentially being more intersectionally disadvantaged than other professional women in academia. Despite the challenges, it is also from this intersectional positioning that Muslim women find agency and the drive for resistance, which is further detailed throughout the rest of the chapter.

Muslim Women's Creative Activism

As highlighted in the previous section, these Muslim women were motivated by a desire to provide the wider public with a meaningful understanding of Muslim women's experiences. They were also partly motivated by the desire to reclaim the narrative space to provide an intersectional gendered representation on faith and Muslim women's experiences. Also, because the women spoke out from their individual intersecting positions of faith, gender, ethnicity and class, each woman uniquely contributed to this narrative. Equally so, public speaking, connection, and outreach were about fostering intercultural understanding through encounters and connections made between members of different faiths and cultural groups. Public pedagogy, however, did not limit itself to discourse and no action. In fact, the women who engaged in forms of public pedagogy were also actively engaged in other forms of anti-Islamophobic activism fuelled by their knowledge, educational capital, experiences, faith, and anti-Islamophobic desire. While part of their resistive efforts was to fight against misrepresentations by educating the wider public about their faith and communities, their activism was more focused on reclaiming the narrative on Islam and Muslims and refocusing their energy into building solidarity with other marginalised communities and peoples within wider Australia on causes beyond just Muslim women's issues. These activist efforts were merged with the Muslim women's public pedagogy and conducted within different areas, including but not limited to academia, media, community, and the creative arts.

Spoken Word and Poetry

Some of the women used creative arts as a platform for anti-Islamophobic activism. Within this vast and flexible platform, the women relied on their creative strengths to share their perspectives and narratives to both cope with Islamophobia and respond to it, as Reema emphasised:

> So, for me, my coping mechanism is a lot more holistic. It's about really, first—the one thing that I have learned is that the best way to fight Islamophobia is to understand it, to be educated about what it is so that you know what you're up against. That really means that you are taking on roles to try to change the structures of society, and so I try to fight it with the tools that I know how to, through writing, through creativity, through the arts. For me, that is my coping mechanism because it is a productive way of responding to Islamophobia. It's not just reactive, because there is a time for reaction but also when it is constantly reactive, that is draining. It sucks the energy out of you because your identity is completely framed in terms of a response. There is no space for you to create your own identity, it's only a knot: it's un-knot this, un-knot that. So, I've learned over the years, particularly after I did my PhD, that a productive way of channelling that sort of energy is much more effective not only in fighting Islamophobia, but giving you a sense that you can. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

As Reema highlights in the above quote, responding to Islamophobia is oftentimes a reactive process. Moving beyond this form of reactive activism into more holistic forms that are creative may be more productive and help activists move forward (see Abdel-Fattah, 2005; Araújo, 2019; Mahfouz, 2017). Creative activism also contributes to Australian cultural life. A good example of this are the contributions of Randa Abdel-Fattah’s creative fiction for the young Australian audience. In her (2005) book *Does My Head Look Big in This?* 16-year-old fictional character Amal decides to wear the hijab and encounters all sorts of reactions as a result. Using Amal’s experience with the hijab, Abdel-Fattah sets the stage for young readers (and adults) to engage in critical thinking, perspective taking, appreciating other cultures and, most importantly, connecting to people of other faiths and cultures via everyday experiences related to belonging, body image, identity, gender issues, racism, sexism, and self-acceptance. A creative activist writing intended for a wider audience, this book has received well over 11,000 ratings on Goodreads online, and most of the reviews are positive from readers from a wide diversity of backgrounds (Goodreads, n.d.). The actual audience reach is doubtless much wider. This shows how creative activism of this sort, which reaches wider audiences in positive ways, can help form intercultural understanding by challenging stereotypical cultural and racism assumptions and forming new ones based on shared struggles and humanity.

Such creative and productive activism also requires a conceptualisation of Islamophobia as a phenomenon that occurs beyond everyday racism: a form of racism that is structural, systemic, and spans micro and macrolevels of society (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Briskman, 2015; Poynting & Briskman, 2018). From this conceptual standpoint, activists feel a deep level of understanding that racism manifests across society in different ways, where everyday racist expressions are entangled with wider systemic structures of racism, permeating the wider society via various justifications over time. The conceptual language for some Muslim women to be able to clearly articulate this comes from their educational capital. The understanding that racism is not something that can be dismantled by individual women leads to coordinated and communal activism that breeds solidarity with other people standing in opposition to discrimination and oppression. Such collective efforts by these women helps contest structural narratives of gendered Islamophobia and offers alternate understandings about Muslims and Islam. Thus, Muslim women who engage collective activist efforts can advance antiracism in progressive and productive ways. In other words, as Reema mentioned, channelling anti-Islamophobic activism into creative pursuits may help give Muslim women the sense that they can slowly begin to challenge systemic racism. Yet, finding the right creative spaces may be challenging sometimes, as expressed by Sawsan:

> I've always been an artistic person, so I've always enjoyed that. But what ended up happening was that I couldn't find a safe space for me to be able to practise my art or to share my art and to talk about subjects that are vulnerable. For example, there's always that thing of airing your dirty laundry in communities, so when you talk about these things and when you do this internal work that all of us activists are doing, you don't want that to be used against you in the *Daily Telegraph* the next day, you know. I was really lucky that in 2013 a group of young people with Muslim background decided that they wanted to start a poetry slam in Bankstown because they, in the same way that I was feeling, felt that there were not many spaces that were accessible to them and friendly to them. So, for example in order to attend and share our poetry we had to drive all the way to the city, which for a lot of people in Western Sydney, isn't practical, it was on a weeknight, they would go and it would be in a bar, you know. Not something that was comfortable. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

Muslim women who found solace and solidarity in spoken word or poetry activism a few years ago did not have suitable platforms to perform their art in a way that illuminated their unique intersectional experiences. This was partly due to the unsuitable locations and times that poetry slams were mostly held, such as in bars on weeknights, and partly because the women did not consider these spaces or crowds (mainly Anglo White, male, and upper to middle class) safe to express themselves without becoming subject to gendered Islamophobia.

> So, after a while, they came back and decided to create this space [to share poetry]. And what was amazing was that it became this movement, because there were so many people from all walks of life, and colours, and races, and ethnicities, everything you know that decided that this was a place that they could belong. Not all Muslim, that's the point. The people who started it were Muslim of different sects, but the people that were coming were from all different backgrounds, but especially marginalised people of colour backgrounds. And that was really important because you had a space where we would come and there was a lot of shared solidarity and understanding. So, every Tuesday, once a month, there's Bankstown Poetry Slam which is now the largest regular poetry slam in the southern hemisphere. So, I think to be able to stand there and talk about topics that are vulnerable and open, you need a safe space and you need a trust, and that definitely came. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

However, the limited availability of safe and comfortable spaces for Muslim women to engage in their creative activism, as seen in Sawsan's case, did not stop them from participating in a social effort to create such spaces for themselves elsewhere. A result of such effort was Bankstown Poetry Slam, which was mainly formed to provide a suitable and safe space for Muslims, especially Muslim girls and women, to perform spoken word and poetry on topics related to their authentic experiences.

One spoken word piece that was published on Bankstown Poetry Slam's YouTube channel, showing the spoken word performance of a young Muslim woman of colour named Yasmine Lewis[11] of Turkish Cypriot Muslim and Anglo Irish Protestant background, proves

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x[11] This spoken word piece is from a video (Bankstown Poetry Slam, 2014) found on Bankstown Poetry Slam's (BPS) Youtube account and has been transcribed to the best of my ability from the video. All credit belongs to Yasmine Lewis and BPS.

the eloquent and powerful way spoken word can be used to critique White privilege and racism in multicultural Australia (Bankstown Poetry Slam, 2014; Vatsikopoulos, 2015):

> So—this is just a really short silly one but I wanted to dedicate it to my grandparents, Fuat and Sakarya, who I always thought were called 'Frank and Sue'—yeah, I never really got why! Cause—
>
> If they can pronounce Shakespeare— If they can pronounce Dostoyevsky, Alighieri, Kafka, Tolkien, and Bauldelaire, they— can pronounce your name!
>
> If they can pronounce Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Bach, Picasso, da Vinci, Michelangelo and Van Gough, Aristotle, Einstein, Galileo and Freud —
>
> If they can pronounce Monet while sipping Möet, quote Plato while eating Paleo, read Ludin while watching Aladdin while eating Greek salad and wearing a kaftan—
>
> If they can eat a burrito in a kimono— dance to Indy with a Bindi— order foie gras with a side of quinoa, then jump in their Toyota and drive to Maroubra... don't wanna be late for yoga—
>
> If they can learn to make cappuccinos in a shop they can learn to write some letters on a cup.
>
> If they can fly to piss through our continents they can try to hiss through our consonants.
>
> If they can wrap their tongue around my kebab they can wrap their tongue around my vocab! For I—
>
> For I am not your lunch order that you can point at and stumble through, nor am I your fashion item that you've appropriated too. This label that was given to me and you, is wrapped in history so get to know it fool!
>
> Because if they can pronounce Geoffrey—
>
> If they can pronounce Arya, Tyrion, Sansa and Daenerys—
>
> Hagrid, Hermione, Dumbledore and Voldemort;

> If they can pronounce Macbeth, Hamlet, Romeo, Othello, art, thou, thee, doth, hither, sither, dither. If they can pronounce SHAKESPEARE then they can pronounce—YOUR NAME!

This powerful piece brilliantly dismantles White privilege that extends across various overlapping oppressions, racism, and sexism that are also rooted in colonial history by using sharp humour and references to the lived reality of multiculturalism in Australia. It also beautifully empowers a form of resistance in opposition to assimilation into a White nation fantasy (G. Hage, 2000), by demanding to be respected for one's cultural difference and identity (Hall, 1990). It is about accepting and embracing the cultural self in a multicultural nation while challenging White privilege and oppressions in opposition to marginalised and vulnerable peoples. Through Bankstown Poetry Slam's platform and various social media accounts, Yasmine Lewis's performance has reached thousands of people in Australia.

This platform was initially intended to welcome the voices of young Muslims on sensitive topics such as faith, racism, sexism, and classism, among others. However, it has also become a spoken word movement that attracts other people, as well, especially people of colour and others from marginalised backgrounds, as Sawsan explained (Sabra et al., 2015). As a result, Bankstown Poetry Slam has made Western Sydney the centre of spoken word performance in Sydney, and therefore, Muslim women from these areas no longer need to go to the periphery to partake in such platforms. Bankstown Poetry Slam has also come to signify something beyond antiracist Muslim activism, moving into a broader activist space and welcoming people from other backgrounds to share their lived experiences (Cunningham, 2017; Jeremy et al., 2018). It came to represent a part of the lived experience of multicultural peoples in Sydney as a platform where spoken word and poetry on multicultural exclusion and inclusion, and of racism and antiracism, can be performed (Sabra et al., 2015). Currently, Bankstown Poetry Slam is the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere (Cunningham, 2017), and this powerful platform originated from the intersectional experiences and struggles of Muslims and, in particular, Muslim women activists.

Spoken word platforms allow Muslim women to own their own narratives, freely expressing themselves as they choose without the external pressure of engaging in public pedagogy limited to 'correcting' stereotypical misrepresentations. The lack of external

pressure in the spoken word poetry space also means that this type of activism can safely push the boundaries of what are considered acceptable topics of discussion (Bagwell, 2021). Hence, it affords Muslim women the freedom to narrate their experiences, engage others in critical thinking, and further discussions about Islamophobia. Furthermore, the greater freedom and flexibility of the performance of spoken word renders it less emotionally laborious than other forms of public pedagogy. Hence, spoken word can also be therapeutic, providing Muslim women who have been subject to sexist and Islamophobic exclusion with a sense of productivity and healing (Levy, 2020). As much as it is about speaking up and being heard by others, and as much as it is about working towards social change, it is also about the ability to be *able* to speak up and therefore also *heal* internally, within the self, as Reema previously mentioned. As such, this form of activism provides an impactful platform for performance where people from various intersectional backgrounds can critique racist, sexist, classist, and other overlapping forms of oppressions to an audience from diverse backgrounds who specifically seek such events (Gillies, 2017).

Academic Research and Media Interviews

Another form of activism in which some of the women in this study engaged was within the fields of academia and media. This involved sharing their expertise and knowledge on Islam and Muslims with a wider community via various academic platforms and through different media platforms, including social media, alternative media, and mainstream media (to a limited degree; see Emotional Management section and discussion on Muslim women silenced in public discourse). The activism of these Australian Muslim scholars reflects similar efforts exerted by other Muslim academic activist women both in and outside of Australia (see Abdel-Fattah, 2017a; Abu-Lughod, 2013; Barlas, 2007; Carland, 2017; Hussein, 2016; Mirza, 2013; Razack, 2004; Zempi, 2020; Zine, 2006). This form of activism, as the women explained, involved scholarly research, publications, seminars, conferences, and media interviews. According to the women, this type of activism could be draining and emotionally burdensome as they were not always heard or respected. Jamila, who had been an academic activist for many years, reflected,

> In the academic space, any advice you want, you seek the research or the opinion of an expert in the field, right? When it comes to issues to do with Muslim women, the politicians are experts, the shock-jocks are experts, you know, those who put opinion

> pieces in the papers are experts, everyone else is an expert! When a Muslim woman speaks out, either she's an apologist, you know, 'You're so dumb that you've bought into this whole oppression', you know, 'You're so oppressed that you don't know that you're oppressed' or, 'Clearly you have no idea'. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

The frustration in Jamila's voice was evident as she expressed how difficult her activist work could be in a wider community that frequently discussed Muslims, particularly Muslim women. She recounted that those who talked about Muslim women often did not allow Muslim women to freely own the narrative on 'Muslim women'. Jamila, whose academic field made her an expert on Muslim women's issues, had found herself on numerous occasions belittled on various Australian mainstream media platforms when she shared her knowledge. She said,

> If I wrote a book that Islam oppressed Muslim women, I could get publicity for it. Within a heartbeat this book would become a best seller! But the narrative of actually bringing out the diverse voices of Muslim women, because not all Muslim women feel empowered and engaged in society, but a realistic representation of Muslim women, that's a difficult picture for people to accept. Because they're not used to seeing and hearing empowered voices coming from Muslim women. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

As mentioned in a quote by Jamila in Chapter 5, every time Jamila shared her expert opinions on a public platform on issues pertaining to Muslim women's experiences, she would face aggressive criticism from the media and the public, which is a common experience for many academic activists, especially those who are also women of colour (Flood et al., 2013). The media would often quote her out of context and misrepresent her expert opinions (Hall, 1990). She talked about receiving abusive verbal and written attacks from the public, including death threats and having her opinions belittled into insignificance, while finding herself unsupported and under increased pressure to remain silent within her academic institution. The lack of vocal support in her defence from the workplace as a counternarrative to media's representations of her shows the embeddedness of racism and other overlapping oppressions within Australian institutions as discussed in the section 'Emotional Management'.

Jamila's experience illustrates the way the 'matrix of Islamophobia' manifests in Australian society, where racism intersects with gender within processes of domination (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 649; Hill Collins, 2009). Hill Collins' (2009) theory of the matrix of domination 'asserts that multiple categories of power are mutually constitutive, meaning that gender, for instance, is simultaneously embedded in race within processes of domination' (cited in Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 649). This theorising accounts for both a person's multiple intersectional characteristics, for example, ethnoculture, gender, and religion at the microlevel, as well as the domains of power that manifest in wider society at the microlevel through 'structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal' factors (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 299; 2009). It is within this domain that Muslim women, like Jamila, are simultaneously privileged with educational capital and oppressed due to gender, culture, and faith (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Ferber et al., 2007). Jamila's lived experiences of gendered Islamophobia, as a Lebanese Australian Muslim woman and an academic from Western Sydney, was not disconnected from the wider structural context that included institutional, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal factors aimed at reducing her voice, position, and expertise to insignificance. It appears that who you are and where you are during activist efforts matter more than what expertise you hold. In other words, the context from which academic women speak matters. Despite these reactions from the media and some members of the public intertwined with wider systemic racism at the macrolevel and institutional pressures, Jamila was adamant and persisted with her academic and media activism. She continued to publish and speak up as an expert on issues related to Muslim women. Though wearing, Jamila was passionate about representing Muslim women's complex and varying experiences to the wider public through her activist work.

Jamila also talked of the dual frustration of navigating wider Australian communities and Muslim communities. She explained,

> The other frustration that we have internally is that we can have so many sermons and lectures about how empowering Islam is for women, you know. We rattle off that Islam gave women rights in marriage, Islam gave women right in civil society, and it can go on and on, and we can leave the lecture or seminar feeling so great, that Islam is empowering, and that might be true, but I'm sorry if that is not translated to the lives of Muslim women, then we have a problem here. So long as we stop at this point and say 'Look how empowering Islam is' but we don't actually look at the real life issues and say

> ‘Ok, what's going on there?’ then we'll always be stuck in this situation. It's not to criticise Islam, we're not criticising Islam, we're looking at what's going on at the society level with Muslims. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

Jamila stressed the importance of activist work that respects Muslim women’s lived experiences without shying away from difficult topics. To both empower and celebrate Muslim women, their whole experiences must be recognised in realistic ways and addressed, including issues that affect Muslim women both outside and within their own communities, whether that be racism, sexism, classism, or any other -ism (Carland, 2017). Jamila’s work was double. First, she spoke as a minority woman of colour to the wider Australian public in which systemic and structural gendered Islamophobia is embedded. Second, she spoke back to certain narratives in Muslim communities that painted a too-rosy picture of the Muslim woman as an emancipated and empowered person according to interpretations of faith. This second issue is also problematic, as Jamila noted, since on the one hand, women are perceived as incapable, meek oppressed, or threatening, and on the other hand, within some narratives in certain Muslim communities, Muslim women are hailed as perfect beings. Neither representation of Muslim women is, according to Jamila, an accurate description of their lived experiences because, she maintained, Muslim women, like women from all walks of life, experience various intersecting oppressions as well as empowered resistance and agency. Jamila noted the reason for the emerging hailed Muslim woman image in some Muslim contexts is partially a response to the widespread gendered Islamophobia in the wider society. However, this counternarrative is also exaggerated and goes beyond Muslim women’s lived experiences.

Within this complicated context, Jamila raised awareness of and spoke about Muslim women’s intersectional experiences and did not shy away from difficult topics such as gender violence, sexism, and misogyny. She recognised that her work could and would be used against her, her faith, and her community, and she continued to exert this activist effort courageously despite the hate mail and threats received from some people in the wider community. She spoke as a Muslim woman and on behalf of Muslim women from her own intersectional experience of racism and sexism, and she exhibited resistance. Her work as an active agent of change required determination and grit.

Jamila is one of many Muslim women activists who are mainly involved in academic and media activism, and there are many more such women emerging in this field. Despite it being a difficult task and emotionally burdensome, academic activism is increasing among Muslim women. Similar to Williams's (2020) research on Black academics, the Muslim women academics in this research illustrated how academia, activism, and the performing or fine arts could intersect in the effort to contextualise Islamophobia for the wider community within politics and history. Using various platforms such as scholarly work, social media, and pop culture, these academics were well equipped to reach a wider audience with their activist messages.

Although Muslim women engage emotional labour in their everyday lives, their activism is leaving a mark and reaching wider audiences. With the growing and innovative use of various technologies, especially the current social media platforms available, Muslim women activists are able to use such platforms to engage with the wider public on their own terms and, in doing so, own their narrative (Mirza, 2013). In contrast to mainstream media outlets that frequently do discuss issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims, yet do not let Muslim women speakers own their narratives, social media platforms privatised to the account holders provide Muslim women activists more control over their narratives and public outreach. These online platforms also allow for engagement of the online audience with the Muslim women's narratives via shares, likes, comments, and subscriptions, which means that as the women attract readers, a community naturally develops in support of their cause. Therefore, scholarly work combined with activism and shared on alternative platforms than just mainstream media or scholarly journals not only reaches a wider audience but has the potential to foster forms of community activism able to promote the message of anti-Islamophobic activism further to other individuals and communities.

Grassroots Activism

As evidenced in the previous section, activism can be emotionally demanding work yet has much potential for social change. This is especially so when activism brings communities and other groups of people together to create social change. This section explores these women's grassroots efforts where they came together with other marginalised people in their resistance in opposition to oppression and discrimination.

In line with recent research on Muslim women's activism in Western contexts, it is no surprise, then, that many women who were interviewed in this research also dedicated much time and energy to grassroots activism (see Bullock, 2005; Green, 2011; Keddie, 2017, 2018; Keddie et al., 2021; McGinty, 2012; Rinaldo, 2014; Worthington, 2011). Such activism was about stepping away from internalised Islamophobic thinking that was expressed by some women in Chapter 5 (for instance, see Bella's experiences of always worrying about what others thought of her as a Muslim).

Grassroots activism is about focusing energy into dynamic avenues of activism that foster community connection and solidarity alongside communal resistance and resilience, as demonstrated by the poetry slam example. Another example of Muslim women's grassroots activism against gender violence is exemplified by Muslim Women Australia, formerly known as the Muslim Women's Association in Australia, which started small to meet the needs of Muslim women experiencing challenging life circumstances and oppression (Muslim Women Australia, n.d.). Their effort soon expanded to include services for all women experiencing gender violence. Muslim Women Australia shows how Muslim women formed solidarity and community connections with non-Muslim women based on their intersectional experiences of gender oppression, which is often interconnected with racism and other forms of oppression.

These holistic forms of combined activist efforts also help raise awareness of and contextualise Islamophobia as a phenomenon within the wider history of racism in Australia. However, it has not always been this way. One of the women, Sawsan, who earlier identified herself as a spoken word activist, reflected on some of the past Muslim public outreach and pedagogic efforts:

> Societally I think, you know, how do we build resilience? Ultimately, we have been doing this for a very long time as a Muslim community, and I homogenise, you know obviously we are not homogenous, but let's say broadly speaking we have been appealing to the mainstream White sensitivities and White boundaries regarding our own existence and our belonging here, and our identities and the extent to how much we belong is defined through the lens of this White oriental gaze. So, I feel like we have been doing that for a very long time to gain acceptance, to say 'We're part of you, we're just as Australian as you' all of those things. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

Sawsan's reflection on Muslim public outreach is particularly relevant for the era immediately following September 11 when Muslims were especially targeted in the media in stories on 'Islamic terrorism' (Alsultany, 2013; Aly, 2007; Poynting & Perry, 2007; Rane, 2014; West & Lloyd, 2017). It was during this heightened media and government rhetoric when Australian Muslim individuals, community leaders, and organisations focused great energy on exerting a 'moderate' image of Muslims and Islam. Such narratives, however, were an indication of how Muslims in Australia had internalised the Islamophobic thinking in media and government rhetoric and thus engaged in the condemnation of 'bad' Muslims rather than target the actual problem—structural and systemic Islamophobia (Abdel-Fattah, 2017). This is what we saw when the Lindt Café incident happened, for instance, where Muslim organisations came out at large, condemning the incident and stressing that Islam was peaceful and not what Islam was about (Abdel-Fattah, 2017)

Much of this Islamophobia was structural and institutional, aiming at policing the perceived Muslim threat. The macrolevel expressions of Islamophobia trickled down to microlevels, resulting in an Islamophobia that spanned both the macro and microlevels of society. This translated into everyday forms of Islamophobia that targeted Muslims (Iner, 2019; Poynting et al., 2004). As Muslims were presumed to be problematic in media and government rhetoric, the Muslim response to Islamophobia since September 11 has mainly been to promote a moderate and good image of Islam and Muslims to the wider Western society. However, not all Muslims have agreed with this tactic. More recently, Muslim activists and community leaders, both in Australia and globally, have increasingly criticised this approach as a form of internalised Islamophobia. They advocate stopping the accommodation of Islamophobic representations and their internalisation by the Muslim community (Abdel-Fattah, 2017; Suleiman, 2017). Such critics have argued for a shift in the conversation where Muslims no longer attempt to appease the very audience that promotes Islamophobic stereotypes and uphold structural and systemic injustices but instead actively resist those narratives. Similar to Moreton-Robinson's (2000) argument in *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, Sawsan maintained that the shift in activist narrative must stop speaking up to the 'White' person in power:

> But ultimately what we really need to be doing is not speaking or seeking acceptance from the mainstream, the ones with the power. But what we actually need to be doing is building communities of resistance, so solidarity, and intersectionality with other

> marginalised communities, other vulnerable voices. To me, I'm no longer interested in speaking to the White man, and I haven't been in a long time. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

Grassroots activism that steps away from internalised Islamophobia regains the voice of and shifts the authority back to Muslims. This is equally true for gendered forms of such activism as it provides an alternative platform that does not need to comply with the wider mainstream narrative and stereotypes held about Muslim women (McGinty, 2012; Rinaldo, 2014; Worthington, 2011). This activism refutes racist stereotypes and representations by aiming to produce counternarratives (Dietze, 2014; Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2009), while freeing Muslim women to focus on, as Sawsan explained, what matters:

> For me, it's about speaking to fellow individuals or communities that are experiencing that marginalisation too. Because no matter what, the best thing that you can do for yourself as an individual is decolonise yourself, decolonise your privilege and working on changing that actively. It's very uncomfortable if you do it in a genuine way, you know, to look at your privilege compared to someone else. So, for me, I'm a Muslim, I'm a hijabi, I'm pretty much on the bottom of the food chain. But if you find someone who, well I don't want to tokenise, but if you find someone who is a Black Muslim woman, like you know, an Aboriginal and Muslim woman, so unfortunately there is—you know, I don't believe that there is an Olympics in any way, but in different ways and in certain degrees we are oppressed as a community and systematically, but I am talking as an individual—how do I educate myself, how do I make sure that I am a good ally and that I'm showing solidarity and that it's more than just tokenistic in that sense? And so, part of me is about educating myself, but it is also about raising awareness in the community. It's making sure that we are building bridges with other marginalised communities. It's not enough to sit here and you know tell me that you are not racist and be not racist. It's not enough anymore. What is actually required is that you are actively antiracist. What that means is building and being part of that coalition and changing fundamentally the wrongs of Australia's past so that we can actually all comfortably try to envision a future where these systems are dismantled and no longer exist. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

Grassroots activism, as Sawsan emphasised, is about reframing Islamophobia as a form of racism among other forms of racism that have a long history in Australia, and it is about connecting with all others who are marginalised within this system. It is about recognising the oppression against other groups, such as Indigenous people, and connecting with them in solidarity to fight against racism together. It is about understanding that the experience of racism and injustice is different for each marginalised group, but the fight against it can be expressed in solidarity:

> And another important thing for me in coping has been solidarity with other groups. So, for me the best thing about it, for me to understand Islamophobia, meant that I had to understand the experiences of Indigenous Australians and what it means to live in a settler–colonial society. That has been really the key turning point for me, because once you understand everything that we're going through has been tried on Indigenous people first and they're still going through it, everything is part of that racial state, you build connections with and bridges with other groups because you can't fight this alone. Imagine I waved a magic wand and Islamophobia went away tomorrow and Muslims were no longer the enemy. If I was a decent human being, that wouldn't satisfy me because the most oppressed people in this country are Indigenous Australians. So, it's not just fighting your own battles, we need to work with others. Once you do that, God that has been the most empowering thing for me, it has been the most illuminating because when you build connections with other minorities and oppressed groups it takes the weight off your shoulders. It really does, and you start to learn from each other as well, and you start to empower each other. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

Hence, for these Muslim women activists, grassroots activism is essentially about making real changes within the wider society by building bridges and connections between marginalised communities. It is simultaneously an antiracist and feminist cause in a shared effort in opposition to racism and misogyny for the betterment of the wider society:

> I mean, even just something like Muslim Women Australia which for many years ran the only Muslim women's refuge in Australia, then now their refuge and crisis service accommodates women from diverse cultural backgrounds in Western Sydney. So, they've actually grown from serving just Muslim women to serving, on a much bigger

> scale, women who have escaped domestic violence from a whole range of cultural backgrounds. I think this is an amazing validation of the work that Muslim women are capable of doing in Australia. I think Muslim women are just getting on with the work. It's almost the best thing that you can do. Because the danger of things like Islamophobia is making the good work stop because it distracts you. But being able to push forward and just keep going, I think that's the best answer to Islamophobia. (Jamila, 43, Lebanese, hijab, academic)

Muslim women's activism against Islamophobia is often grassroots, where individual activism merges into a larger community movement, promoting a raised awareness and understanding of Islamophobia. These social movements have a crucial role in the workings of society and in heralding change as they challenge the existing oppressive structures in an effort to find creative solutions. This form of activism is empowering because the first step to break away from colonisation and institutionalised, systemic oppression is to first understand the self and one's social positioning within a wider historical context (De Lissovoy, 2019; Grosfoguel, 2010; Lugones, 2010; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). The decolonial spirit of unlearning and relearning the self within a wider colonial context is a powerful way of reclaiming the narrative. This involves stepping away from conceptualising Muslims as problematic Others to thinking of Islam and Muslims as longstanding and contributive parts of the Western world (Grosfoguel, 2006, 2013; Grosfoguel & Martín-Muñoz, 2010; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006). Within the Australian context, such thinking spans back in time to recognise Muslims' longstanding presence and history on Australian soil long before European colonisation occurred (Ganter, 2012). Such decolonial reframing also enables a recognition of the deep connections that Muslims, too, have to the land and the meaningful relationships, trades, and other exchanges that have historically occurred between Muslims and the Indigenous populations in Australia (Charkawi, 2019; Ganter, 2008). Thus, Muslim women's intersectional grassroots activism is both sobering and progressively powerful as it builds bridges of solidarity with other people and joins forces with other minorities. Such activism also helps to name the problem, racism, and ongoing coloniality of people and bodies and therefore subverts coloniality via more than just narrative.

Recognising the Power of Activism

The women who engaged in systemic agentic activism were mostly those who had higher formal educational capital and were able to navigate the language of activism more smoothly. However, this did not mean that those with lower educational capital did not engage in such activism as some showed an agentic and resistive nature in opposition to Islamophobia in their everyday lives, as seen in Chapter 5. The nature of collective work enables anyone to be an activist. This is because solidarity building and engaging in activist projects involve activists identifying their diverse strengths in relation to their goals, valuing diverse perspectives, knowledge, and skills of each other, and utilising them in the cause. For example, not all the women contributing to the poetry slam would have higher educational capital, and not all women active in Muslim Women Australia have a university education, but they carry out valuable activist collective work, nonetheless.

Educational capital provides opportunities for the women to mobilise language against racism specifically and effectively. Thus, combining activist language with the right platforms, whether they be a spoken word platform, online platform, mainstream media platform, or scholarly platform, provides a powerful tool for social change.

It also provides a powerful tool in understanding Islamophobia from an intersectional standpoint and its impact on Muslim women as a first and vital step in preparing to fight it as knowledge is empowering. This knowledge also provides a realistic understanding of the resistive capabilities available to fight gendered Islamophobia, a phenomenon deeply embedded within the fabric of the wider Western society (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Iner, 2019; Perry, 2014) and now increasingly in other global contexts (Ç. Ali, 2020; Hassan, 2016). The recognition of Muslim women's capable positioning in relation to gendered Islamophobia is a vital element in the fight against it, as Reema explained:

> When you realise the problem is so much more bigger than just somebody yelling out to you, when you understand that, you don't blame yourself so much when things goes bad. You realise that the problem of Islamophobia is not a problem of the Muslim, their behaviour, because it doesn't matter if you're a good Muslim, bad Muslim, moderate, radical—these are false labels. Islamophobia exists independently of that. So that took a long time for me to recognise. It came through my own education about what Islamophobia is, because there were times when I didn't understand that, and I was

> really depressed about, you know, I would say things like 'Are Muslims giving Islamophobes ammunition, why are they acting like this, they know the media will sensationalise it'. When you do that, you project the problem onto your own community, and that is very disempowering because you soon realise that you're fighting an uphill battle because nothing, I mean it doesn't matter how your community acts, it's always going to be race at the core. So, once you understand it's bigger than that, then there is a feeling that I can just do whatever I can to make a change in my own circles, my own sort of—make a difference in what my agency allows me to. That for me has been the best coping mechanism. So, when I was doing my PhD, the first year I realised that it had really affected me. This was around 2015, there was a real crisis, a lot of events happened in that year. I was internalising a lot of it, I felt really down about it. But as I started to learn more, I realised actually, first of all once you understand the problem, there is a sense that I know how to address it. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

As Reema stressed, instead of internalising Islamophobia and making it the driving force for Muslims to be outstanding citizens, which is a reactive response based on fear and compliance, the various forms of activism have given Muslim women the power to choose their own narratives and destinations—and fitting into the preconceived categories of moderate and good is not necessarily their aim. With this frame of mind comes the power of refusing to engage with any debate about Muslim women and their communities' right to exist. Instead of apologising for their existence, the women are embracing a solution that refuses to accommodate self-erasure. Muslim women's activism is also more about being engaged with multiple voices in the wider community and connecting with people in beneficial ways that foster solidarity and therefore strengthen their fight against racism.

Make Your Activism God Conscious: The Role of Faith in Muslim Women's Resistance

> I definitely get a lot of my inspiration and empowerment from my *deen*. (Maryam, 34, Bangladeshi, hijab, stay-at-home mum)

In contrast to the Muslim woman as a meek victim of her faith, and concurrent with other research on Muslim women's activism in Western contexts (Keddie, 2018; McGinty,

2012; Rinaldo, 2014), many of the participants in this research said that their Muslim identity drove them, as Reema explained:

> But also, from an Islamic point of view you realise that you can't change the world. Once you realise that you don't have to take on colonialism, and imperialism, and the War on Terror, and foreign policy, and the Palestine question—that your capacity is that God is judging you on what you can do within your own reach. Once you realise that, I think that's sobering and it actually gives you a different energy. So, when I thought that the problem was about Muslims behaving badly, for example, it depressed me because I felt, 'We just got to fix ourselves' you know? But then when I realised these are problems much larger than I can ever hope to impact on, that's not a sense of defeatism, it means you're understanding the way the world is working. Then you can channel your resistance in more productive ways, and for me that's been writing books that speak to young people, exploring experiences in the grassroots of community, working in community, empowering myself and others through education. When you do that, I think, that's a really useful way of dealing with Islamophobia. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

Faith, an important and valuable part of Muslim women's identity, was part of the motivation behind their activism, and the whole point of their activism was to break down institutional and systemic issues, such as Islamophobia, into more manageable sizes that could be responded to in productive and creative ways that fostered change (Bullock, 2005; Faiza, 2021; Fazlalizadeh, 2020; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017). Simultaneously, there was recognition that not all issues could be tackled equally, and the women's faith that God was in control and did not burden people with what they could not handle brought solace to some of the women, such as Reema. Hence, empowerment emerged from faith and a belief in God, as Sarah emphasised:

> I realise that I only have two choices. I can either feel hopeless or I can have hope. These are really the only two choices that I can have. Either to feel optimistic about my future or myself or my role in society, or to feel just hopeless. I don't want to live a life that is hopeless, so I have to choose hope. So, if I choose to be hopeful about things then I act accordingly. (Sarah, 39, Anglo Australian, hijab, academic researcher)

The emphasis on hope here is vital and stemmed from the women's references to their Islamic faith that encouraged hope over despair (Tahir, 2017). Being hopeful during

periods of misfortune or hardship was perceived as a form of agentic spiritual and personal control of oneself. It equipped some of the women with a sense of agency that could help reshift the energy and focus onto more productive gendered responses. This was exemplified by Reema:

> I honestly believe that God has placed us here as, you know, the *khalifa*,[12] that it's not just a male responsibility to change the world, it's a female responsibility as well. You know, and honestly there are times I would love to just stay at home and forget what's happening around me, but my Islamic duty, my Islamic sort of role in this world prevents me from being apathetic or shutting it out, I can't. Because everything that I am enjoying comes at the expense of others. I can't just look at middle class Muslims or the experiences of Muslims in the West because that privilege that I have living in a Western society is built on the back of colonised and exploited, and continuously colonised and exploited others. So, it's not enough for me to shut that out. You can't, you have to . . . Make your activism God conscious. (Reema, 39, Palestinian Egyptian, no hijab, academic researcher)

The recognition that these Muslim women had a gendered responsibility, that they interpreted their own faith to give them both the responsibility and the power to stand up and fight for a better world, to fight for social change, and that this was a God-given responsibility given to them as women in a powerful way, was a major driving force in their activism. This was about interpreting their Islamic faith as not being male-centric, in contrast to thinking about Islam, but as a source of feminine agency. Not only does this particular finding go against the widespread stereotypes and Orientalist misrepresentations of Muslim women and Islam, it contributes to current scholarship on Muslim women in terms of their gendered agency motivated by their own faith.

Hence, faith remained a major motivation and source of solace and empowerment in the participants' drive against racist and sexist oppression, not only for themselves but for others experiencing similar oppressions both within Australia and abroad. It was their Islamic duty of being the *khalifa*, or stewardess on Earth, that offered a sense of renewal and energy during difficult times and inspired them to recognise the pain of others and stand up for their rights. The women's faith and the values generated by their beliefs

[12] Steward/stewardess or a caretaker

ensured that they would not stay impassive and silent in the face of others' oppression. In their own fight against gendered Islamophobia and the systemic structures maintaining such racism, they would also speak up and against other similar systems of oppression and raise awareness of other marginalised peoples, including the Islamophobia directed at Muslim men.

Fighting against racism here in Australia also meant to be aware and raise awareness of racism exercised in other global contexts. As such, these Muslim women's activism in opposition to Islamophobia within the Australian context also connected them to other activist causes more widely, to other marginalised groups who also continue to experience systemic racism. For these Muslim women, it was about moving forward into history together, as Sawsan stressed:

> You know what we need to do, we need to find new ways for an old country. This country is old, and it got so much heritage and so many stories. Unfortunately, we are not progressing in the way that we should be. We are not taking it and celebrating, we are literally oppressing, and the colonisation is still ongoing and that's the problem. We need to reconcile the past if we hope for a positive future. (Sawsan, 30, Palestinian Lebanese Egyptian, hijab, university master's student, activist, spoken word artist)

Conclusion

As this chapter illustrated, Muslim women engage with numerous forms of anti-Islamophobic activism through various platforms. While public self-representation focused on reclaiming the narrative and representation of Muslims from persisting stereotypes, anti-Islamophobic activism was about creating productive grassroots change within the wider community. Such forms of activism included but were not limited to the creative arts, spoken word, academia, media, and grassroots activism. Some women engaged in activism using a variety of these methods. Muslim women's grassroots activism did not stop at Muslim communities but reached out to other communities also experiencing forms of systemic, structural oppression and marginalisation. Grassroots activism enabled the Muslim women to connect to others outside Muslim communities, forming extended communities of solidarity that focused on creating productive change within the Australian context and raised awareness about needs for social change within global contexts.

A decolonial understanding of one's positioning within time and space gives a renewed energy for creative agentic power, and thus, the responses in opposition to Islamophobia may feel less emotionally arduous and more productive. As can be deduced from this and Chapter 5, Muslim women who have for a long time found themselves in the spotlight and under pressure to defend themselves and their communities from Islamophobia are now, via grassroots community and other activist efforts, reclaiming the narrative and authority. Their efforts, although for the most part emotionally arduous, are simultaneously creative, productive, and rewarding.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore via qualitative methodology the lived experiences of Muslim women in Australia and in particular their experiences of and response to racism and other forms of discrimination and prejudice. Complementing and expanding other research on Muslim experiences in Western contexts, this research shows that Muslim women are racialised and as a result experience Islamophobia (anti-Muslim racism), which intersects with sexism, through lived experiences in their daily lives (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Perry, 2014). Muslim women who are more visible via their dress, other exhibited markers of their faith, or by outing themselves as Muslim are most vulnerable to Islamophobic targeting. Within the Australian context, because the majority (72%) of Islamophobia victims are women, while the majority (71%) of Islamophobic perpetrators are men, Muslim women's experiences of Islamophobia are frequently gendered (Iner, 2019); that is, they experience Islamophobia as Muslim *women*, not simply as Muslims. They are targeted specifically because they are *Muslim women*, and therefore, Australian Muslim women experience Islamophobia in gendered ways that are very different to Muslim men (Bakali & Soubani, 2021; Perry, 2014). Some of the ways Muslim women have experienced racism range from physical attacks, verbal abuse, racist commentaries, silencing them in public spaces, to other incivilities.

Also, in line with recent studies on Muslim women in other places, the findings show that Australian Muslim women respond to and often resist gendered Islamophobia in creative and agentic ways (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Faiza, 2021; Keddie, 2017, 2018). In contrast to the persistent stereotypes marking Islam as oppressive towards Muslim women, the women in this study found great motivation and empowerment from their faith as they stood up to racism and sexism. Despite the potential challenges emerging for more visibly Muslim women, many of the participants in this study chose to be visibly Muslim through traditional Islamic dress codes. While this study did not explore other reasons for choosing to adhere to traditional dress codes beyond faith-based motivation, future research can

delve deeper into this topic and explore the different motivations for wearing the hijab, and how these motivations impact on Muslim women's experiences in Australia. Further, as I have demonstrated, they also formed solidarity with other marginalised and vulnerable communities in a communal effort against racism and sexism. In their efforts in doing so, they also expended emotional energy in the form of emotional labour to manage the thoughts and feelings of those in their wider public in order to change public perceptions of themselves and their communities and to mitigate potential gendered Islamophobia against themselves and other women (and men).

My findings provide a rich and nuanced qualitative understanding of Muslim women's experiences in Australia. Most importantly, they provide insights into Australian Muslim women's contemporary activism against gendered Islamophobia. Significantly, the thesis offers an account of intersectional grassroots efforts where people from diverse backgrounds, especially marginalised and vulnerable people, together exert a collectivist effort that aims to resist intersectional discrimination. The insight provided into Muslim women's lived experiences of agentic responses to racist discrimination can be utilised to further explore and initiate in creative ways different grassroots efforts of marginalised communities experiencing racism or other forms of discrimination. Moreover, this research contributes to existing scholarship on Muslims in the West. In particular, it adds detailed insights on Muslim women's lived experiences to the emerging but as yet limited scholarship on Muslim women's experiences of and responses to gendered Islamophobia. Finally, this research has potential to contribute to a growing body of literature that can provide the Australian Government, and perhaps other governments, with an understanding of the deep impact on Muslim women in particular and all people in general of Orientalist racist representations. Hence, it offers an opportunity for Western governments to reconsider discriminatory dominant narratives that target in Orientalist ways Muslim women and the Muslim community at large. Such narratives include that of multiculturalism, which is revealed to be a White nation fantasy that serves to misrecognise the actual lived experiences of multicultural peoples in Australia. Frequently, these experiences are not of multicultural harmony but of exclusion and discrimination. The findings in this research can help future policymakers to implement realistic social change policies that are sensitive to the lived experiences of multicultural and in particular multifaith peoples of Australia. Currently, multicultural affairs in Australia is the

responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs, and is framed in terms of social cohesion and countering violent extremism (CVE), where social cohesion is heavily dependent on CVE measures (*Countering violent extremism*, 2022; Love, 2021). As this thesis has shown in the previous chapters, CVE measures in themselves are inherently racist with Orientalist underpinnings of the Muslim Other, in particular targeting Islam via its visible symbol – the Muslim woman. While national security is indeed vital to the wellbeing of Australia, the language and ideologies shaping our multicultural policies remain tinted with inherent racist assumptions. These assumptions in return fuel media, public, and parliamentarian discourse in ways that continuously situate Australian Muslim as the Other in need of some sort of governmental intervention to reduce or prevent their assumed threat to the national social cohesion. This research has shown numerous examples of how Muslim women are othered and removed from governmental belonging within a national space that in theory celebrates multiculturalism. As Philomena Essed emphasised, everyday racist expressions are dependent and fuelled by governmental discourse and policies. Therefore, for Australia, as well as other Western governments, to proceed towards effective multiculturalism, the Australia government as well as other Western governments must rid themselves of policies underpinned by racist and Orientalist assumptions. It must also embrace different faiths as positive contribution to real multiculturalism, and not associate any one faith group with extremism. Other future policies around social cohesion, harmony, and gender equity should focus on empowering Muslim women by appreciating their unique intersectional differences and being attentive to diversity in person-centred ways.

Belonging and the Emotional Burden of Gendered Islamophobia

Muslim women are often more visibly Muslim than Muslim men. Mostly, this is due to their dress, which marks their bodies as Muslim via clothing such as the hijab, jilbab, or niqab. However, not all Muslim women are visible via their dress. Some are visibly Muslim due to other exhibited markers that signify their Muslim identity, such as stereotypical Muslim names or through self-declaration of their faith in other ways. Any form of visibility impacts Muslim women, rendering them vulnerable to gendered Islamophobia; however, visibility via their dress especially makes them vulnerable to this form of gendered racism. As the findings indicate, it is the persistent hegemonic misrepresentations, negative meanings, emotions, and stereotypes associated with Muslim women's dress that trigger

Islamophobic targeting. This in return impacts significantly on their identity formation, as Muslim women in response to such negative representations, continuously engage in shaping and reshaping their identities in counterresponse to experienced racism. As I argued throughout this thesis, one response to this targeting is the practice of emotional labour, whereby Muslim women take it upon themselves to manage both the perpetrator of Islamophobia and their own response to it, while often exhibiting a Muslimah excellence.

It is also important to note here, as suggested in the beginning of Chapter 4, that Muslim women who were not visibly Muslim in this study usually experienced Islamophobia in different ways and contexts compared to visibly Muslim women. Most often, their experiences of Islamophobia occurred on social media platforms and within professional work contexts in which they witnessed Islamophobia directed at other Muslims, as demonstrated by the experiences of Sana and Anita in Chapter 4. The findings from this research show that while the women had the opportunity to withhold declaring themselves as Muslim during such Islamophobic situations, they chose to out themselves and speak up in most situations in defence of the other Muslim victims. In comparison to Muslim women who were less visibly Muslim, those who were more visibly Muslim did experience gendered Islamophobia in embodied ways in their everyday lives, as detailed in both discussion chapters.

Because visibility renders Muslim women more vulnerable to gendered Islamophobia, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, those women such as Bella and Iman, who were more visible due to their dress, were quite aware of their embodied difference and visibility and therefore navigated the wider social context accordingly. Despite this vulnerability, the women in this study showed great empowerment and determination in persisting with exhibiting their visible Muslim identity via their dress, in the face of contemporary misrepresentations even if that meant hypervigilance and careful manoeuvring across suburbs. As my research demonstrates, Muslim women normalise Islamophobia in their 'mental maps' of Islamophobia and they navigate the wider society with hypervigilance in geographical areas with Muslim minority populations, such as northern and eastern suburbs as well as in places outside of Sydney. Some women, such as Bella, said she tried to avoid these places altogether, and those who did venture into those areas were often suspicious of how the public perceive them, and as a result, they observed the public for any signs of potential Islamophobia.

This hypervigilance and unease in certain areas was not a uniform experience across the women participants in this study, as the findings across the two discussion chapters showed, because their experiences of gendered Islamophobia were very much impacted by their intersectional positioning. Age, class, ethnoculture, and educational capital seemed to play a large role in the Muslim women's experiences of gendered Islamophobia and in their responses to it. Muslim women of colour who are younger, first-generation immigrants to Australia, and visibly Muslim, are more uncomfortable with their hypervisibility in such areas and feel more out of place. Some of the women in my study, like Asma, Iman, and Bella told me they scanned the public for signs of potential Islamophobia instead of fully enjoying their outing. In contrast, as detailed by Linda in the same chapter, Muslim women of Anglo Australian background, who tended to be older as well as having more education capital, were able to more easily brush off their feelings of discomfort in such places, believing that the public, even if potentially Islamophobic, would just become used to their visible presence and get over it. This difference in the Muslim women's responses signals that some Muslim women are better placed to practise governmental belonging in contrast to others who only experience belonging in a passive way within a multicultural Australian context (G. Hage, 2000).

The challenge of self-representation that results from being the visible embodiment of Islam and the Muslim community was translated into various forms of responses by these Australian Muslim women. Emotional management of gendered Islamophobia via smiles, laughter, silence, and other forms of self-policing were used to mitigate their situations. These responses were emotionally arduous as the women were navigating places of education, work, and leisure. Some were forced into silence rather than self-expression and contribution as Muslims within such spaces, as demonstrated by Hana's experience in her workplace around Eid time. Others' experiences, like Nida's with her university professor, chose silence as a response to imbalanced power relationships to ensure their wellbeing and not cause Islamophobia from occurring or escalating. Furthermore, smiles and laughter were frequently used by the women to mitigate potential Islamophobic situations to either de-escalate the situation or to render the perpetrator insignificant. Additionally, self-policing was increasingly used by some of the women while navigating the wider Australian public to ensure that they always portrayed an exceptional image of Islam and Muslims (Muslimah excellence) to the public. This is an immense burden for a woman to carry on her

shoulders daily. Despite the burden and the emotional labour involved, there is great evidence of agency and power behind these women's responses as it takes agency, courage, and personal strength to smile in the face of gendered racist threat.

Muslim Women as Their Own Defenders

While the challenge of representation due to being the visible face of Islam made some women feel the pressure to self-police in public, other women felt the need to self-represent and educate the wider public on Muslim women's experiences and their faith. Many felt the pressure to speak on Muslim issues due to persistent stereotypes about Muslim women in the public. Thus, speaking up and presenting an alternative image and information about Muslim women's lived experiences were seen as necessary to combat gendered Islamophobia in public, which was concurrent with emerging research on Muslim women in Western societies, as I discussed in Chapter 5.

Particularly significant in the findings from this research is that outreach to the wider public in the form of intercultural understanding was both powerful and agentic despite the emotional labour involved. By self-representing and engaging in informative communication and connection with non-Muslim colleagues, neighbours, and others in the wider public, these women engaged in a discursive practice that served to humanise their Muslim identity and dismantle many of the persisting stereotypes held about Muslim women. These engagements were not always an easy task, nor always initiated by the women themselves, as questions and remarks from an ignorant public also initiated such responses from the women. Regardless of the prompting for such responses, such intercultural connections seemed an important element in the individual women's efforts against gendered Islamophobia in their everyday lives. In such daily conversations and connections, the women hacked away at persistent Islamophobic stereotypes, dismantling them slowly through alternative representations and narratives, one conversation at a time.

Some other Muslim women used the power of words in the form of spoken word and poetry activism against Islamophobia. Recognising the power of poetry slams and spoken word, some women were strongly involved in contributing an alternative representation of Muslim women's experiences to the public. Via spoken word platforms and in particular Bankstown Poetry Slam, the Muslim women were able to share their intersectional experiences of gendered Islamophobia as well as connect with a wide range

of diverse peoples from other marginalised and vulnerable communities in their activist efforts to oppose discrimination. The intersectional solidarity and alliances formed with other marginalised and vulnerable groups in the common struggle against discrimination indicates the power of words and how creative expressions can connect people in powerful ways for social change.

Resistance to Islamophobia was also expressed via academic and media platforms by Muslim women scholars. These women, who were engaged in research pertaining to Muslim women's experiences, used such platforms to disseminate their findings and engage in intellectual conversation with the wider public on the many issues associated with Muslim women, Islam, and Muslim communities. Interestingly, gendered Islamophobia was expressed most violently against a Muslim woman academic who received all sorts of abuse including harassment, hate mail, verbal abuse, media misrepresentation, and death threats to mention a few.

Intersectional positioning played a role in these experiences within academic spaces, indicating that Muslim women experience a double jeopardy in such spaces targeted by sexism and racism, expressed in both structural and systemic ways within their institutions and in everyday ways in public. The women expressed great frustration over the gendered racist targeting of their academic work and position and found this form of targeting to be a more painful form of racist experience compared to gendered Islamophobic experiences in other public settings. Despite the frequent abuse and death threats received, the women persisted with their academic work, publishing their research and continuing to engage with the wider public intellectually.

Many of the women in this study involved in activist efforts were also specifically involved in grassroots initiatives that focused on intersectional solidarity against racism and sexism with other marginalised groups and vulnerable people. This is a significant insight into Muslim women's lived responses to gendered Islamophobia. Such efforts expanded the fight against gendered racism to include the fight against racism and sexism of other vulnerable groups in ways that may be construed as a decolonising of the self of existing Eurocentric views and representations in an effort to contextualise discrimination and oppression within a wider colonial context. Furthermore, recognising that they were benefiting in privileged ways from a colonised and stolen land, these Muslim women's grassroots initiatives also include activist efforts with Australian Indigenous communities.

These initiatives were not just about dismantling stereotypes and negative narratives about Muslim women and other oppressed groups. They sought to drive social change by dismantling racist oppression via meaningful connections to other groups, forming a multicultural solidarity. Their motivation was God conscious, as Reema mentioned in Chapter 5 when explaining how faith motivated her to continue with her activist work and not give up. Empowered by faith, they were striving today for a better tomorrow even if they were not going to harvest the fruits of their labour. This powerful finding is starkly opposite to the stereotype of a meek Muslim woman oppressed by her faith and menfolk, or the potentially threatening and problematic Muslim woman. These women were their own defenders, striving for a better Australia for all.

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