MUSLIMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: SETTLEMENT, FAMILY LIFE AND PARENTING

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Western Australia

Discipline of Social Work and Social Policy
School of Population Health
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

and

Centre for Muslim States and Societies
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts

2015

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

I acknowledge with thanks the proof reading assistance from Eris Jane Harrison, *Effective Editing*, in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice developed by the Institute of Professional Editors.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Granddaughter, Annabel Grace, whose recent arrival has filled my heart with great joy. I hope that this thesis will contribute towards a better world for you and for all of us.
ABSTRACT

This research involved the interviewing of 31 self-identified Muslims who settled in Australia by various means. It explores some of the challenges they faced during settlement and the ways these challenges affected them and their families. The research also considers the role of acculturation on their adjustment to family life and expected parenting practices in Australia, some of the child-rearing strategies they use, and where or to whom they turn for help when needed.

Findings suggest that, in spite of their difficult and often dangerous refugee journey and long wait for reunification, settlement experiences for families who arrived in Australia as refugees appear to improve significantly once they are reunited with their families. Settlement experiences for families arriving under other visa categories appear to be less challenging and difficult, as most migrants in this category bring with them skills that are sought in Australia and have the resources and skills that allow them to find employment and housing.

The way in which Muslim families and individuals address challenges associated with settlement is also discussed in relation to the concepts of resilience, acculturation and identity formation. Findings in relation to the role of acculturation and identity formation appear to support the presence of a number of factors that contribute to families’ developing a strong and balanced sense of identity and of belonging to Australia. Muslim families’ parenting styles, values and practices are analysed in terms of the influence of different experiences and factors, such as their cultural and ethnic background and family of origin experiences.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with pleasure that I acknowledge the help and support of the following people during the period of study for this thesis: Associate Professor Maria Harries; Dr. Susan Young; and Professor Samina Yasmeen. My special thanks go to Associate Professor Maria Harries, who has been a tremendous mentor for me. I would like to thank you for encouraging my research and for allowing me to grow as a researcher.

A special thanks also to my wife Maria de Jesus, my children, Eduardo Luis and Susana Maria, and my son-in-law, Adam Matthew. Words cannot express the gratitude for their patience, support and encouragement. Last, but not least, I would like to thank all those who generously gave their time to participate in this research.
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PROLOGUE

One afternoon some two years ago, I caught a taxi back to work at the end of a meeting. It was peak hour, and the journey back to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) head office was longer than expected. The taxi driver, whom I shall name Ahmad, was a Muslim man from Middle Eastern background with a strong accent but a good command of the English language. As often happens during a taxi journey, casual conversation begins with a comment about the weather or a question about your occupation. As can be imagined, revealing that you work for CPFS can lead either to an awkward silence, or to a passionate discussion about child protection and its challenges. Luckily, sharing your work address with the Department of Health provides an easy excuse for a harmless little white lie … “Ah! Yes. I work for the Department of Health,” I replied.

The stratagem worked well, and soon enough, after a brief comment about some of his health complaints (a result of past injuries suffered during armed conflict in his country of origin), Ahmad told me how he and his family had ended up in Australia. His was a touching, and at times sad, story of struggle and survival. Ahmad told me of his difficulties in adjusting to the new life in Australia: the suburban lifestyle, where next-door neighbours seldom engage with each other; the concerns about his children and their future; and the longing for his home country. He had decided to return, with the help of an Australian Government incentive available at the time. Ahmad told me about the plans to set up his own business and to return to the communal lifestyle he missed so much.

I listened attentively to Ahmad’s narrative, which I thought was truthful and heartfelt. As I left his cab at the end of the trip, I wished him well for the future; I certainly hope that his dreams have all come to fruition. It was one of those moments where I wished that I could have simply invited him to participate in
this research in order to record his journey. With this thesis, I am hoping to share my own research journey and the stories of those who, like Ahmad, passionately shared their personal narratives and journeys with me.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES CREATING RESEARCH

My interest in doing research in the field of multicultural studies has been consistent since the end of 1993, when I completed my Social Work degree at Curtin University, Western Australia (WA). I started my professional work with CPFS in June 1994 as a child protection worker. This was my introduction to what I consider one of social work’s most challenging and demanding roles. Workers in the child protection (CP) statutory field often confront complex situations involving families and children from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Regrettably, reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare\(^1\) do not capture the data on the number of CP cases involving families and children of Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds. CPFS provides clear evidence that the number of CP cases involving CaLD families and young people are on the increase in WA, through its CaLD Services Framework:

> The growth in diversity across the community and particularly families from refugee communities has resulted in an increase in the number of people from CaLD backgrounds coming into contact with the Department ... Increased demand for services is pronounced for metropolitan districts with a high CaLD population such as Mirrabooka, where intervention with the CaLD (predominantly the African and Sudanese community) accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the district front-end workload. (Department for Child Protection and Family Support 2013, p. 3)

In her review of Australian CP research, Kaur (2012) notes the significant growth in Australia’s cultural, religious and linguistic diversity since the years of the Second World War through overseas migration and argues that:

> Child Protection authorities need to understand this shift in Australian population demographics, as families and children that come to the attention of the child protection system (CPS) will increasingly be from culturally,

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\(^1\) The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is the Australian Federal government body responsible for reporting on the Australian child protection system.
linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds and to ensure that the delivery of child protection services is culturally responsive to the needs of CALD and refugee communities. (Kaur 2012, p. 9)

Recent numbers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 census substantiate the significant growth in cultural and ethnic diversity across all Australian states and territories. Using these statistics, the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) in Western Australia highlights the evidence that makes WA one of the most culturally diverse states in Australia:

WA is a state of migrants. Almost one-third (31%) of Western Australians were born overseas (compared with 27% in 2006) and more than half (56%) were Australian citizens. More than half (52%) had at least one parent born overseas (48% in 2006) and three-quarters (75%) identified that they had a non-Australian ancestry (51% in 2006). In addition to English, 15% of the population spoke a language other than English at home (11% in 2006). (Office of Multicultural Interests 2013)

My first major research project, a Master of Social Work (MSW) by research degree at Curtin University, Western Australia, was completed in December 2000. This research looked into how CPFS child protection workers considered cultural issues when investigating or assessing cases involving parents from CaLD backgrounds. My interest in research continued during my employment with CPFS, with a major research project on the prevalence of substance abuse in care and protection applications (Farate 2001). I decided to undertake further research work in 2006, at the time I left my position as a counsellor and consultant at the Family Court of Western Australia (FCWA) and started working in my current cultural diversity policy position at CPFS.

My time at the FCWA gave me the opportunity to work with a number of parents and children from ethnic minority groups, including those who follow Islam. Relationship breakdown, including issues of family and domestic

2 The term ‘ethnic minority’ is used concurrently with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) throughout the document and has the same meaning.
violence (FDV) are the factors more likely to contribute to Family Court litigation. The safety of children is often under the spotlight in cases where FDV is present. Invariably, I noticed that cases involving Muslim families, both at CPFS and the FCWA, seemed to create some degree of apprehension among various professionals. This normally resulted in discussions about the best way to deal with some of the religious aspects related to marital relationships, parenting, children and parents’ rights, or custody.

While these discussions generally contributed to improved case outcomes, I was intrigued with what I considered hesitance or uncertainty among various professionals on how to best provide services to this particular minority group. Muslim families have a long history of contact with, and settlement in, Australia, particularly in Western Australia. In her book, *Islam Dreaming*, Stephenson (2010) notes the trade that took place between ‘Makassan’ (Indonesian) fishermen and Aboriginal communities in Australian pre-colonial and early colonial eras (pp. 23-24). She further notes how these Makassan left their mark, not only on Aboriginal and social institutions, but also “… on their religious and spiritual practices” (p. 26).

Jones (1993, pp. 31-32), Stephens (1993, pp. 49-52) and Stephenson (2010) report that permanent Muslim settlement in Australia started during early colonial settlement years, particularly across the northern part of Australia, later spreading across other parts of the country. These early Muslim settlers were mostly Afghan cameleers who had a critical role in supporting the initial exploration and settlement of the Australian continent by England, particularly from the 1860s to the 1920s (Stephenson 2010, p. 33). The settlement of people from non-European backgrounds was restricted until 1947 by the 1901 White Australia policy, with Australia’s population composed mainly of people of British and Irish origin (Bouma 1997, p. 71). However, Saeed (2004, p. 7) notes that some Muslims of Albanian extraction were accepted during the pre-1947 period because of their “lighter European complexion, which was more
compatible with the White Australia policy”. Bouma further notes that “in the census conducted in that year, 88% of Australians identified with a Christian religious group and only 0.5% with a non-Christian group” (Bouma 1997, p. 71).

This situation changed significantly in the 1947 post-world war period, which saw the gradual loosening of the ‘White Australia’ policy over a period of 25 years, culminating with the abolition of this policy in March 1966 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014b). Bouma (1997) and Saeed (2004) note that this change in policy was due to the need for population growth and the economic development of Australia, and that it is during this period that an increasing number of displaced Muslims from diverse backgrounds settled in Australia. Highlighting the cultural and ethnic diversity across the Australian Muslim community, Saeed reports that, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, Muslims from more than 60 countries had settled in Australia (Saeed 2004, p. 7). He notes that, while a very large number of them had arrived from Turkey and Lebanon, Australia was home to Muslims from Indonesia, Bosnia, Iran, Fiji, Albania, Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, among others (p. 7). ABS statistics show the significant growth in the number of Australians who follow Islam in the past 20 years—from 147,487 in 1991 to 281,578 in 2001 and 476,300 in 2011.

Given this rich and long-term history of Muslim settlement in Australia, the significant increase in the number of Muslims calling Australia home, and Australian-born Muslims, I expected that maybe professionals in the human services area should by now be better equipped to deal with people from this faith. These observations influenced my decision to examine the effects of settlement and life in a Western liberal society on Muslim families, particularly on parenting and family relationships. When choosing a topic, researchers take into consideration many different factors. My choices on what topic to research take into consideration, inter alia, three key factors: relevance to the profession; potential contribution to improvements in service delivery and policy
development; and study viability. An additional factor in this study is the desire, and hope, that it will contribute to the development of more understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

My argument is that we should all strive to learn from one another, and that openness, sharing and collaboration are key ingredients to achieving social cohesion. Therefore, the study of factors affecting Muslim families’ settlement in Western Australia, and how government and non-government services can best cater for these families, became my main area of interest, and central to the research questions. Five years after having completed my MSW, I felt ready to embark on a new research journey. The next steps would be further exploring current research and discourse on this topic and sharing my vision with the appropriate people within academia.

1.2 INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THE TOPIC

My initial plans to focus on Family Court cases involving people from Muslim backgrounds, and ways the Court dealt with those cases, presented some challenges. The main one is that the Family Court does not collect data on the ethnic, linguistic or religious background of applicants and respondents. In spite of formal plans to implement the collection of this data in 2004 (Family Court of Australia 2004), the situation remains unchanged, with only Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status collected by the FCWA. This would make the search of Court cases involving people from Muslim backgrounds extremely difficult and time consuming. Discussions with some of my colleagues and the judiciary at the FCWA assisted in initial planning on what specific aspects of the topic I would study, and what the research question would be. Of particular helpfulness were the discussions with the Court librarian, who helped me search relevant literature on the topic and advised me on how to search relevant case law.
On further reflection, however, I decided that focusing data collection specifically on FCWA cases would limit the research to mostly negative aspects of family relationships and/or parenting. While the study’s findings could eventually contribute to improvements in the way the Court deals with Muslim litigants, I thought that rather than looking into what made Muslim families fall apart, a better option would be exploring how they manage their lives and, in particular family relationships and parenting in a secular Western society.

1.2.1 Resettlement: the Challenges

Research shows that settlement in a new country and social environment requires varying degrees of adjustment for ethnic minority families moving across cultures. Findings from contemporary research on the topic of immigration and settlement reveal that settlement experiences, and the factors affecting families or individuals resettling in a new social and political environment, are shared across several ethnic minority groups. This is evidenced in the Samers (2010) and O’Neill (2010) studies on international migration, and the asylum-migration nexus, and in Jacob’s (2011) study on Australian migration. Similar evidence is also to be found in reports prepared for the Australian Government, such as that by Pe-Pua et al. (2010), or those initiated by local multicultural organisations in Western Australia (Allotey 1996; Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia 2004; Jurak 2005). As Samers stresses when describing the difficulties or barriers faced by migrants seeking acceptance in the resettlement country:

Migrants are also plagued by problems that impact on their substantive citizenship. Substantive citizenship can be understood as the issues that concern the daily lives of immigrants: matters of family, finding an adequate place to live and work, choosing decent and appropriate schools, participating in relevant organizations and events, the problems of finding quality legal advice, and accessing health care. These challenges are exacerbated on a daily basis by racism or expectations of certain kinds of cultural behaviour, often generated by a variety of state-based organizations, or citizens, and even other migrants. (Samers 2010, p. 35)
Some of these factors, for which satisfactory resolution may determine settlement outcome, are multifaceted and may be compounded by language barriers, difficulties in acculturating to the host society, lack of appropriate resettlement services, social isolation, lack of family support, discrimination or health issues.

For religious families, settlement in a secular, Western liberal society is likely to present additional challenges, given the underlying expectation of adherence to religious precepts, values and practices. For migrants of Muslim background resettling in Western countries, the rise in Islamophobia, and Muslimophobia pose added challenges to their settlement process, and everyday life as a result of the racism they are exposed to (Cheng 2015; Abbas 2011; Kunst et al. 2012). Abbas and Cheng both note that the rise in Islamophobia, and Muslimophobia, led to the racialisation of Islam. In her article on the presence, and effect of Islamophobia and Muslimophobia in Swiss parliamentary discourse, Cheng notes that “In these Muslimophobia-as-racism discourses, Muslimophobia stands alone without Islamophobia, since Muslims’ skin colour and willingness to integrate has nothing to do with Islam” (p. 574).

As Grillo notes in relation to migrant and refugee issues in the European Union, the analysis of factors affecting lives of migrant, transnational families have become more complex in recent times because of the “growing significance of global and transnational influences, and the multiplicity and range of voices involved” (Grillo 2008, p. 22). He stresses that in this context, and given the ever-increasing number of migrants and refugees originating from outside Europe, there must be clarity brought into the debate on migrant families. Grillo considers that the question of culture, of which religion is a component, is “at the heart of both the particular issue of the migrant family and the broader issue of immigrant integration in general” (p. 32).
Current research shows that Muslim families resettling in Western countries may nevertheless experience added challenges, such as that generated by the current public and political discourse on Islamic terrorism. In her study of Muslim families in Austria, Stepien (2008) notes that, in spite of official recognition and acceptance of Muslims in that country, the negative public discourse from populist right-wing politicians and the implementation of “exclusionist legal regulations” (p. 181) creates an environment where even Austrian-born Muslims continue to be seen as immigrants. Stepien finds that this leads to a situation where some Muslim families may feel excluded from mainstream society, and resort to an increased focus on the family unit:

This further influences the possibilities of contact and exchange with ‘Austrian’ families, giving a lot of space to create and maintain mutual concepts which do not always meet with the given reality. This imagined space consequently feeds, and is fed by, amongst other things, the idea of family as the mainstay of life. Thus, the Muslim family with its values and rules of universal and also imaginative character is accorded high priority. (Stepien 2008, p. 181)

Findings of research by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010), who researched the settlement experiences of Middle Eastern Muslim asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, and Pels (2000), who conducted a study on the settlement of Moroccan Muslim families in the Netherlands, highlight the significant challenges faced in particular by Muslim asylum seekers. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh note that: “The absence of particular family structures and externally-provided cultural and religious reference-points surfaced as central concerns for interviewees facing a series of challenges in their immediate and broader hosting environments” (2010, p. 310). Also, reporting on their study of South Asian Muslim mothers living in the United States, Ross-Sheriff, Tirmazi and Walsh (2007) find that all the mothers had experienced challenges protecting their daughters from the “negative forces” in U.S. society. They also struggled to maintain their daughters’ knowledge of Islam and were fearful about their daughters’ safety since September 11 (pp. 206-207).
The method of immigration, and the journey undertaken in that process, is an important factor that also influences the resettlement experience, and even its outcome. Choice of destination country may not have been afforded or available for some of the people who arrived in Australia under the humanitarian program or as asylum seekers, and, as a result, Australia may not have been their preferred option (Jacobs 2011; O'Neill 2010; Samers 2010). This view is also supported by the findings of research on factors affecting asylum seeker choice of destination undertaken by Spinks (2013) for the Australian Parliament. In her research, Spinks notes that these “choices” of destination (emphasis by the author) are very limited, and “constrained by factors such as geography, finances, available travel routes (for example flights, accessible land borders), visa options, and the networks and routes used by people smugglers” (p. 8).

Australian author Keith Jacobs (2011) provides a condensed but striking description of this process when he writes:

> Clearly there is an affective dimension to migration, particularly when the move from one space to another is enacted in a very short space of time. In general, the physical journeys precipitated by migration involve significant emotional upheaval, particularly for refugees who are forced to experience acute hardship on their voyages. From a psychological perspective, the emotions generated by migration are significant both before and after the physical act itself. (Jacobs 2011, p. 22)

Unfortunately, people who arrive in many countries through the asylum seeking process are facing increasingly restrictive and often punitive immigration policies. Examples of the complex web of policies affecting the lives of often desperate asylum seekers are highlighted by Samers (2010) and Power (2014). While the Australian Federal Government claims success with its Operation Sovereign Borders (Morrison 2014), Power stresses that such harsh measures are unlikely to resolve the asylum seeker or people smuggling issue in the long run. Focusing on the asylum issues in Australia, Power argues that:
The current issues facing Australia will not disappear until governments in Asia-Pacific begin to realise that collectively they have much more to gain by working together on a regional approach to refugee protection than by trying unilaterally to turn their backs on those in need. (Power 2014, p. 3)

In his seminal work on the ecology of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlights the effect of public policy on the wellbeing and development of human beings because of the way in which public policy determines the conditions of their lives. Given these policies’ significant long-term effect on the people they directly affect, particularly on recently arrived asylum seekers, Australia’s current immigration policies prove Bronfenbrenner’s argument. This is particularly the case with policies of mandatory detention of asylum seekers (including children), the restrictions on family reunion for all people who arrived in Australia by boat from August 2012, and the granting of temporary protection or humanitarian concern visas to those people who are released into the community (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014c; Refugee and Immigration Legal Service 2013). These are measures that, apart from barring people, including unaccompanied minors, from applying for family reunion, also create a deep sense of insecurity, potentially leading to despondency and a cycle of poverty (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013; Australian Human Rights Commission 2014). Adding to this state of affairs are limitations placed on access to services, employment, or welfare benefits for asylum seekers in this cohort, and the challenges faced by settlement service providers across Australia due to the current tight fiscal environment (Settlement Council of Australia 2014). As I will discuss within the next section, apart from the negative mental health effects these policies have on people already in a precarious and vulnerable situation, they are also likely to affect their ability to develop a healthy sense of identity and of belonging to Australia in the long term.
1.2.2 Identity and Acculturation

In sum, what one must analyze in order to understand the relationship between culture and identity is not so much the dominant values of a culture, or “everything” that has meaning in the culture; rather, one needs to understand the tool kit of resources available to different members of the culture and how skilful various members are in constructing and completing strategies of actions that achieve certain ends (or identities) for them. (Cote 2002, p. 141)

Peoples’ experiences through life and within their family of origin powerfully influence and shape their identity and way of life (Kroger 2002, p. 86). Social and political systems—secular or religious, democratic or authoritarian—and the factors that lead people to migrate or seek refuge overseas, such as looking for a better life, safety for self or family, family reunion, or economic issues, are other key factors in their decision making process. Research on this topic, such as the work done by Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle (2010) or Choudhry (2010), shows that these factors, and the unavoidable emotional and psychological aspects linked to migration, play a vital role in the ensuing settlement process.

In his critique of sociological and psychological schools of thought on identity formation, Cote (2002) argues that the role of “incremental” and “monumental” changes that occur as a person constructs “these domains of identity” cannot be seen individually. He stresses that:

This distinction is useful in understanding ethnic differences in national and cultural identity, inasmuch as members of a majority group seem more likely to experience incremental change in their cultural identity, whereas those from minority groups seem more likely to experience monumental, or massive, change in self-definition because of the salience of these issues for them as they attempt to formulate a viable adult identity in the face of prejudice and discrimination. (Cote 2002, p. 68)

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3 Cote describes “incremental” views on human identity formation as based on sociology’s school of thought that sees human identity formation as a gradual process which takes place as a person grows up in a particular culture or country. On the other hand, developmental psychologists argue that a person’s identity is shaped by periods of “monumental” change, in particular during adolescence. These periods of change are characterised by relatively rapid changes during those formative years.
When these theories on human identity development are applied to the immigration process, it can be argued that changes experienced by immigrants during resettlement will trigger a process of “monumental” changes. During this process, immigrants adjust to life in the new country, developing a new sense of identity, while still holding on to their native cultural identity. This view of identity as an evolving and adaptive process is consistent with that of Brah (2007), who states that:

Identity is not an already given thing but rather it is a process. It is not something fixed that we carry around with ourselves like a piece of luggage. Rather, it is constituted and changes with changing contexts. It is articulated and expressed through identifications within and across different discourses. (Brah 2007, p. 143)

The effect of receiving countries’ settlement policies on immigrants’ identity formation is also significant. In her analysis of immigrant settlement in France and Germany, Kastoryano (2002, p. 4) stresses ways in which the relationship between states and their immigrants are “becoming more complex and remote from traditional representations”. She argues that this is happening as nation states move from traditional discourses and policies of national unity towards a pragmatic approach to the needs of ethnic community groups. Kastoryano points out that, as a result of this evolving relationship, nation states are now engaging in what she describes as a new stage of “negotiation of identities”, stressing, however, that issues of social exclusion need to be addressed:

The issue for states is negotiating the ways and means of including descendants of immigrants into the political community. The issue for individuals or groups formed into communities is to struggle against every form of exclusion, political, economic, social, and/or cultural. (Kastoryano 2002, p. 4)

A critical factor in this negotiation process between immigrants and the nation state is the quest for citizenship, which at its core encompasses the idea of belonging (Ilcan 2002, p. 62). In countries such as Australia, citizenship presumes the immigrant’s acceptance of the laws of the land and an unwavering commitment to the Commonwealth of Australia and its principles.
Kastoryano sees this commitment to citizenship as an initial, crucial step towards the shaping of “an identity of a citizen” (Kastoryano 2002, p. 8). From this statement, it may then be assumed that any policies or actions that create obstacles to the settlement process, or lead to an individual’s exclusion from mainstream society or basic human rights during the settlement process, may undermine that individual’s development of a healthy sense of identity and of belonging to the resettlement country. As Ilcan (2002, p. 8) cautions: “Settlements are sites of difference that may be uprooted by political and cultural struggles initiated by their own inhabitants”.

Ersanilli and Saharso’s research on the settlement of children of Turkish immigrants in Germany, France and the Netherlands (2011) did not find a clear correlation between Turkish children’s identification with their countries of residence and those countries’ different citizenship policies. They conclude that, more than the effects of those policies, children’s weak identification with those countries resulted from experiences of racism, exclusion, and also the result of self-exclusion:

Although a civic conception of citizenship is reflected in policies, everyday reality reflects a “thicker” notion of citizenship, which does not include people of a different ethnic origin, especially if they have a different skin color or religion ... We found our respondents’ weak identification with the settlement country to be a result of exclusion – at the policy and the settlement society level – but also of self-exclusion. (Ersanilli & Saharso 2011, p. 931)

Another process that influences settlement outcomes is that of acculturation. In their influential study, Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) define acculturation as including “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). Research shows that the interplay between the processes of
acculturation\textsuperscript{4} and settlement (or resettlement) for ethnic minority families in host countries is complex and has broad implications for family functioning and dynamics. This is supported by the findings of Marín and Gamba’s review of the literature on this topic (2003) and the research of Santisteban and Mitrani (2003) and Stuart et al. (2010). The last studied the settlement of refugee families in New Zealand and find that, in contrast with other studies that assume a deficit perspective and highlight conflict in immigrant families, “migrant families bring a range of strengths to the acculturation process”, particularly in what concerns the supportive function of the family unit (Stuart et al. 2010, p. 125). These findings seem to support the development of immigration policies that favour family reunification, a move that should particularly favour the settlement of people originating from collectivist societies (Berry 2007, p. 70, p. 80).

Collie et al. (2009), and Ross-Sheriff, Tirmazi and Walsh (2007) report on the challenges faced by immigrant families during the acculturation period. Common themes across their reports are families and parents’ efforts to hold on to their traditional cultural values and norms, and their ethnic identities, while going through the acculturation process. Furthermore, there is a significant body of research which suggests that the effects of this process on family life, both on husband and wife relationships and on parent-child relationships, may take some time to surface and result from:

- different parenting styles to those expected in the new country
- contact with more liberal views on family relationships and different roles within the family

\textsuperscript{4} Liebkind (2008, p. 387) notes that there are currently two different theories of acculturation recognised in the literature. One emphasises a linear process of assimilation, and the other, emphasises cultural plurality. My research adopts the latter theory, which “is two-dimensional in the sense that it recognizes that ethnic groups and their members preserve, albeit in varying degrees, their heritage cultures while adapting to mainstream society. It holds that a variety of cultures can and do exist in the same geographical region and maintain a part or the whole of the ethnic/cultural backgrounds while functioning successfully within a host society” (Laroche et al. 1998, cited in Liebkind, 2008, p. 387).
• children’s
  - faster acculturation and integration into the new social and cultural environment
  - mastering of the new country’s language
  - moves to adopt some of the more liberal Western lifestyle and culture, with the resulting clash with their parents’ more conservative or traditional values and norms.

These findings are supported by research such as that carried out by Stuart et al. (2010), McMichael, Gifford and Correa-Velez (2011) and Hua (2008). In their study, undertaken with refugee young people in Melbourne, Australia, McMichael et al. note that, for refugee families that resettled in Australia, the experiences of trauma and family loss or separation contribute to an exacerbation of tensions between parents and their children. Young people interviewed for their research reported dissatisfaction with their lack of autonomy stemming from their parents’ attempts to control their lives and their suspicions over their daily activities and friendships (McMichael, Gifford & Correa-Velez 2011, p. 185). McMichael, Gifford and Correa-Velez conclude that:

They [young people] suggest that because of their parents’ loss of everyday bearings and lack of familiarity with new surroundings, they are anxious about their children’s lives outside of the home. A common theme from the qualitative data was that young people regard their parents as too strict, causing a sense of frustration over their own lack of autonomy. (2011, p. 185)

Hua, on the other hand, looked into the role of language, in particular how children use “code-switching”—switching between English and their mother language—in order to challenge parental authority:

In particular, I have shown that contrary to the stereotype of the obedient Chinese child, the two children in our examples challenge their parents’ positions and display very different behaviour from the cultural norm. They do so by using strategic use of their linguistic resources such as code-switching. (Hua 2008, p. 1811)
Marín and Gamba stress the importance of understanding families’ “core values and how they change or remain stable” for the purpose of developing culturally appropriate services (2009, p. 91). They further note the importance of family unity during the process of acculturation, a view shared by Stuart et al. (2010), who state:

In the end there was ample evidence to suggest that the family provided a significant support system for both parents and young people … The high value placed on the family unity provided a stable and secure environment and enabled family members to move forward in a positive fashion and to engage each other and members of the host country in a more effective manner. (2010, p. 124)

In the following section, I review the literature on the role of religion in the acculturation process, a topic that is central to this research space.

1.2.3 Religious Families and the Acculturation Process

For some migrant families, religion adds another important dimension to their acculturation process, given the expected adherence to specific religious principles, values and practices (Holden 2010; Weinreich 2009). An important aspect of family life for religious families is the imparting of religious education and knowledge to their offspring. On the topic of religion and parenting, Holden (2010) notes that:

Religious beliefs, like culture, provide a fundamental contextual influence on how parents think about child rearing and their children. Religions supply long term parenting goals through specifying desirable behavior, both in childhood and adulthood. (2010, p. 278)

Lees and Horwath’s (2009) small-scale study of young people’s perspectives on the influence of religious beliefs on parenting appears to indicate that they also recognise the importance of religion in their lives. Their research was carried out in a multicultural city in the north of England and involved 40 mostly Christian and Muslim young people. In a conclusion to their study, and based
on the perceptions of research participants, Lee and Horwath conclude that: “… it would seem that ‘Religious parents just… want the best for their kids’ and use religion as a vehicle for enabling them to achieve this” (Lees & Horwath 2009, p. 173). Studies by Mahoney et al. (2008), Horwath, Lees and Sidebotham (2012) and Godina (2012) highlight the positive effect of religiosity on parenting and family life. In these cases, parents also benefit from support from people who share similar value systems and from local religious organisations:

Belonging to a community that reinforces one’s existential beliefs and values, whatever they may be, may facilitate better personal psychological adjustment to challenging and often uncontrollable family circumstances. (Mahoney et al. 2008, p. 95)

However, not all research on religious parenting is conclusive about the positive parenting outcomes in religious families. In his longitudinal study of 356 Dutch parents, Vermeer (2011) notes that, unlike several U.S. studies that report various associations between parental religiosity and child rearing, his study did not find any such associations. Researchers also caution that, while religion may positively influence and enhance parenting and family life, negative outcomes can be experienced when religiosity leads to rigid and authoritarian parenting or family practices (Godina 2012, pp. 1-6; Mahoney et al. 2008, pp. 93-94). Similarly, in their study on religiosity and parenting, Duriez et al. (2009) find that “the effects of religious parenting on adolescent adjustment are limited and not unequivocally positive”, stressing that:

Enhancing parents’ open-mindedness toward existential issues such as religiosity may provide an important pathway through which their parenting skills and their children’s well-being and tolerance can be improved. (Duriez et al. 2009, p. 1305)

In spite of some dispute as to the importance and influence of religiosity on parenting and family life, a review of the relevant research appears to point to the fact that religiosity, culture, and the cultural context in which the family is living do play a role, to varying degrees, in religious families’ lives and
parenting styles (Godina 2012; Lees & Horwath 2009; Yasmeen 2007). As a result, religious parents may face additional challenges during their acculturation process, as they adjust to the secular and liberal social norms and rules in the resettlement country (Collie et al. 2009; Stuart et al. 2010). As Stuart et al. note in their study of CaLD families resettling in New Zealand, parents make all possible efforts to ensure that their children adhere to religious tradition and practice, which they see as an integral part of their culture:

In many families, religious values and cultural maintenance were seen to be inextricably linked. Parents were resolute about their children’s adherence to religious traditions in order to preserve the culture of the family. (Stuart et al. 2010, p. 119)

In their studies on Islam, 'Abd al 'Ati (1977, p. 14) and Armstrong (1991, pp. 1-5) note that religious or spiritual belief is a key component in someone’s identity. And the significant role of religious principles and practice among families of Muslim background is highlighted by several researchers and scholars ('Abd al 'Ati 1977; Becher 2008; Beshir & Beshir 2004; Omran 1992; Scourfield et al. 2013a). However, existing studies on Muslims and religious practice reveal that, contrary to general public perceptions, levels of adherence to religious practice vary significantly across the Muslim community. As Saeed and Arkbarzadeh (2001, p. 6) note, Muslim identity is shared by all people “who have at least some form of cultural affiliation with Islam”, irrespective of whether they are practising Muslims:

This identity is therefore, by definition, all inclusive: it extends to those who do not actively follow the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith, as well as those who do. A non-practising Muslim still identifies with Islam as a component of his or her cultural heritage, even if proportionally less than other aspects. (Saeed & Arkbarzadeh 2001, p. 4)

These differences are also influenced by socio-cultural factors and variations on the interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunnah by different religious groups or sects. As Deen (2003, pp. 68-69) light heartedly notes: “Muslims have different degrees of attachment to Islam, although this usually remains hidden to outsiders who sometimes behave as if Muslims are perpetually frozen in
prayer”. In their study of Muslim parenting in the U.K., Scourfield et al. (2013a) also note that the cultural diversity within the Muslim community results in the presence of some individualisation in Muslim religious practice, though in keeping with tradition:

There is some evidence of individualization but also a great deal of following of tradition. There is a general tendency not to question the principle that Qur’an and Sunnah should be literally applied, even if some recommended practices are in fact not followed by many, as in the case of some birth rituals. To dismiss aspects of religious texts as not relevant today because the historical context was so different when they were written does not seem to be acceptable discourse for Muslims. This therefore places very strong limits on individualization and reflexive life choices in relation to religion. (Scourfield et al. 2013a, p. 22)

This diverse approach to Islamic praxis and expectation that the Qur’an and Sunnah’s guidance should be followed adds complexity to the settlement experience and may, in the end, affect family relationships and parenting.

1.3 THE JOURNEY AHEAD

This brief exploration of the literature and issues facing Muslim families resettling in a new country provided the necessary background for my initial meeting with two eminent Australian academic researchers at the University of Western Australia (UWA), Professor Samina Yasmeen, and Associate Professor Maria Harries, who would become my PhD supervisors. This initial discussion of the topic of parenting and family life in the context of settlement, and further exploration of the literature, informed my research proposal, which was submitted at the end of 2006.

The present research aims to explore the experiences of a cohort of Muslim families who settled in Australia, in particular:

- how Muslim families in Australia manage settlement challenges
- how these challenges affect family dynamics
• the role of acculturation and identity formation in this process
• how families manage parenting issues when things go wrong or become difficult to manage
• where or to whom they turn for help.

With the main research question decided, I went on to develop a sub-set of questions that would prompt the information from participants on key topics—settlement experiences; emerging challenges; seeking help; and acculturation. I expect that focusing on each these areas will contribute to the development of a better understanding of how Muslim families manage the challenges of living in a Western liberal society. In essence, I want to answer the research questions through their stories, their experiences as Australian Muslims, and in particular their stories of parenting and family life.

The research draws on Acculturation Theory, and Identity Formation Theory to address the research questions, and inform the analytical process. These two theoretical frameworks provide the best fit for this research because, as discussed in the previous sections, successful acculturation and identity formation, are two key factors in the settlement process (Berry & Sabatier 2010). These two processes are closely interconnected, as difficulties to adjust, and develop an ability to navigate the new social and cultural environment, are likely to affect a person’s ability to develop a sense of identity, and belonging, to the resettlement country. Applying the lens of acculturation and identity formation to this research will also provide an opportunity to explore how participants’ ability to remain connected to their cultural and religious identity and practices affect overall acculturation outcomes. On this particular issue, Marín and Gamba (2003) find that successful acculturation and identity formation can be achieved alongside individuals’ continued connectedness to their original cultural identity.
An individual with a bicultural identity tends to adopt a multifaceted achievement style that does not necessarily discourage individual independence and achievement as long as individual successes reflect positively on the family. (p. 89)

Marin and Gamba’s finding is echoed in a recent study on the settlement experiences of Hazara immigrants and refugees in Australia’s Dandenongs5 by Mackenzie and Guntarik (2015). These researchers highlight the positive role of social support structures and multicultural initiatives within the host community, which enable a migrant’s transition into the new society. Mackenzie and Guntarik find that this enabling environment allows Afghan Hazaras to develop a balanced sense of identity, where they are able to remain connected with the original culture, whilst developing an Australia Hazara sense of self (p. 75).

Keeping to the metaphor set in the prologue to this thesis, the first stopover in this research journey is at Chapters 2 and 3, with a review of the contemporary literature on Muslim family life and parenting. In Chapter 2, I provide a brief historical background on the genesis of Islam and ways the Qur’an and Sunnah, the teachings of Prophet Mohammad, ultimately shaped the legal, moral and normative frameworks that govern and guide Muslim family life and parenting. Chapter 2 includes a brief exploration of gender roles and responsibilities within the Muslim family and the current discourse on the role and status of women in Islam. That chapter presents the main standpoints in the current discourse on this important topic, highlighting the centrality of the Qur’an and Sunnah and the sensitivities surrounding the interpretation of these texts.

5 Dandenong is a municipal region situated around 30 kilometres south-east of Victoria’s capital, Melbourne. Dandenong is home to a thriving Afghan Hazara community (Nowell 2014)
In Chapter 3, I turn my attention to contemporary issues affecting Muslims living across a culturally and ethnically diverse diaspora. It includes a discussion of current Australian and international research on family and parenting experiences for Muslims settling in the West and some of the ways in which they may adjust family and parenting practices in the new country. I also provide an overview of the role of identity and acculturation in the settlement process, and I consider how settlement or social policies may assist or hinder the development of a sense of belonging to the adopted country. I conclude Chapter 3 with a discussion on help-seeking preferences among Muslim families—community, religious or professional—and some of the factors influencing families’ choices in this area.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the research planning and design processes, and my methodological approach. This is what I describe as the ‘road map’ for my research journey, showing where adjustments were required as the recruitment and interviewing tasks got underway. This emergent design is an important element of naturalist methodology, as evidenced in seminal works by Lincoln and Guba (1991) and other qualitative researchers. This chapter also includes the rationale for the use of naturalistic inquiry as the chosen methodology. It concludes with an overview of the data analysis process, including a discussion of the issues of validity, the use of qualitative data analysis software, and a consideration of the ethical issues identified.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I cover the broad topics of family life, parenting and participants’ life experiences in Australia. In Chapter 5, I discuss participants’ migration journey and ways this journey affected their settlement experience. I explore and make sense of participants’ views and experiences as partners and parents, outlining and analysing participants’ strategies when parenting or family support is required. In this chapter, I also discuss participant’s views on identity, belonging, and community and social relationships and analyse them
in the context of their families’ settlement experiences and their adjustment to the new social and community environment.

In Chapter 6, I discuss and analyse participants’ comments on their parenting practices and strategies and their decisions on issues such as the management of their children’s social and peer relationships and their use of social media. In this chapter, I also discuss participants’ decisions in relation to their children’s academic and religious education needs, and the rationale supporting those decisions. Woven throughout Chapters 5 and 6 are discussions of cultural and traditional values and norms, and the role of religion in family life and parenting. This discussion includes participants’ views on the role of government and non-government community services, including CaLD-specific services. In Chapter 7, I reach the end of this journey and, as with most journeys, I summarise and reflect on all the experiences, from the point where it all began, revisiting the research questions and summarising the findings. This final chapter also considers, and suggests, what further research may be valuable in this particular area of study.
2. ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY AND PARENTING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review is contained within Chapters 2 and 3 and situates the research within contemporary Islamic scholarship. It starts in this chapter with an analysis of the literature on the main subject matter—Muslim family relationships and parenting—then offers a necessarily brief discussion of the Islamic foundations of family and the religious precepts, social norms and values that guide Muslims in their parenting and family relationships. It includes a brief overview of the social, legal and religious frameworks that support Muslim families in their practices or help them enforce the established moral standards of behaviour. I must acknowledge from the outset, and at the example of contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim researchers such as ‘Abd al ‘Ati (1977, p. 3), Sedgwick (2006, pp. xv-xvii) or Ansari (n.d-a, pp. 1-4), the difficulties with providing a balanced and objective overview on a topic that draws such diverse views, which interact in multiple directions with social and legal frameworks in Muslim states and communities.

2.2 ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY AND PARENTING

2.2.1 Brief Historical Background

When Muhammad began to preach the Word in Mecca, the whole of Arabia was in a state of chronic disunity. Each of the numerous Bedouin tribes of the peninsula was a law unto itself and in a state of constant warfare with other tribal groups. (Armstrong 1991, p. 46)

With the exception of certain areas around ground that is more fertile and close to major trading ports, where commerce flourished, the Arabian Peninsula into which Prophet Mohammad was born was mostly characterised by intertribal and feudal fighting. Complicating the state of affairs in the Arabian Peninsula during the Prophet’s era was the social and political instability in the surrounding regions. As Armstrong (1991, p. 167) notes, the revelations to Prophet Mohammad come at the end of a long period of time when people
around the world appear to have ignored the message that God had sent through the first Prophet, Abraham, and others who had followed him. Muslims identify this pre-Islamic period, which is marked by social and political instability, as the age of Jahiliyyah (from the word ‘jahl’ or ignorance).

The early days of Islam, and the genesis of the Islamic way of life, were initially slow and complex; this was a period marked by hardship and sometimes violent struggles and persecutions, as Mohammad and his followers converted polytheist and idolater Arabia to “build a society according to God’s plan” (Armstrong 1991, p. 167). It was because of his persistence, and the “belief in his call, to proclaim the unity of God, which was the making of Islam” (Ansari n.d-a, p. 9). Initially, the revelations and Hadith of the Prophet, and all the new teachings and indoctrination were based on verbal tradition (Armstrong 1991, p. 49). As Abdell Halleem (2005, p. xv) notes: “With every new revelation, the Prophet would recite the new addition to the Qur’an to those around him, who would eagerly learn and in turn recite to others”. Throughout the period of revelation, and even during the days of persecution, Prophet Mohammad would also repeatedly recite the Qur’an to his followers and ensure that they recorded it as well (Abdell Halleem 2005, p. xv).

It was in the ninth century that Muslim scholars Muhammad ibn Ismai’il al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Hijjai al-Qushayri “carefully examined the pedigree of each tradition (Hadith) to make sure it was reliably attested” (Armstrong 1991, p. 48; Barlas 2002, p. 33). The writing down of the Qur’an started with the first Caliph, Abū Bakr, who compiled the first book. However, it was during the time of the third Caliph, ‘Uthmân, that the first known edition of the Qur’an, the Vulgate edition, was produced (Rahman 1979, p. 40). Al-Qaradawi (2006) stresses the fundamental meaning of the Qur’an for all Muslims:

The Qur’an is the supreme sign and the greatest miracle of Muhammad (SAAS), the preserved everlasting Book, into which falsehood cannot enter
from any direction. Its permanency from first to last makes it the primary fixed source validating all the sources of Islam and its further secondary proofs — one never argues from the later to validate it. (2006, p. 1)

Al-Qaradawi further notes that the Sunnah\(^6\) of the Prophet “comes as a source following along with the Qur’an and making it clear, as God said, addressing His Messenger: ‘We have sent down to you the Remembrance so that you make clear to humankind what has been sent down to them’” (al-Nahl, 16: 44, cited in Al-Qaradawi 2006, p. 1).

Although united in Islam, interpretations of Qur’anic text and Sunnah in relation to all matters social, familial, legal and religious grew in number and in accordance to different streams of thinking over the centuries. In essence, in spite of the Qur’an’s status as Muslims’ source of truth and means for them to realise their actions, its translation into Islam’s existential framework is interdependent on other sources: the Sunnah, Hadith, Tafsir (the clarification or interpretation of the Holy Book) and Shari’ah. These dynamics continue to create division between different groups across the Islamic world (Brown 1996). On the interpretation of Shari’ah in particular, Rippin (1990) observes:

> All parties agree with the concept of Islamic law, that is, that religion should have something to say about legal issues, but they disagree on matters of jurisprudence, that is the extent to which the decisions of the past are binding on the present. As well, the character of that Islamic law — whose Islam? Which Islam — continues to fragment the various groups. (p. 221)

\(^6\) Sunnah is the “established custom, normative precedent, conduct, and cumulative tradition, typically based on Muhammad’s example. The actions and sayings of Muhammad are believed to complement the divinely revealed message of the Quran, constituting a source for establishing norms for Muslim conduct and making it a primary source of Islamic law. In the legal field, Sunnah complements and stands alongside the Quran, giving precision to its precepts. Sunnah encompasses knowledge believed to have been passed down from previous generations and representing an authoritative, valued, and continuing corpus of beliefs and customs”. (Esposito 2003, p. 228)
2.2.2 The Concept of Family in Islam

A discussion on the concept of family within Islam, including some historical background, is essential at the outset of this literature review. The brief historical introduction raises the question of whether a concept of family existed in early pre-Islamic times and, if so, whether Islam radically changed and strengthened that concept. Rippin (1990, pp. 11-12) and ‘Abd al ‘Ati (1977, p. 7) describe pre-Islamic society in the Arabian Peninsula as characterised by polytheism and the existence of many diverse tribes, some of them nomadic, that made up the fabric of society. However, as ‘Abd al ‘Ati stresses, the existence of this great diversity within the Arabian social system of that time did not “nevertheless means chaos”, as the tribe was “held together as a social unit” (‘Abd al 'Ati 1977, p. 8).

These tribal groups, both sedentary and nomadic, were mostly autonomous and were held together through strong blood and kinship ties and loyalty, providing for the safety and survival of their members in often precarious circumstances (Armstrong 1991, p. 58; 'Abd al 'Ati 1977, p. 8). The same authors note that another critical social feature that ensured survival in such an unforgiving environment was placing the group’s interests above those of the individual. To achieve this, leadership and guidance was granted upon the strongest man, in what historians describe as the Arab ideology of Muru’ah, or manliness. These tribal leaders, chosen by their bravery in battle, stoicism and loyalty to the qwam, or people, were also responsible for providing for the groups’ religious, moral and honour practices. Honour, these authors note, “took the place of law and the moral idea of right and wrong” ('Abd al 'Ati 1977, p. 8).
Another important characteristic, common across these and other ethnic groups and societies (Stone 2014), was the practice of polygyny, as this was the only way that women had to survive and be protected. Arranged marriages were a common occurrence, and “almost every imaginable form of marital and sexual relationship” was practiced (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 50; Armstrong 1991, p. 191). Although the practice of polygyny remained in place in the post-Islamic period in varying degrees and is still permissible across some Muslim countries today (Omran 1992, pp. 19-20; Rippin 1990, pp. 195-196), Muslim scholars argue that Islam significantly changed the idea of family and introduced limits that focused on family as the basic social unit of Islamic society (Esposito 1984). This is highlighted by Ansari (n.d-a), who notes how Islam provides for the Islamic family institution:

The institution of family is thus the corner-stone of Islamic society; and Islam has provided, for its proper functioning and stability, a code of familial ethics which is built upon (a) marital piety, (b) parental piety, and (c) filial piety, - namely: uncompromising emphasis on: (a) chastity of the husband and the wife, (b) comprehensive parental benevolence, and (c) unflinching goodwill, devotion and respect of the children for their parents and elders. (Ansari n.d-a, p. 187)

‘Abd al ‘Ati provides an “operational definition” of the term family in the Islamic context as:

A special kind of structure whose principles are related to one another through blood ties and/or marital relationships, and whose relatedness is of such a nature as to entail “mutual expectations” that are prescribed by religion, reinforced by law, and internalized by the individual. (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 19)

And Omran (1992, p. 13) explains who is included in the family: “The family in Islam includes both the nuclear (husband, wife and their children) and

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7 The term polygyny denotes marriage to multiple wives (also termed polygamy), which includes both polygyny and polyandry (the latter is the opposite of polygyny and denotes marriage to multiple husbands). Although not unique to Islam, the practice of polygyny is not as widespread today due to a number of factors such as growing urbanisation, modernisation and Westernisation across countries where this practice is permissible.
extended varieties by caring for all the relatives (ahl)”. As ‘Abd al ‘Ati also notes, “[for Muslims] As far as their mutual expectations, it makes no fundamental difference how or where [family members] reside” (1977, p. 20). This Islamic definition of family shares some commonalities with the view of a nuclear family# in the conventional, Western sense. Peters (1999, p. 56) notes that:

The traditional and more conventional usage of the nuclear family has reference to mother and father and their biological child(ren). It also embraces widows and widowers and their children, as well as orphans who are adopted into a family. The term includes the remarriage of widow(er)s with or without children, even if one of the spouses is single. In the case of orphans, children are identified in the new family.

The strong connection between the family unit and the teachings upheld in the Holy Qur’an are played out within this unit, with clear instructions, rules and guidance provided in relation to all relationships within the nuclear and extended family system. This makes the family unit one of the key instruments for the transmission of religious values and of sustaining a religious culture, as stressed by Hamilton (1995, p. 140), who notes that this function is enhanced by the parents’ duty to teach their children Islam’s tenets, doctrines and practices. Moreover, as ‘Abd al ‘Ati points out, although the Islamic family “is not necessarily a ‘religious’ unit”, religion plays a significant part in regulating family life through Islamic law: “While Islam prescribes family rights and obligations, it does not seem to presuppose, at least on the primary level, religious uniformity” (’Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 33). Osman Bakar equally supports this view:

In theory, Islam affirms both the religious and the societal values of these [family] relations which it sees as effective means of cementing the human bonds of brotherhood and solidarity. Islam would like to see these relations

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# This narrow view of the nuclear family is challenged in some western spaces, with authors such as Sarkisian and Gerstel (2012, p. 14) who, with reference to American society, argue that this view “…overlooks women’s experiences as they are more likely than men to do the work of maintaining ties to relatives … and … ignores the familial experiences of racial/ethnic minorities for whom extended families are centrally important”.

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strengthened and accordingly the Qur’an reminds the believers of the rights of their near relatives (al-aqrabûn) and of their obligations to be good to them. (Bakar 2011, p. 13)

In essence, the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet provide the principles, guidance and regulation that ensure the strength and perpetuation of the Islamic family system as the “solid grounds” for Muslim societies (’Abd al ’Ati 1977, pp. 38-39).

Although not restricted to Islam, another important aspect of the Islamic family system is its patriarchal outlook (Jawad 2003; Kamali 2011). Rippin (1990) attributes the creation and maintenance of this patriarchal family system to Islamic law:

Islamic law, with its enunciated roots firmly in the Qur’an, has instituted a social system based upon the presumption of an extended family grouping within a patriarchal system. (p. 116)

Kamali notes that in Islam this patriarchal character has nevertheless been harder to challenge because of “factors such as poverty, low levels of female education and employment, and prevalence of tribalism”, which he sees as “formidable challenges to gender equality and family welfare at the dawn of the twenty-first century” (Kamali 2011, p. 41). Hassan (2008, pp. 211-215) asserts that the prevalence of this patriarchal system is due to a “skewed” interpretation of the sacred texts that helps maintain “the dominant role ascribed to men in the private sphere of the family to ensure its proper functioning”. This view is supported by Siraj (2010), who, in her research of British Muslim families, identified the interpretation of Qur’anic verse 4: 34\(^9\) as

\(^{9}\) This interpretation is not limited to British Muslims and is at the heart of intra-Muslim debates on the hierarchy within the family based on this verse. In her research, Siraj refers to the verse of the Qur’an as translated by Yusuf Ali: “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means” (Qur’an 4:34). Siraj (2010, p. 199) notes that “In Yusuf Ali’s translation, men are the protectors and maintainers of women instead of their guardians. This translation alters social responsibility into paternalism by
one of the main arguments used by those in favour of that particular family structure:

Participants constructed the role that they played within the family according to a religious framework which essentialised gender identities. Their views were consistent with the general patriarchal reading of the verse favoured by male jurists. Therefore, the patriarchal ideology of the male authority figure and male power was kept alive. (Siraj 2010, p. 212)

Similarly, findings from Becher’s (2008) study of parenting roles and relationships among South Asian families in the U.K. reveal that “the continuing importance of religious and cultural value systems was also apparent, for example in the religiously-derived nature of the emphasis on fathers’ breadwinning and authority, and mothers’ domestic roles” (p. 127). This construct of family is found across Muslim countries in other regions of the world, such as South East Asia and Africa. However, authors such as Moghadam (2004) and Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2006) point out that this patriarchal system is slowly being changed through modernisation and rapid economic development across the Middle East and South East Asia. On this particular topic, Moghadam concludes:

One cannot escape the conclusion that the combination of declining fertility and changes to the structure of the family, along with the conservative backlash and women's activism are signs of the crisis of Middle Eastern patriarchy. (2004, p. 157)

This phenomenon is highlighted by Yasmeen (2004), who reports that women in those regions are increasingly pursuing professional careers and education and are becoming involved in social and political movements: “Like women across the globe, women in the Middle East and South East Asia are gradually expanding their areas of operation beyond the family sphere” (Yasmeen 2004, p. 162).

employing the term ‘strength’ to stipulate ‘what it is that God has given the one more of than the other’.”
2.2.3 Islamic Law and the Muslim Family

Shari’ah is fundamental to the practice of Islam and is considered to be an expression of Islamic beliefs in practice. In the centuries following the Prophet’s death in 632, Islamic law started to develop into a wide-ranging system that encompassed and governed personal and public behaviour. Islamic scholarship notes that this evolution involved a complex process of legal development, which was based on the immutable moral law contained in the Qur’an—God’s moral law—and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Engineer 2005; Esposito 1984; Rahman 1979). In his introduction to Islamic law, Joseph Schacht notes that: “The sacred law of Islam (Shari’ah) is an all-embracing body of religious duties, the totality of Allah’s commands that regulate the life of every Muslim in all its aspects” Schacht (1969, p. 1). Rahman (1979, p. 33) stresses that a man’s duty is to carefully formulate this Law and to submit to it with all his physical, mental and spiritual faculties.

However, as Rahman further notes in his book, the formulation of the law is open to interpretation when translated into legal practice. This is a phenomenon that, according to him, stems from the Qur’an’s development process, its compilation, and the emergence of books of interpretations some years following the completion of the very first edition of the Holy Book, the Vulgate edition, by the third Caliph, ‘Uthmân (Rahman 1979, pp. 40-41). Hodkinson (1984, p. 1) notes that issues surrounding the interpretation of the Sunnah and Hadith of the Prophet began to emerge after Mohammad’s death, with Rahman pointing out that, while these were “coeval and consubstantial in the early phase after Mohammad” (p. 45), both followed his set of principles.

As the community started to rapidly expand, and administrative systems were created to cope with this expansion, so did the complexity of the new moral issues and legal situations that had to be dealt with (Hallaq 2009; Rahman 1979, p. 56). As Donohue and Esposito (1982, p. 179) note, the first reported period of modernisation for Shari’ah occurred in the nineteenth century in the Ottoman
Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, and continued during the twentieth century “through the adoption of Western secular codes”. As a result, the development of the body of knowledge in Shari’ah is mired in a number of different interpretations. Some of these interpretations are linked to the schools (madhab) that provide knowledge of Shari’ah, and others are linked to the social-cultural landscape. One of the secondary methods for clarification or interpretation of the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah is Tafsir, which follows two main schools of thought: Ijma, social consensus\textsuperscript{10}, and Ijtihad a process of critical reasoning\textsuperscript{11}. Another method of interpretation of the law that is supported by the four main Sunni schools of law, Qiyas\textsuperscript{12}, holds that a ruling from the Qur’an or Sunnah “may be extended to a new problem provided that the precedent (asl) and the new problem (far) share the same operative or effective cause (illa)” (Esposito 2003).

It is out of the differing views and discussions on the correct interpretation of all these texts across the Islamic world that, over a period spanning many centuries, four of the main schools of legal thought—Maliki, Hanbali, Hanafi and Shafi’i—emerged (Barlas 2002; Rahman 1979). As the sacred law of the Islamic community (ummah\textsuperscript{13}), and unlike Western laws, decisions made by

\textsuperscript{10} Ijma – “Consensus or agreement. One of four recognized sources of Sunni law. Utilized where the Quran and Sunnah (the first two sources) are silent on a particular issue. There is considerable debate concerning whose opinions are relevant for ijma. Some argue that only the opinions of scholars are relevant. Others contend that ijma includes the consensus of the laity. Most agree that the consensus of Muhammad’s Companions, the people of Medina, or the family of the Prophet is authoritative. Once an ijma is established, it serves as a precedent” (Esposito 2003, p. 99).

\textsuperscript{11} Ijtihad — “Islamic legal term meaning “independent reasoning,” as opposed to taqlid (imitation). One of four sources of Sunni law. Utilized where the Quran and Sunnah (the first two sources) are silent. It requires a thorough knowledge of theology, revealed texts, and legal theory (usul al-fiqh); a sophisticated capacity for legal reasoning; and a thorough knowledge of Arabic” (Esposito 2003, p. 99).

\textsuperscript{12} Qiyas — “In Islamic law, the deduction of legal prescriptions from the Quran or Sunnah by analogic reasoning. Qiyas provided classical Muslim jurists with a method of deducing laws on matters not explicitly covered by the Quran or Sunnah without relying on unsystematic opinion (ray or hawa)” (Esposito 2013, p. 194).
those presiding over Shari’ah courts take into consideration issues of morality and law, following the Qur’anic principle that Muslims should be encouraged to act and behave in a good manner and be dissuaded from the bad (Esposito, 1984). However, the marked cultural, ethnic and traditional diversity that is found across Islam makes achieving universally accepted standards in judicial decisions impossible. These four schools of legal thought developed in different circumstances, resulting in different interpretations. As Engineer states:

If one studies the evolution of different schools of Islamic Jurisprudence (i.e. Maliki, Hanbali, Hanafi and Shafi’i) one will see that their formulations were greatly affected by their own social, cultural and economic conditions. (Engineer 2005, p. 23)

Shari’ah deals with marriage, divorce and all other aspects of Muslim social and family life and is “essentially a religious code of conduct of which law in the Western sense occupies just a small part. The Shari’ah covers all aspects of a Muslim’s life and makes little distinction between moral, ethical and (in a Western sense) legal questions” (Hodkinson 1984, p. 1). Ideally, the application of Islamic family law based on Shari’ah complements and further strengthens the regulation of family affairs in general, from marriage to divorce, property and the custody of children and the relationships and responsibilities between members of the family unit (Khouj 1990; Rahman 1979). However, some of the facets that characterise and affect Islamic law and its application are the varying degree of severity in sentencing and its interaction with religious and government institutions.

This inconsistency in sentencing is found mainly in countries with religious forms of government, such as Iran, where religious institutions and religious leaders have a significant power base (Hassan 2008, p. 20 & p. 258). Engineer (2005) argues that a current lack of evolution and growth of Shari’ah is because of an impasse between those who consider it to be “an attempt to achieve the Qur’anic goals, values and principles … a means, not an end”, and those who
see Shari’ah as an “end in itself” (Engineer 2005, p. 23). But as Doi (1992, p. 11) and Haddad (1984) report, Shari’ah lays down the rules and regulations for family life and shows the way in relation to parental rights, filial service to the parents and “guidance on economic, cultural, social, and political behaviour” (Haddad 1984, p. 3).

2.3 GENDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE FAMILY

2.3.1 Husband and Wife

Important issues to consider when discussing any family system, but in this particular case the Muslim family system, are those of gender roles and relationships, in particular the roles of men and women in and outside the family home. The prevailing stance and principles on issues of marital relationships, including inheritance, rights and responsibilities of husband and wife, child rearing and even sexual relationships, are enshrined within the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. In predominantly Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, Shari’ah courts enforce these rules and principles. However, there are differing philosophical and sociological views about the courts’ and other institutions’ interpretation of the Holy Texts. These differing views lead to passionate discourse in the Muslim and non-Muslim world, with religious leaders and scholars across the ideological spectrum, such as 'Abd al 'Ati (1977), Ansari (n.d-b), Mernissi and Lakeland (1991) Sadlaan (1999) and Wadud-Muhsin (1992), pouring over the Qur’an and Sunnah searching for guidance and meaning.

In her significant study on women in the Qur’an, Stowasser (1994) analyses the main social and theological stances on the status of women in contemporary Islamic scholarship. She categorises them in three broad categories: the

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14 Amina Wadud originally authored books under the name of Wadud-Muhsin. She is referred to in this thesis under both names, depending on the date of her work.
modernists, the conservatives or traditionalists, and the fundamentalists. According to Stowasser, the first group, the modernists, “distinguish the pristine faith and way of life of the Prophet and his first community from later manifestations which resulted from the internationalization of Islam, that is, its expansion outside of Arabia’s borders, and a host of ultimately damaging acculturation processes” (1994, p. 6). She points out that modernists require *ijtihad* in order to find the source of Islam as it was practised in its origins, and also “the need of legal reform (perceived as separation of the true shari’a from its medieval juridic formulation, the *fiqh*)” (1994, pp. 5-6). In her book, Stowasser represents modernism through the seminal Qur’anic exegesis, known as *Tafsir al-Manar*, of Muhammad Abduh (whose work is continued by his friend and disciple, Rashid Rida), and also from later works from lay modernist thinkers “in which women’s Islamic right to sociopolitical equality with men is expressed in progressively more inclusive and absolute terms” (1994, p. 6).

Stowasser describes the second group, the conservatives or traditionalists, as those who view Islam as “an inherited, balanced system of faith and action based on, and sanctioned by, scripture and its interpretation through the verifying authority of community consensus” (1994, p. 6). She notes that this group takes a defensive stance against modernists, whom they see as pro-Western and as potentially posing a risk of cultural contamination. Stowasser notes that, from the 1960s, modern conservatives’ position on women shifted from an emphasis on evoking the “medieval theme of women's innate physical and mental deficiency as proof of the justice of their paradigm” to one that gives emphasis to “women's equality with men in the spiritual and cultural sense”. However, she notes that modern conservatism continue to “pit woman's emotionality (prime quality of the good mother) against man's rationality (prime quality of

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15 *Fiqh* — “conceptually, the human attempt to understand divine law (shariah). Whereas shariah is immutable and infallible, fiqh is fallible and changeable. Fiqh is distinguished from usul al-fiqh, the methods of legal interpretation and analysis. Fiqh is the product of application of usul al-fiqh, the total product of human efforts at understanding the divine will. A hukm is a particular ruling in a given case” (Esposito 2003, 66).
the head of household and its provider), and thereby also gives justice to the old tradition of excluding women from political participation” (1994, p. 6).

The third group, the fundamentalists, are described by Stowasser as “scripturalist activists who see themselves as the conscience of the Islamic way of life, soldiers in Islam's battle against the forces of darkness without and within, whose ambitions parallel, in no small part, those of America's Puritan tradition and Europe's Radical Reformation” (1994, p. 6). She notes that followers of this group “insist on the literal interpretation of scripture and translate the sacred text directly into contemporary thought and action”, as a result often bypassing and disregarding the work of “centuries of theological-legal experts” (1994, p. 6). Stowasser further notes that by ignoring or rejecting diversity in local historic customs and traditions, and formulating their own interpretation of Qur'anic message through ijtihad “in rejection of the conservative ‘ulama’ — formulated community consensus”, fundamentalists “stand in political opposition and incur the wrath of the established authority in almost all Muslim nations” (1994, p. 6). Stowasser observes that, in their efforts to rebuild Islam according to the views of the scriptures, fundamentalists recognise women “as soldiers in a popular battle for communal righteousness”, noting that:

In her traditional role as loving wife and nurturing mother, the woman fights a holy war for the sake of Islamic values where her conduct, domesticity, and dress are vital for the survival of the Islamic way of life. Religion, morality, and culture stand and fall with her. (1994, p. 7)

16 Ulama: Sunni — “Men of knowledge (sing., alim). Refers to those who have been trained in religious sciences (Quran, hadith, fiqh, etc.). In the colonial and postcolonial world, alim can also mean a scientist in the secular sense. Formulators of Islamic theology and law in the classical age. In the modern era, the ulama's sphere of operation is confined to the mosque and the madrasa” (Esposito 2003, p. 242).

Ulama: Shi'i — “Professional although unofficial clergy of Shii Islam. Most important center for education is in Qom, Iran. Historically, ulama have exercised the right of ijtihad (independent reasoning) in interpretation of Islamic law, setting the stage for engagement in social issues. They are believed to serve as agents of the Hidden Imam during his absence, lending them religious authority and placing them in a position to care for the poor, infirm, widows, and orphans and to supervise religious and charitable expenditures” (Esposito 2003, p. 242).
The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the current discourse on gender roles within the Islamic family as is articulated by each of these groups. It is important to note, however, that Islamic scholars unanimously outline the crucial role women play in the Muslim family system and, importantly, the critical and sacred role that the family unit plays in the formation of life. This view originates in the Holy Qur’an’s concept of Unity (Tawhid) and its canon on the family as the “unit of society” and one of its structural blocks.

Contemporary conservative Islamic scholar Ansari (n.d.-a, p. 157) describes Tawhid as “[not] merely a concept among concepts but as an all pervading principle which governs all the fundamental domains of human faith and action”. Ansari outlines his interpretation of this concept of Unity in three main areas he sees as deeply influential on family life and gender relations:

The “Unity of Life”:

Taking ‘life’ in the universe as a whole, or ‘life’ as such, all ‘life’ forms a unity. In other words: Because the Holy Qur’an projects the universe as an organic whole which has come into existence through the unitary action of the Divine Will, all the projections and manifestations of ‘life’ exist within a single unitary evolutionary principle – human life being distinguished as unique and overpowering because it functions within the framework of Personality. (p. 161)

The “Unity of ‘Love’ and ‘Law’”:

‘Love’ functions as the ‘soul’ and ‘Law’ functions as the ‘body’ of the human code of conduct; and, in the Qur’anic view, genuine flowering of the human personality is possible only when ‘Love’ and ‘Law’ function in organic unity in the life of a person. (p. 163)

The “Principle of Unity in respect of the sexes”:

Although man and woman are different in respect of some of their functions, and consequently in some of their organs, they have emerged, according to the Holy Qur’an, from a single primeval Self. In their basic human nature and status, therefore, they are united in the bond of humanity: they are one and the same, and even in their functions they stand out as compliments [sic] and not as negation of one another. Consequently both possess equal human dignity. (p. 163)
Ansari describes Islamic society as characterised by an “integralistic welfare” nature; a society that is based on the pursuit of piety, truth, justice, love, wisdom, beauty and selflessness. This, he stresses, “is due to the fact that Islam is opposed to the mystic-ascetic approach to life and regards society as the natural framework of activity for human fulfilment” (n.d-b, p. 185).

Ansari provides a clear and concise description of the respective duties of husband and wife in line with the Qur’anic text. On the position of a woman in the relationship, he states that the Qur’an makes “no distinction between woman [sic] as regards the fundamental human rights”. Just like a man, the woman holds a free personality and is equal to man “in respect of her spiritual and moral status … economic rights and … legal rights” (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 185). On the “inequalities of condition”, Ansari notes that while “as a human being” she enjoys equality with man, as a mother and as a wife there are “some inequalities” in her condition. This, he says, is related to the woman’s role as mother and carer being superior to that of the man, hence ensuring that she deserves, and enjoys, greater devotion and honour. As a wife though, while “enjoying fundamental human rights, she has been placed one degree below the husband in the matter of administering the affairs of the family” (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 189).

Quoting from the Qur’an, Ansari places a caveat on this latter statement, stressing that, in spite of this, the husband and wife are in “complementary relation with each other and never in the relation of the ruler and ruled (II : 187)” (n.d.-b, p. 190). He points that the Qur’an’s choice to have man as head of the household is justified by his greater physical strength, ability and capacity to be the bread winner and to protect the family from danger. In support of this interpretation, he quotes Qur’an’s verse IV: 34: “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah hath given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they spend of their wealth (for supporting them and other members of the family)” (n.d.-b, pp. 190-191). At this point, Ansari again
cautions that, despite this directive, as a devout Muslim, only in extreme cases should man “differ irreconcilably” from the wife. This is because “the Holy Qur’an commands him to be always merciful and considerate” (p. 191).

Omar & Allen (1996, pp. 16-19), present a concise description of what those roles and responsibilities are, highlighting the fact that the Qur’an “addresses specifically neither men nor women, but human beings. It acknowledges the biological differences between the sexes, and that the roles of men and women are different but complimentary (sic)”. In an attempt to bring this debate into perspective, Omran (1992, p. 58) argues that there are two main reasons why women’s status in Islam is “seriously misunderstood”. One of the factors, he says, is the erroneous assumption that the behaviours of individual Muslims and Muslim communities invariably reflect “the laws and orthodoxy of Islam” (in a sense, that they are “frozen in time”). This factor, he notes, is multiplied by “misconceptions about the status of women in Islam or gross abuse of Islamic family laws among some uninformed Muslim groups” and, to some extent as well, by the impact of underdevelopment, or low socioeconomic circumstances in not only Muslim but also many non-Muslim countries in the Third World. The other main factor is what he describes as Muslim writers’ guilt of “reverse bias” whereby: “In their zeal to prove Islam’s modernity, they select only the components that would parallel Western systems” (Omran 1992, p. 58). In supporting this argument, Omran points to historical events that demonstrate how, from its inception, Islam elevates the status and treatment of women in the areas of civil, social and economic rights.

Modernist scholar Hammudah ‘Abd al ‘Ati (1977)17 equally notes that the roles, rights and obligations of husband and wife are enshrined in the Qur’an and

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17 In his book, under a chapter headed The Web of Domestic Relations, ‘Abd al ‘Ati discusses husband and wife roles and responsibilities in some detail, providing descriptions of the ethical principles enshrined in the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet, which are translated into behavioural norms and the legal texts.
Sunnah and are applied according to its universal interpretation. He states that these legal texts deal with all issues related to married life, including, but not limited to, the husband’s rights and obligations to his wife. They regulate matters relating to maintenance of residence and support during periods of illness or poverty, recalcitrance, dower or other economic rights and non-material rights, such as rights to property where there are other wives. ‘Abd al ‘Ati concludes with specific verses from the Qur’an that support his views on the moral foundations of marital roles for husband and wife respectively:

The role of the husband normatively evolves around the principle that it is his solemn duty to God to treat his wife with kindness, honour, and patience; to keep her honourably or free her from the marital bond honourably; and to cause her no harm and grief (Q. 2:229-223; 4:19). The role of the wife is summarized in the Qur’anic statement that women have rights even as they have duties, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree over them; God is almighty, all-wise (2:28). (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 149)

‘Abd al ‘Ati concludes by noting that this ‘degree’ is:

usually interpreted by Muslims in conjunction with another passage which states, among other things, that men are protectors of women and managers of their affairs because God has made some excel others and because men expend of their means. The righteous women are therefore devoutly obedient and conscientiously guard what God would have them guard. (1977, p. 148)

The same author stresses that the wife’s main obligations “as a partner in a marital relationship is to contribute to the success and blissfulness of the marriage as much as possible” (1977, p. 168). Citing passages from the Holy Qur’an (25:74)—“Our Lord Grant us wives and offspring who will be the apples of our eyes, and guide us to be models for the righteous”—‘Abd al ‘Ati outlines in more detail a wife’s main obligations: attentiveness to her partner’s comfort and wellbeing; avoiding offence or hurting his feelings; faithfulness; trustworthiness; and honesty (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, pp. 168-182). He concludes his

18 In this case, recalcitrance can be generally defined as circumstances where tension or animosity arises between the couple and the relationship is at risk of breaking down.
writings on the marital roles by reminding readers that all schools of Islamic law agree to the concept of *Ihsan*, the imperative to show “kindness to kindred of whatever degree”, and “that every individual is directly responsible to God and personally accountable to his own deeds” (1977, p. 214).

Muslim feminists Amina Wadud-Muhsin (1992) and Fatima Mernissi (Mernissi & Lakeland 1991) are highly critical about an interpretation of the Qur’an and the Holy Texts that perpetuates the gender imbalance and oppression of women across the Islamic world. As Wadud-Muhsin argues when discussing the importance of the Qur’anic text: “It was not the text which restricted woman, but the interpretations of that text which have come to be held in greater importance than the text itself” (Wadud-Muhsin 1992, p. vi). These authors base their argument on detailed historical analysis. While emphasising the unassailable validity of Qur’anic values and ethics, they point in particular to the fact that, from the outset of Islam, men have undertaken the interpretation, translation, and application into law of the Holy Texts. Wadud-Muhsin stresses that: “In the final analysis, the creation of the basic paradigms by which we examine and discuss the Qur’an and Qur’anic interpretation were generated without the participation and firsthand representation of women” (1992, p. 2).

On the subject of women’s status in Arabian societies, and using the Moroccan context in the mid-1970s as an example, Mernissi (1975) outlines the complex social, religious and political dynamics that started shaping gender relations. In her analysis, she sees the improvement to women’s conditions in the Muslim world as dependant not only on the resolution of spiritual or religious problems, but on a process that will include a societal willingness to provide them with the necessary economic and material resources (Mernissi 1975, p. 144). On the particular subject of family and women, Mernissi notes the changes taking place within the Moroccan context, where modernisation and a changing economic environment are challenging ingrained traditional gender
roles and attitudes. She further notes that, regrettably, evidence shows that these changes are also taking place within the context of a challenging social and political environment:

In Morocco the events of the past decades have brought about a serious erosion of male supremacy which is generating greater tension between the sexes, at least in this transitional period. (Mernissi 1975, p. 151)

In sharp contrast with modernists such as Wadud and Mernissi, fundamentalists dispute these views, defending a traditional interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunnah, and see the gendered approach as in accordance with the genetic and biological differences between the two sexes. In her article on women’s status in post-Islamist Sudan, Tonnessen (2010) notes the influence which fundamentalist scholar Hassan al-Turabi’s 1973 “small booklet or pamphlet with the title ‘Women between the Doctrine of Religion and the traditions of Society’ where he demands a reinterpretation (ijtihad) of women’s rights in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh)”, had on women’s status in Sudan (Tonnessen 2010, p. 587). Tonnessen stresses that this pamphlet set the “framework for the Islamist discourse on women’s rights in Islam”. She notes that, as a result:

The basic assumption is that many juristic rules have been adopted to qualify the shari’a to suit cherished customs and traditions that men historically have read liberally and to broaden the scope of rules granting authority to men, while reading literally and strictly those imposing limitations on women. (2010, p. 587)

The debates on gender issues and the status of women in Islam between conservative and progressive Muslims have been part of Muslim knowledge for centuries and are likely to be ongoing. Norani Othman (2006), a Malaysian scholar who focuses on South East Asia and Muslim women’s struggle for human rights and gender equality, attempts to answer questions regarding the social and political challenges demanded in the name of Islam and the impact of Muslim politics and Islamic fundamentalism/extremism on women, woman’s body, rights identity and status (Othman 2006, p. 3). Othman concludes that
the rise of Islamic movements and their political discourse had a major impact upon the human rights of Muslim women throughout the Muslim world, and stresses that:

A major challenge for Muslim women is working towards the repeal, reform or reviewing of certain types of Muslim family laws which are detrimental to women’s rights which are often already recognised in Islam but not granted in practice ... Ultimately, it is essential that Muslim women speak out, claim the right to speak and create the public space to engage with Islamic matters at all levels. (2006, p. 19)

Ultimately, the traditional stance on Muslims’ marital relationships and the rights and obligations of husband and wife remains overwhelmingly unchanged. This can be easily established through the works of Islamic scholars such as Ansari (n.d-a), 'Abd al 'Ati (1977), Sadlaan (1999) and others. Likewise, while responsibilities for parenting and the running of the household are seen as the responsibility of both parents (Omran 1992, pp. 55-56), gendered divisions of those tasks do occur because of the patriarchal nature of the traditional Islamic family (Barlow & Akbarzadeh 2006; Hassan 2008, pp. 211-212).

2.3.2 Parent/Child Relationships in Islam

We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months. At length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, ‘Oh my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayst approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam. Such are they from whom We shall accept the best of their deeds and pass by their ill deeds: (they shall be) among the companions of the Gardens: a promise of truth, which was made to them (in this life) (Qur’an, verses XLVI : 15, 16)

This verse, commonly quoted in the opening of sections on the duties towards one’s parents, clearly places children’s respect for their parents’ sacrifices and
efforts as paramount. The Qur’an and Sunnah address matters related to the relationship between parents and children, with these religious texts translated into their mutual rights and obligations. 'Abd al 'Ati (1977) summarises Islam’s approach to children in a few principles: “first, it is a divine injunction that the child is not to be the cause of harm to its parents (Qur’an 2:233). Secondly, by implication, parents should reciprocate and cause the child no harm” (1977, p. 182). ‘Abd al ‘Ati and other Muslim scholars emphasise what they consider to be one of Prophet Muhammad’s critical statements: “In one of his unequivocal and perhaps most suggestive statements he declares that ‘every child is born into the true religion [i.e. into a pure natural state of Islam], its parents later on making it into a Jew or Christian or Pagan’” (‘Abd al 'Ati 1977, p. 183). This statement highlights Muslim parents’ critical role in ensuring that the teaching of Islam becomes an essential part of their parenting role as the child grows.

The examination of Islamic books and texts dealing with the topic of parent and child’s rights and responsibilities (or obligations) reveals a consistent message. The literature addresses the topic in varied ways, from book sections (‘Abd al 'Ati 1977; Becher 2008; Omran 1992; Ramadan 2004) to whole books that are dedicated to the raising of children in Islam, from birth to adulthood (Bulandsheri (Ra.) 2005; Tarazi 1995). A common thread across this literature is the close reference to specific passages from the Qur’an and Sunnah that justify and support each parenting strategy. The level of detail and prescriptiveness varies, with some authors illustrating their advice with examples of modern day parenting experiences or challenges. In her book on parenting, Tarazi (1995, p. 41) quotes a number of Qur’anic verses in order to emphasise in the strongest possible way both the respect and obligations that children owe their parents:

Your Lord has decreed that you worship no one but Him and be good to your parents. Whether one of both of them reach old age at your side, do not say to them a rough word nor repulse them, but address them with respectful speech, and, out of compassion, lower to them the wing of humility and say,
‘My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they cared for me in childhood’. (Qur’an 17:23-24)

And We have enjoined man concerning his parents: his mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years, in order that you may be thankful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the (final) return. But if they strive to make you associate with Me anything about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them; and keep company with them in this life with goodness, and follow the path of the one who turns to Me. (Qur’an 31:14-15)

Tarazi and Bulandsheri equally quote certain Hadith that make the disrespect and neglect of parents a sin:

The Prophet (S) said three times: ‘Shall I inform you about the greatest of the major sins?’ They said, ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘To join others in worship with Allah and to be undutiful to parents …’ (Bukhari, 3.822; cited in Tarazi, 1995, p. 42)

Abdullah ibn Mas’ood (R) asked the Prophet (S), ‘What deed is dearest to Allah?’ He said, ‘The prayer at its proper time.’ Ibn Mas’ood (R) then asked, ‘Then what?’ He said, ‘Goodness to parents …’ (Bukhari, 1.505; cited in Tarazi, 1995, p. 43)

Abu Darda tells us that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) say, ‘Your father is the middle door (that is, the best of doors) to paradise. It depends on you to safeguard this door by obedience or lose it by disobedience.’ (Baihaqi: Vol. 4; cited in Bulandsheri (Ra) 2005, p. 16)

In summary, the key messages from these and other passages presented by Tarazi, Bulandsheri (Ra), and Ansari are that:

- Parents have the right to be obeyed, respected, and honoured by their children; in turn, they are responsible for caring adequately for their children, and for ensuring their safety and wellbeing, and that they follow the right path, the path of Islam.
- Children have the right to be protected and cared for by their parents, the right to legitimacy, and the right to receive proper religious
education; in turn, they are responsible for honouring and caring for their parents in old age.

The Islamic literature also covers issues related to brother-sister relationships and other kinship relations (‘Abd al ’Ati 1977, pp. 207-211; Bulandsheri (Ra.) 2005, pp. 54-63: 54-63; Tarazi 1995, pp. 213-294). As previously discussed, the principle of *Ihsan* requires that “kindness to kindred of whatever degree of relatedness is imperative”, applying to all Muslims and extending to children’s relationships with siblings, extended families and elders in the community (‘Abd al ’Ati 1977, pp. 205-214).

### 2.3.2.1 The rights of parents in Islam

Underpinned by the principle of *Ihsan*, Islam upholds parents’ rights to be honoured by their children in an acknowledgement of the sacrifices and efforts they make to raise them (Omran 1992, p. 48). Ansari (n.d.-b, pp. 177-185) once again provides a concise list of “duties of commission and omission” of children towards their parents, and of parents towards their children. Starting with the former, and supporting each statement with the relevant Qur’anic verse, he lists children’s duties as: “doing good to parents every day; obeying them without demur in everything good; behaving respectfully towards them; maintaining attitude of thankfulness towards them; and, caring for them with mercy — with special regard for the mother” (n.d.-b, p. 177).

The role of mothers gets particular attention, with Hadith reinforcing the special duty of respect and kindness to them in recognition of their childbearing and child-rearing roles (Bulandsheri (Ra.) 2005, p. 7). Ramadan (2004) stresses the importance of this teaching in Islam by quoting Prophet Mohammad’s Hadith: “Paradise lies at the feet of mothers”, and, in relation to both parents: “To serve one’s parents and be good to them is the best way of being good before God” (Ramadan 2004, p. 87). Children also have the responsibility to care for their parents in old age (Omran 1992, pp. 27-28).
However, under “duty of omission”, an important caveat accompanies the precept of respect and obedience to parents and elders: that it remains acceptable and valid for as long as they act responsibly and do not order that their children do something that is against God’s commands (Ansari n.d-a, p. 179; 'Abd al 'Ati 1977, p. 183). Should this happen, children are in the right to disobey their parents or elders’ commands:

Whether it be a parent, a religious leader or spiritual leader (Peer), teacher or government official, howsoever high, obedience to him is permissible only when it does not imply disobedience to our Lord, the Creator of all. (Bulandsheri (Ra.) 2005, p. 9)

2.3.2.2 The rights of children in Islam

Children are considered a joy, an adornment as well as a way to continue one’s descent. Islam enjoins us to have children, but it insists at the same time that they should be good and righteous which requires an intensive effort to raise them correctly. The ability to raise children correctly is an inherent requirement of marriage in Islam. (Omran 1992, p. 50)

Omran’s statement charges parents with the responsibility to provide for, and raise, children in God’s given way. Ansari notes that the “Holy Qur’an teaches that the child is a respectable being” because of his humanity in the eyes of Allah and his sinlessness, having been born without the sins of his ancestors (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 180). As a result, children are innocent and must have immunity against punishments reserved for those adults who do wrong (p. 180). The protection of children in Islam extends to forms of exploitation such as sale into slavery and the practice of infanticide:

And do not kill your children out of fear of poverty; We provide, sustenance for them and for you. Truly, killing them is a great sin (Qur’an 17:31; 6:151)

The practice of infanticide was common in pre-Islamic Arabia, as well as in ancient societies, such as in the Near East and Europe, and even across Christianity ('Abd al 'Ati 1977, pp. 184-185). The Holy Qur’an strictly prohibits this practice, with this injunction extending into Islam’s legal position in relation to abortion of the foetus (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 181). Even an unborn foetus
has the right to life, especially after taking shape or ‘ensoulment’ (40–42 days according to some jurists and four months according to others) and hence should not be aborted beyond that time (Omran 1992, pp. 191-197). Omran further notes that jurists’ positions on the issue of abortion as a form of family planning vary according to the different schools of thought—Maliki, Shafeei, Hanbali, Zaydi, Imami Shieits, Zahiri or Ibaddi schools—with the Imami Shieits and Ibaddi schools not allowing abortion at any time (1992, pp. 191-192). Doi (1992, p. 133) stresses that “Islam forbids abortion completely in family planning, and it is considered a murderous crime”, noting, however, that it can be permitted in order to save the life of the mother. Alamri (2011), Hedayat, Shooshtarizadeh and Raza (2006) and Omran (1992) note that all schools agree that abortion should be allowed in cases where compelling reasons exist such as a threat to the mother’s life, harming a suckling child, or where the foetus is expected to be deformed.

The rights of children extend to other areas, which Ansari describes as “duties of commission” (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 181). He stresses that, while recognising parents’ inherent instinct to protect and raise their offspring, the Holy Qur’an reinforces the key precepts that parents must follow. Parents must safeguard the interests of the children, and nurture and nourish them throughout life (even in the event of divorce or separation). They must also ensure the “unselfish” upbringing of the child to the age of maturity, learning the Holy Qur’an’s prayers that guide parents in their duties, and finally, ensuring that their children remain in the path of the true God (Ansari n.d.-b, pp. 184-185).

O ye who believe! protect yourselves and your wives and children from a (spiritual) Fire whose fuel (unlike the fuel of physical fire) is human beings (who lead wrong lives) and stones (which have been worshipped as false deities by ancient communities) over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded. (Holy Qur’an, verse LXVI : 6)

Ansari uses this Qur’anic verse to advise parents how to fulfil their obligations towards their children. The Islamic literature is unanimous with respect to the
high value placed on children across Muslim societies, as attested by the representative writings of Ansari (n.d.-b), Omran (1992), Tarazi (1995) and others. Omran goes further by stressing that, although children are highly valued in all societies, they are more particularly so in Muslim societies (Omran 1992, p. 50). Ultimately, Islam emphasises the importance of being prepared for parenthood, a lifetime of commitment, and its challenges. The expectations for parents who fulfil their duties according to Islamic precepts should be to have their children care for them in old age. This is emphasised by Omran who notes that, as a result, in Islam: “Children constitute an in-built social security system for parents in old age” (Omran 1992, p. 50).

2.3.2.3 Sibling, kinship and community relationships

The Holy Qur’an has enjoined looking after the wellbeing of one’s relatives — sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, grand-parents, grand-sons, grand-daughters, etc. — and rendering to them all possible assistance with the purest of motives. (Ansari n.d.-b, p. 215)

This statement highlights the importance that Islam places on intra-familial and intergenerational relationships, with the concept of Ihsan playing a significant role in extending to them the necessary deference, kindness and compassion (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 209). Ansari summarises the duties of commission that are due towards “kinsfolk”: “(a) Maintaining cordial relations with them, and cultivating love for them; (b) Rendering economic assistance to them, and cultivating love for them; (c) Doing good to them in every other way” (1977, p. 216). Under the duty of omission, he points out that the Qur’an firmly condemns any actions that may damage these relationships (1977, pp. 215-216). Failure to discharge the responsibilities towards one’s relatives may then bring about charges under Islamic law. However, ‘Abd al ‘Ati notes that there is no consensus among Islamic jurists on how the failure to abide by this injunction should be treated. He points to the fact that some jurists consider that brothers and sisters have mutual obligations, in line with the concept of Ihsan, and that these are enshrined in the Holy Texts. Others, however, consider that these duties are non-negotiable and represent ‘fixed responsibilities for brothers and
sisters as far as their responsibilities are concerned” (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977, p. 209).

Finally, Tarazi (1995, p. 231) stresses the importance of maintaining and strengthening family relationships, as these will provide the child with “attachments and ties to many individuals besides his parents, who all care about him and contribute to his socialization and upbringing” (Tarazi 1995, p. 230).

Ansari (n.d.-b, p. 219-254) outlines the duties and respect owed towards community elders and leaders, and to other "particular categories of non-relatives”. The latter include neighbours, friends and associates, orphans, widows, the needy and destitute, guests and wayfarers and slaves. Focusing on individual Muslims as members of the broader community of faith—the Ummah—Ramadan (2004) condenses the Holy Texts’ message on these teachings:

A Muslim belongs above all to God, and this belonging influences and illumines with a particular light each social sphere in which he or she is involved. To believe in God and to bear witness to His message before the whole humankind means that the fundamental values He has revealed, such as honesty, faithfulness, fairness, and justice, all have priority over parental ties. Consequently, Muslims must respect family ties (and by extension ties with community, people, and nation), as long as no one forces or compels them to act against their faith or conscience. (2004, p. 88)

### 2.4 SUMMARY

The first part of this literature review reveals that, apart from areas around more fertile ground or major trading ports, the Arabian Peninsula into which Prophet Mohammad was born was characterised by intertribal feuding and fighting. The practice of polygyny and arranged marriages was common, as this was the only way that women could survive and gain protection (Armstrong 1991). These practices led to the development of a society described as fiercely patriarchal and misogynistic, where the rights of women were significantly eroded. The advent of Islam through the revelations and the teachings of Prophet Mohammad saw an improvement in the status and
treatment of women. These changes were brought about by legal enactments and general reform pronouncements of the Qur’an (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977; Armstrong 1991). However, this view is tempered by some Muslim scholars who argue that the early gains brought about by the Qur’an were soon compromised by Islamic jurists in view of harsh practical realities (Engineer 2005; Mernissi 1975).

It is within this societal and gendered context that the genesis of the Islamic family takes place, guided by the Qur’an and the teachings and leadership of the Prophet and his followers. The family becomes the main building block of Islamic society, with polygyny remaining one of its integral characteristics, a practice that is not as widely accepted today but which remains in place in some Muslim countries (Omran 1992; Rippin 1990). Eminent Muslim scholar Muhammad Ansari (n.d.-a, b) stresses that, in its structural aspect, the Qur’an emphasises the family as a unit of society and the cornerstone of Islamic society. In fact, as Ansari and many other scholars unquestionably demonstrate, all aspects of Muslim life—family, communal, financial and legal—are in essence regulated and guided by the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet; this, they argue, ensures the strength and perpetuation of the Islamic family system and lays the solid ground for Muslim societies (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977; Ansari n.d-b; Ansari n.d-a; Bakar 2011; Hamilton 1995).

Issues of gender roles, relationships and parenting are essential ingredients when family systems function within any given social and cultural group. Within Islam, the prevailing stance and principles on issues of marital relationships, including inheritance, rights and responsibilities of husband and wife, child rearing and even sexual relationships, are enshrined within the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. In predominantly Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, Shari’ah courts enforce these rules and principles. However, there are differing philosophical and sociological views about the courts, and other institutions’ interpretation of the Holy Texts, and
these differing views lead to vigorous debate across the Islamic ideological spectrum. In her seminal work on women in the Qur’an, Stowasser (1994) identifies three main social and ideological positions on the status of women in Islam, which she categorises in three main categories: the modernists, the conservatives or traditionalists, and the fundamentalists.

According to Stowasser, the first group, the modernists “distinguish the pristine faith and way of life of the Prophet and his first community from later manifestations which resulted from the internationalization of Islam, that is, its expansion outside of Arabia’s borders, and a host of ultimately damaging acculturation processes” (1994, p. 6). In her book, Stowasser represents modernism through Muhammad Abduh’s seminal Qur’anic exegesis, known as *Tafsir al-Manar* (whose work is continued by his friend and disciple, Rashid Rida), and also from later works from lay modernist thinkers, “in which women's Islamic right to sociopolitical equality with men is expressed in progressively more inclusive and absolute terms” (1994, p. 6). Two Islamic scholars who espouse modernist views are Hammudah ‘Abd al ‘Ati and Ashgar Ali Engineer. Stowasser describes the second group, the conservatives or traditionalists, as those who view Islam as “an inherited, balanced system of faith and action based on, and sanctioned by, scripture and its interpretation through the verifying authority of community consensus” (1994, p. 6). She notes that this group, which includes scholars such as Muhammad Ansari and Abdel-Rahim Omran, takes a defensive stance against modernists, whom they see as pro-Western and as potentially posing a risk of cultural contamination.

Finally, Stowasser describes the third and last group, the fundamentalists, as “scripturalist activists who see themselves as the conscience of the Islamic way of life, soldiers in Islam’s battle against the forces of darkness without and within, whose ambitions parallel, in no small part, those of America’s Puritan tradition and Europe’s Radical Reformation” (1994, p. 6). She notes that followers of this group, inspired by influential fundamentalist scholar Hassan
al-Turabi, “insist on the literal interpretation of scripture and translate the sacred text directly into contemporary thought and action”, as a result often bypassing and disregarding the work of “centuries of theological-legal experts” (1994, p. 6).

The debate on gender issues and the status of women in Islam between the different ideological and theological fields has been part of Muslim knowledge for centuries and is ongoing. As Norani Othman (2006) stresses, the rise of Islamic movements and their political discourse had a major impact upon the human rights of Muslim women throughout the Muslim world. She concludes that: “Ultimately, it is essential that Muslim women speak out, claim the right to speak and create the public space to engage with Islamic matters at all levels” (2006, p. 19). Ultimately, however, the traditional stance on Muslims’ marital relationships and the rights and obligations of husband and wife remains overwhelmingly unchanged, as can be seen through the works of Islamic scholars such as Ansari (n.d-a), 'Abd al 'Ati (1977), Sadlaan (1999) and others. Likewise, while responsibilities for parenting and the running of the household are seen as the responsibility of both parents (Omran 1992: 55-56), gendered divisions of those tasks do occur because of the patriarchal nature of the traditional Islamic family (Barlow & Akbarzadeh 2006; Hassan 2008, pp. 211-212).

Matters relating to parent/child relationships and the rights, duties, and responsibilities of each are also clearly laid out in the Qur’an and Sunnah. Summarising Islam’s approach to this area in a few principles, 'Abd al 'Ati (1977, p. 182) notes the divine injunction that a child is not to be the cause of harm to its parents, and secondly that, by implication, parents should reciprocate and cause the child no harm. Written child-rearing resources for Muslim parents commonly include references to relevant passages from the Qur’an and Sunnah to justify and support each parenting strategy (Bulandsheri (Ra.) 2005; Tarazi 1995). This literature also covers issues related to brother-
sister relationships and other kinship relations, with the principle of Ihsan, or kindness to kindred from whatever degree of relatedness, imperative ('Abd al 'Ati 1977).

In Chapter 3, I discuss some of the current literature on family life and parenting across some of the predominantly Muslim countries in South East Asia and the Middle East and explore some of the challenges faced by parents in those countries, as they deal with the impacts of a globalising world on their family and children. I also review some of the contemporary literature on family and parenting experiences for Muslims living in Western countries, including Australia, and review some of the current research that documents how Muslim parents adjust their parenting and lifestyles to the new social and community environment. Chapter 3 concludes with a brief overview of families’ decision making when seeking support or counsel in relation to parenting or relationship problems.
3. STORIES FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES AND THE MUSLIM DIASPORA

In the first chapter of the literature review, I provided a brief analysis of what the literature says about the main subject matter of my research, Muslim family relationships and parenting. This included a brief discussion of the Islamic foundations of family and the religious precepts, social norms and values that guide Muslims in their parenting and family relationships. I also provided a brief overview of the social, legal and religious frameworks that support Muslim families in their practices, or help them enforce the established moral standards of behaviour.

In this chapter, I complete the literature review, discussing some of the current literature on family life and parenting across some of the predominantly Muslim countries in South East Asia and the Middle East. In it, I explore some of the challenges faced by parents in those countries, as they deal with the effects of a globalising world on their family and children. This chapter illustrates the cultural diversity across the Muslim world and provides an overview of the nuances found on parenting and family relationships within it. I also briefly explore the role of women within family and society in the context of the current discourse on women’s status across the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

This chapter contains a review of the contemporary literature on family and parenting experiences for Muslims living in Western countries, including Australia, and reviews some of the current research that documents ways Muslim parents adjust their parenting and lifestyles to the new social and community environment. In it, I also analyse some of the literature offering child-rearing advice or strategies to Muslim parents. Applying the lens of identity formation theory and acculturation theory, I explore the impact of destination countries’ laws, expectations in relation to parenting practices, and
immigration policies on families’ settlement process, with a particular focus on immigrant Muslim families. I conclude with an overview of Muslim families’ decisions on accessing family or parenting services or support and provide some insights into their preferences and the type of services—social, community or religious based—they may choose in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, including Australia.

3.1 MODERNITY AND GLOBALISATION ACROSS THE MUSLIM WORLD

Globalisation is prompting a reformulation of the common Muslim belief that Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life, which in Islamic discourse is known as the ‘one religion one culture paradigm’. Such experiences reveal not only what is common among Muslims but also what is different. … While the first consequence makes us conscious of the social and cultural diversity of the Muslim ummah, the second produces a reaction of rejection of this cultural and social hybridity and a desire to replace it with the authentic ‘Islamic way’. (Hassan 2008, p. 228)

In his book, *Inside Muslim Minds*, Hassan presents the findings of his comparative study of Muslim religiosity across seven Muslim countries: Indonesia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Malaysia and Iran. His findings show how modernisation and secularisation are causing tensions within the Islamic ummah. He notes that, in most instances, this phenomenon is leading to a tightening of religious praxis across social and family settings, often against a backdrop of difficult economic circumstances. In Hassan’s own words, evidence from his study “shows that the Muslim world displays a strong resilience in its commitment to Islam, especially today, when it has fallen behind the Western world in economic and technological terms” (Hassan 2008, p. 100). These sentiments were also expressed by Rahman (1979, pp. 212-214) and Rippin (1990). Rippin finds that this resilience, demonstrated by the “willingness of individuals to adopt the religion, complete with its external symbols and values, is certainly of note for considering the role Islamic identity
plays as a source of resistance to an assumed ascendancy of a global modernity” (1990, p. 188).

So how does this state of affairs affect families in majority Muslim countries? Already in 1977, in the conclusion to his book on the family structure in Islam, ‘Abd al ‘Ati pointed to the pressures and challenges that globalisation was placing on modern industrial societies in general and on Muslim societies in particular. He notes that Western societies were looking into new ways of dealing with those challenges but, having often “exhausted the possibilities of originality”, were increasingly turning to what could essentially be described as “traditional primitive ways” (1977, p. 283). This, he stresses, was because there was “nothing ‘new’ that has not been done or thought of by someone at some time in the remote or recent past”. Acknowledging that contemporary Muslim families were equally at a crossroads, he suggests that a return to traditional Islamic teachings would present the best possible solution:

If the true structure of the family in Islam is successfully brought to their attention, they may well discover how the classic solutions of Islam can help to solve their modern problems. (1977, p. 283)

Another Muslim writer, Bakar (2011), raises concerns over what he describes as an all-out attack on the “traditional idea of the family and its institutional role as a foundational pillar of human society” (2011, p. 31). He then describes what he sees as the crisis presently affecting the family institution. This, he says, is caused by a number of factors, including the “many anti-traditional modern practices and life styles” (p. 32) and the role of modern technologies. Bakar stresses that: “Newer and more powerful media technology makes it more and more difficult to halt or at least to slow down the onslaught” (2011, p. 31). Conversely, in her study on piety among Bangladeshi Muslim families, Rozario (2011) sees some of the advantages that technology in the digital age can afford in the provision of religious education and guidance to the younger generations. She cautions, however, that this easy access to religious information, along with the newfound freedoms brought about by rapid
industrialisation, may lead young people to develop a modernistic interpretation of Islam that may ultimately lead to conflict with that of their parents (2011, p. 306).

Madigan (2009), Rozario (2011) and Ahmed and Bould (2004) find that the pressures that globalisation and modern industrialisation place on families are leading to significant challenges to the patriarchal family system. Also focusing on the situation in Bangladesh, Ahmed and Bould note that the financial demands on the family unit and the rapid development of the garment industry, which largely employs women, is the main driver for these changes:

> Because the traditional patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal family structure no longer guarantees male support, Bangladeshi working mothers must assume more control over their futures and those of their children. (Ahmed & Bould 2004, p. 1340)

Madigan (2009) sees the potential positive effects of these socioeconomic developments. Casting a wider lens across Catholic and Islamic fundamentalism, she observes that “globalised modernity” has a powerful effect in changing the “power structures of many civilisations ... In the contemporary struggle between patriarchy and the forces of modernity, religions are themselves experiencing the turmoil that accompanies any major social transformation” (2009, p. 1). Madigan thus concludes that:

> Today, despite the long patriarchal histories of both religions, a growing number of Catholic and Muslim women, faithful to the liberating vision which inspired the respective founders of both Christianity and Islam, are challenging the ‘invented’ fundamentalist positions which endorse the unjust economic and social relations which have developed between men and women in patriarchal and neo-patriarchal cultures over the centuries. (p. 18)

In other Muslim societies, such as the oil rich United Arab Emirates (UAE), the generational changes brought about by rapid economic development, modernisation and exposure to Western values and lifestyles create yet another set of challenges for families. In their study of generational and cultural
changes in family life in the UAE, Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman and Schvanevedlt (2005) note that most young females appear to welcome and embrace the fast-paced change, abundance and ‘Westernized’ lifestyle brought about by the West’s appetite for oil. This modernisation and wealth also brings with it access to higher education and social mobility. However, Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman and Schvanevedlt (2005) note that parents view all this with suspicion and concern, and are caught between their traditional views and lived experience from a time: “where things were predictable [and] a world that is rapidly changing as their daughters grow up with cars, music, TV, cosmetics, and lifestyles that in many ways come out of the West” (p. 89).

And the struggle to cope with these changes extends to the political and institutional spheres, keen to allow and benefit from this new found wealth and freedoms—in the knowledge that the younger generations will be a valuable asset to secure the post-oil economy—but nevertheless weary of the clear drift away from the traditional and religious values and precepts. As the same author stresses:

> While political and university leaders desire their citizens to be more involved in the Western economy, they also strongly desire to maintain strong traditions steeped in Islam. (2005, p. 89)

In their study of the changes, challenges and future of the Iranian family, Azadarmaki and Bahar (2006) find that the onset of modernisation is at the core of Iranian families’ major challenges. Attributing some of the changes to the rise in feminism, charged among other things with the introduction of the male privilege discourse, higher divorce rates and the increase in women’s involvement in outdoor activities, the authors name marriage distress and divorce as the main challenges for the Iranian family (2006, p. 601). Their article also explores the relationships between generations, with the authors arguing that, rather than the “logical” explanation of “generation crisis and the intergenerational conflict”, the Iranian family “is encountering generational gap and difference as opposed to generation conflict” (2006, p. 603). Generation gap
is linked to young people’s preference to associate with their own peer and age group, as a result drifting from the older generations.

Azadarmaki and Bahar find that young people’s access to higher education, desire to form relationships “aside from their family life”, seeking of new jobs and pursuit of hobbies and entertainment rather than visiting family or travelling for religious purposes compounds this gap (2006, p. 604). Finally, these authors observe that the weakening of bonds between generations is yet another challenging factor for Iranian families. However, the findings also show how Iranian families accommodate and adapt to the changing times, exemplifying the multiple practices that exist within the context of the Islamic family unit. The authors conclude that, despite the challenges identified, “due to the focal nature of the family, we are able to observe the simultaneous presence of three generations within a family, which live together despite their individual differences.” (Azadarmaki & Bahar 2006, p. 604)

Given this snapshot of modern life in some majority Muslim countries, how, given the different challenges faced, do Muslim immigrant families adjust to their adopted states, especially in the West? They may not be so prepared, according to evidence from research by Te Lindert et al. (2008) and Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and Chinichian (2011), who report on the experience of Iranian refugee and immigrant families who settled in Canada and the Netherlands respectively. In their research, Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and Chinichian conclude:

Immigration presents a major life challenge, especially when the move is both geographical and across wide cultural divides. One of the areas of greatest challenge is in adjustments in gender and marital roles, perhaps because both of these are so close to the core of identity, self-esteem, and sense of place in the world. (2011, p. 766)
3.2 THE RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE

The condition of Western society today can be said to prove the correctness of the Islamic teachings concerning the diverse responsibilities of men and women, of the husband/father and the wife/mother, within the family. … When women fulfil their nurturing role and men their protective, maintaining role, society flourishes; when they do not, society falls apart. (Tarazi 1995, p. 63)

Tarazi’s statement is useful to illustrate the tensions that Muslim families may face when exposed to Western lifestyles (even in predominantly Muslim countries). Muslim families resettling in Western societies are likely to confront new sets of social rules and mores, mostly upheld by political systems that emphasise individual freedoms free from religious obligations (Renzaho, McCabe & Sainsbury 2011; Te Lindert et al. 2008). And while families from other minority groups may experience a number of different stressors during the settlement process (Samers 2010; Suárez-Orozco 2007), some of the current research on immigration suggests that the experiences of Muslim families can often be more complex and trying. In their study of mother-child relationships within London’s diverse Muslim community, Ryan and Vachelli (2013) found that, while faith was in many ways a comfort for those religious women, “it is also apparent that being a Muslim is not easy in the current political climate where Islam has become a ‘spoiled identity’. Many felt misunderstood and misrepresented in contemporary London” (Ryan & Vachelli 2013, p. 84). And the same authors conclude that: “In attempting to instil religious values in their children, these mothers had to explain the hostility that Islam appeared to provoke in many public arenas” (p. 84).

Some of these complexities and stressors can be caused by different approaches to immigration and settlement policies and practices in settlement countries, and popular perceptions or acceptance of different categories of migrants in the destination country add significant challenges to that experience (Brah 2007; Grillo 2008; O’Neill 2010; Samers 2010). On this particular topic, Samers notes
the effects that security measures across many (mainly) Western countries are having on Muslim migrants, when he pointedly states:

Though most migrants (and countless citizens) have felt the force of securitization in one way or another, this has had terrible consequences for Muslims throughout the ‘West’ in particular. From all across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and even the Middle East, immigration and other authorities have ‘cracked down’ on Muslim-dominated organizations, towns, or neighbourhoods. Innocent Muslims have been swept up in raids, deportations, closures of Mosques and Islamic organizations of every stripe and colour, confiscations of property, cultural and religious humiliation, and the loss of jobs and income. (2010, p. 201)

Political and policy environments are not the only source of undue pressures on Muslim families living in Western countries and societies. Negative views and stereotypes are kept alive by regular and quite often negative portrayal of Muslims by the media, which in turn feeds a rise in Islamophobia (Aslan 2009; Ciftci 2012; Rousseau & Jamil 2010; Abbas 2011; Cheng 2015; Kunst et al. 2012). This is also consistent with the findings in Australia (Kabir 2004, pp. 327-328; Pe-Pua et al. 2010, p. 15) with Kabir noting that incidents of discrimination or antagonism against Muslims in Australia appear to increase at times of international incidents involving Islamic countries. This concerning trend is identified by Markus (2014). Using the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion, although concluding that “Australia remains a highly cohesive country”, he finds that: “5% or fewer respondents indicated that they were ‘very negative’ or ‘negative’ towards Christians or Buddhists, but a significantly higher proportion, close to 25%, towards Muslims” (2014, pp. 1-4).

Parents’ efforts to uphold Islam’s moral and behavioural rules while children are exposed to, and engaged with, Western lifestyles add complexity to those challenges (Hamilton 1995, pp. 175-177). Some of those parents may have

19 The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion (SMI) has been used in the preparation of the Scanlon Foundation Mapping of Social Cohesion national survey in Australia since 2007. The SMI provides an overview in the five core domains of social cohesion: belonging, worth, social justice, participation, and acceptance and rejection.
already faced the challenges and realities of modern life (and the globalising world we all live in) back in their home country. This is recognised by researchers such as Stivens (2006) or Bakar (2011), with the latter finding that “like all other traditional family institutions, the traditional Islamic family institution has been impacted by modernisation, secularisation, and globalisation in adverse ways in all of its aspects, including the place and role of the near relatives in the larger family institution” (2011, p. 14). Moreover, the level of support that parents were likely to receive in their home country—through extended family, local institutions or their local community—is often absent in the resettlement country, leading to considerable cultural adjustments (Ramadan 2004, pp. 215-216; Ryan & Vachelli 2013, p. 107; Moghissi, Goodman & Rahnema 2009, p. 9).

Parenting styles or strategies are often passed from generation to generation and usually follow the normal process of socialisation, by which parents continue using and applying parenting rules and practices that they inherited (Bornstein & Cheah 2006, p. 15; Trommsdorf 2006). For religious families, parenting practices and beliefs, including those concerning filial piety, expected behaviour, and disciplining, may be influenced by, and framed within religious texts and education (al-Hibri 1982; Godina 2012; Mahoney et al. 2008; Vermeer 2011). However, continuing these same parenting practices and this style following resettlement may ultimately lead to intergenerational conflict, as children find themselves caught between two cultures. This is more likely to be the case when those practices are influenced by a conservative or fundamentalist religious belief and lead to an authoritarian style of parenting which children may see as restrictive (Arnett 2006, p. 643; Mahoney et al. 2008; Vermeer 2011, p. 81).

Contemporary immigration research shows that Muslim families resettling in Western countries are faced with similar challenges (Hynie, Guruge & Shakya 2012; Moghissi 2010; Nassehi-Behman 2010; Pels 2000). Nassehi-Behman (2010)
notes that among Iranian families who have settled in the U.K., those who were unable to negotiate and adapt to host culture find themselves in a “more intense conflict situation between the two disparate worlds”, where “both generational and cultural gaps come into play. Parents whose authority has become increasingly questioned through an extreme change of lifestyle are no longer able to practise their child-rearing methods or discipline.” (p. 84) In their study of Somali parents’ experiences of bringing up children in Finland, Degni, Pöntinen and Mölsä (2006) highlighted the difficulties Somali parents faced in adapting to new parenting practices and husband-wife relationships, concluding that:

Somali parents face more difficulties with their sons than with their daughters and that this relates to the changes in husband-wife relations after migration. They face also considerable cultural shock upon what they considered as an abnormal behaviour of Finnish adolescents and their parents' relative passivity. (2006, p. 14)

One of the facets of child rearing that may present significant challenges for migrant parents is the use of corporal punishment. In her study on the reconstruction of parenting after migration to the Netherlands, de Haan (2012) highlights the potential for tensions to arise in situations where parents use stricter forms of child discipline, such the use of smacking, which is forbidden under Dutch law. De Haan notes that:

The traditional harsh disciplining and strict authority relations have become instable through the confrontation with the more child-centered model these immigrant families enter through their children. The Dutch disciplinary model, with its more child-centered approach, was criticized by immigrant parents as ‘soft’ and doubt was raised on its effectiveness set against the normative frame of traditional disciplining. (p. 390)

In her book on family, law and religion, Hamilton (1995, p. 140) stresses that immigrant parents may have to reshape or adjust their parenting styles or strategies in the new social environment in order to remain effective and avoid potential intergenerational conflict. She notes, as well, that parental rights and obligations, seen as absolute under Islam, may conflict with laws in respect of
the rights of children, such as those in force in England and the United States, including duties under Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995, p. 140). Hamilton also notes that, since the 1980s, in countries such as the United States, “the courts have shown a greater willingness to consider the best interests of the child at the expense of the parent’s rights” (Hamilton 1995, p. 176), a position that is increasingly being adopted in other countries (Freeman 1998-1999; Walter, Isenegger & Bala 1995). This is a topic that continues to generate a significant amount of debate, with parents arguing that the states’ legal frameworks impinge on their parental rights, and restrict their ability to control and educate their children (de Haan 2012; Degni, Pöntinen & Mölsä 2006; Mahoney et al. 2008).

Arguably then, successful settlement for migrant families in Western countries will depend on several factors that include, inter alia: their country of origin; their level of adherence to traditional family practices and norms; and their ability to adapt to the new country’s social and legal norms and rules (Chun & Akutsu 2003). Hynie, Guruge and Shakya (2012, p. 12) note that families’ experience of migration—whether immigration by choice and in a planned manner, or whether as refugees (often with no choice as to destination country)—plays a significant role. They conclude that: “The effects of migration on intergenerational relationships in refugee families may, therefore, differ from those in immigrant families in the intensity and/or nature of the changes brought about”. Finally, settlement and immigration policies in destination countries play a significant, often a determining, role in this whole process, as does the process of acculturation (Mansouri, Leach & Traies 2006). The processes associated with immigration and acculturation place significant stress on migrant and refugee families, who will require a high level of resilience if they are to survive the challenges they face and remain intact. This is highlighted by Santisteban and Mitrani (2003, p. 123), who note: “The importance of strong family functioning is evident when one appreciates that the already complex processes of acculturation are complicated even further within a family system”.

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3.3 MUSLIMS IN THE DIASPORA

3.3.1 Family Relationships

The research of Degni, Pöntinen and Mölsä (2006) on the experience of Somali Muslim families living in Finland provides an overview on the effect of resettlement on family life and parenting. The authors report that Somali families’ life in Finland suffered significant changes “both in relation to family dynamics and family structure” because of the changed family and social environment. Faced with the absence of immediate or extended family help with raising the children, many husbands take more responsibility for child rearing and household tasks. Similarly to Iranian women, Somali women report satisfaction with these changes in family life: “Women reported that because of the difficulties of bringing up several children in Finland they have needed more help from their husbands leading to a kind of power sharing within the family that would not have occurred in Somalia” (Degni, Pöntinen & Mölsä 2006, pp. 6-7).

Changes in family structure are another inevitable by-product of settlement for Somali families, with respondents describing changes in parenting practices and gender-household relations as “heavy and stressful” and “difficult to cope with” (p. 8). These changes were mainly related to their inability to use physical discipline, the lack of extended family support in relation to child care, and children’s challenging of parental authority. “Every respondent agreed that the problems surrounding large families in Finland were related to a complex interplay of social, cultural and economic differences between Finland and Somalia. The transitions associated with these differences changed the household-gender dynamic and family norms” (Degni, Pöntinen & Mölsä 2006, p. 10).

In her study of the experience of Iranian born migrants in the U.K., Nassehi-Behman (2010) notes that pre and post-Islamic revolution migration delivered a
“quite varied diaspora” composed of three types of immigrant groups, depending largely on “where and why the people in it left their homeland”: political; “socio-cultural”; and economic (p. 73). Nassehi-Behman stresses the importance of this typology, as it influenced how each group adapted to their new home in the U.K. She describes the first group, the “political” exiles, as Westernized, well resourced, well educated, and wealthy people who had left Iran prior to the collapse of President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr’s government (Katouzian 2010, p. 49). Nassehi-Behman further notes that these people chose Britain because of their familiarity with British culture, making their settlement easier.

The “socio-cultural” group consisted of “disappointed revolutionaries, hostile to both the Pahlavi and the Islamic regimes, politically engaged, of a younger generation, educated, but not necessarily Westernized” (Nassehi-Behman 2010, p. 73). Importantly, Nassehi-Behman notes that, in contrast, Britain was not the country of choice for the “socio-cultural” group. The third and last group, the economic type of migrant, started in the 1990s. These Iranians left their country because of the post-war economic situation and the growing rate of inflation. Nassehi-Behman notes that their first destination was Sweden, but, because of some restrictions and racial problems that arose there, the flow of Iranian migration eventually turned to Britain (2010, p. 74). Iranian immigration to Western countries extended to other countries such as the U.S., Canada and the Netherlands (Bozorgmehr & Douglas 2011; Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale & Chinichian 2011; Te Lindert et al. 2008). Nassehi-Behman also notes the higher number of single parent families, which in the case of this particular group appears to have been created by the arrival of women ahead of their families, and the subsequent breakdown of the couples’ relationships following reunification:

The existence of a considerable number of single-parent families, especially at the beginning of exile, gave women the obligation of playing both masculine and feminine roles at the same time. Once couples were reunited, many of these women refused to go back to their previous status. This situation forced
family members to renegotiate family and, especially, gender roles. In cases of failure, this became a source of conflict. (Nassehi-Behman 2010, p. 82)

These findings are supported by other research into the settlement experiences of Iranian families, which reveals that couples were forced to negotiate or accept more egalitarian relationships that, while liberating for fathers and mothers alike, did nevertheless lead to potential conflict (Nassehi-Behman 2010, p. 84; Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale & Chinichian 2011, pp. 765-766). In his research on Iranian families in Sweden, Naghdi (2010, p. 203) finds that this was probably caused by Iranian women’s: higher “adaptation potential with European culture”; better language learning ability; and paying more attention to the new country’s rules and regulations. He concludes that: “The challenges between men and women, divorce, family disintegration, youth problems, and Iranian identity are among major problems of Iranian immigrants” (2010, p. 203). Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and Chinichian (2011) find that a particularly challenging issue for men and their identity and traditional leadership role as husbands is accepting financial dependence on their wives, more so than their requirement to perform certain household chores, (2011, p. 758 & p. 766).

Attempts to control their children’s marital choices appears to be another area that causes tensions between parents and children of Iranian background living abroad.

The young generation is much freer to choose their future spouses from a much broader circle than in Iran. Love and sexual compatibility have appeared as prominent factors in marital choice. Parents (the first generation), believing in traditional Muslim culture, do not approve of premarital sexual relations, especially for their daughters, but at the same time they want to live like their peers. (Nassehi-Behman 2010, p. 81)

Nassehi-Behman’s quote illustrates Iranian parents’ struggle to control their daughters’ lifestyle choices, further noting first-generation parents’ preference that their children marry within the Iranian community, even if the marriage has to be arranged “through correspondence” (2010, p. 81). However, in their
study, Bozorgmehr and Douglas (2011, p. 8) note that, in America, Iranian Muslims, including second generation, are more likely to intermarry: “Regardless of religion, young Iranian women, more than their male counterparts, were caught between the traditional values of their parents—who favored arranged marriages—and the liberal values of American society” (2011, p. 8). In her comparative study on Afghan men’s and women’s experiences during their exile, and following their return to Afghanistan, Rostami-Povey (2007) finds that there were few marriages between Afghan and British or American people mainly because of the “cultural divides based on the West’s hostility toward the people of Islamic culture”. She notes, however, that those who married Westerners tried to hold on to their Afghan culture, but were worried about “the clash of cultures for the young generation”, with some young people rebelling against their Afghan identity because of their parents’ “imposing strict Afghan gender roles” (2007, p. 252). In the conclusion to their study, Ross-Sheriff, Tirmazi and Walsh (2007, p. 208) find that, in spite of all their efforts and positive outcomes: “At times the goals and aspirations of mothers for their daughters lead to decisions that are contradictory. Mothers struggle with competing goals, such as the development of an identity that reflects religious, cultural, social, and personal components.”

The experiences of Afghan refugees who fled to bordering countries Iran and Pakistan, or further afield to the U.K. and the U.S., reveal similar difficulties and challenges (Moghissi 2010; Rostami-Povey 2007; Sadat 2008). Rostami-Povey reports that changed gender relations between men and women in exile communities is due to an increase in women’s self-confidence and domestic authority because of their active social, economic and cultural participation: “Gender relations between men and women altered, and individual identity and the rights of individuals within the household and the family were desired and demanded.” She notes, however, that “many Afghan women thought that they had to adopt these individual rights according to their own culture” (Rostami-Povey 2007, p. 249).
In her research on the Muslim diaspora in Canada, Moghissi (2010, p. 94) explores this particular phenomenon and asks two interrelated questions: whether, in fact, men are more predisposed to be “stuck in nostalgia for their known family culture”, hence locked into a patriarchal outlook, and whether religious beliefs support this stance. She also investigates what social and cultural pressures can lead individuals to become stuck in “cultural difference” and “Islamic tradition” as a form of resisting changes in gender roles required by the new social and cultural environment. Moghissi finds that male and female participants in her study, even those from the same countries “dominated by Islamic laws and religious practices”, held diverse perspectives on social values and gender roles, but she stressed that these were not part of intrinsic Muslim values. Moghissi also finds that challenges to older ideas appeared to be processed differently in different communities and in different settings, showing that those differences may reflect the “influence of external factors” that help frame people’s views on what proper gender relations and roles look like.

In other words, efforts to return to a pre-given culture, with an associated social conservatism that is often justified through religion, are not the inherited values of Muslim men. They rather might be a reaction, at least partially, to the greater difficulty they have in adjusting to a new society or new conditions of life.” (2010, p. 94)

The loss of support from extended family through the immigration process is another factor identified by Sadat (2008), Moghissi (2010) and Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and Chinichian (2011). Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and Chinichian report that, although male and female participants generally lament the loss of that support, women spoke favourably of its contributing to “a greater sense of independence and personal, or couple, accomplishments” and a sense of pride for being able to build their lives without the assistance of third parties (2011, p. 762 & p. 765). However, while expressing similar views, men “were more likely to speak of losing the support of the extended family ... particularly when couples were experiencing difficulties or disagreements” (2011, p. 765). Interestingly, however, Nassehi-Behman (2010) notes how the internet and
social media can alleviate this gap and help rebuild family networks, which she describes as “a multinational kinship system outside the home” (2010: 87).

Among the new generation, face-to-face relations have been replaced, due to long distances, by electronic connections. This new medium seems especially suited to the needs of communities in exile, as it has the capacity to facilitate ongoing communications between the scattered diasporas and the homeland. (p. 87)

In Australia, Muslim families find themselves in a similar scenario. Australian Muslim researchers Akbarzadeh and Saeed (2001) report on the challenges faced by Muslim families who settled in Australia, highlighting the tensions arising from the secular basis of the Australian legal system, and particularly family law (2001, p. 10). In the same vein, in their 2010 report on the needs of Australian Muslim families Pe-Pua et al (2010, p. 37) find that newly arrived, and even well-established, Muslim families can experience intergenerational conflicts and tensions, observing that “devout parents, irrespective of faith, struggled when raising children in a secular society”.

### 3.3.2 Settlement, Identity and Belonging

The ability to develop a sense of identity with, and belonging to, the host country and its community, social and political environment, plays a significant role in the settlement process and the individual’s and family’s adjustment to the new social and cultural environment (Mansouri & Wood 2008, pp. 6-11; Stepien 2008, pp. 166-174; Kunst et al. 2012, p. 529). As Engineer (2005, p. 141) notes in his research into the impact of migration on the Muslim diaspora, for communities: “Faced with the fragmentation of the fates of individuals and families, with a multiplicity of lands of origin and with spatial dispersion, the construction of a collective memory is essential to the emergence of a Muslim diaspora consciousness”. These families are faced with what Gardner and Grillo (2002) describe as the “transnationalism”, as a result becoming “transnational families”. In their work, they observe these transnational households and families through “the lens of ritual” (2002, p. 183), examining
how migrating families use life-cycle events and traditions, including those with religious foundations, to maintain their sense of identity and culture. Researchers such as Hooker (2004, p. 10) and Ahmad (1984) highlight the strength and effectiveness of Islamic teachings and their universality across the Islamic diaspora, which they see as notable in the face of its vast cultural and ethnic diversity:

Given its heterogeneity, observers of the Muslim world are impressed by the evidence of unity in Islamic people’s cultural, social, and political life. There is evidence also of a strong Islamic affinity across territorial and linguistic divides. This sense of solidarity has been based not merely on religious beliefs and practices but on shared consciousness of history, and a commonality of values. (Ahmad 1984, p. 18)

However, in spite of the sense of identity and consciousness that Islam provides to Muslims worldwide, the immigration policies and the social and community environment in the destination country play a determinant role in the settlement process. Onder (1996) demonstrates the negative social and personal effects when migrant communities fail to develop a healthy cultural and ethnic identity. She finds that: “The circumstances of being torn between two cultures is most often a severe problem for Islamic families”, with the issues they face so complex that “external help can only partially clarify certain aspects of them” (1996, p. 18). Onder’s findings are based on a study of 15 Turkish families and their German-born schoolchildren who were living in the German federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, between 1991–1992 and 1993–1994. In it, she reports that the schoolchildren were confused and felt torn between their family on one side, and their social and school environment on the other. Onder illustrates these findings through the voice of one of the participants who explains: “In Turkey we are the Almanci (those coming from Germany) and in Germany we are ‘the damned foreigners’. I don’t know where I belong. It’s a hard life to be torn between two cultures” (Onder 1996, p. 18).

In their study on the effects of religious stigma on Muslim minorities’ identity formation in Germany, Kunst et al (2012) note that, whilst public and political
discourse tends to blame Muslim minorities’ for an apparent lack of integration into German society, it is in fact religious stigma, and Islamophobia, that constitute a major obstacle to Muslims’ national affiliation. Referring, in particular, to the settlement experiences of German-Turks, he concludes that this particular ethnic minority group “may have adapted to and internalized the notion that identifying as a Muslim composes the main barrier to successful integration into German society” (Kunst et al 2012, p. 529).

Onder’s and Kunst et al’s findings remain current and are consistent with those arising from studies by Ersanilli and Saharso (2011), Britto (2008) and Sadat (2008). On issues of identity formation and belonging, Britto identifies the unsupportive cultural and “political milieu” that adds to the ethnic identity formation challenges faced by Arab Muslim children and adolescents in the United States (Britto 2008, p. 855). Reporting on the experiences of Afghani expatriates in the U.S., Sadat notes that similarly, faced with being seen as outsiders in Western countries and as afghan-e kharijee (foreign Afghan) in their own country, some look to their diaspora—Afghaniyat—in their quest for identity. He explains this phenomenon:

This attempt at bicultural coexistence was aimed at preserving all that is Afghan while living in a non-Afghan society. That is, Afghaniyat runs on the concept of a collective, which is based on familial and social networks, whereas the core of being American is based on individualism. In general, this duality between life in the Afghan home and life in non-Afghan society results in conflict between Afghan children and their parents, as well as within their lives as Afghan immigrants in a host country. (Sadat 2008, p. 331)

These and other immigration studies reveal the complexity of identity formation and development of a sense of belonging among immigrant populations. And Sadat’s findings also point to the detrimental effect this duality, this lack of belonging, may have on family lives and parent/child relationships.
Onder (1996) and Ersanilli and Saharso (2011) also point out that someone’s sense of identity or of belonging to a certain society cannot simply be achieved through the development or implementation of integration policies. Such approaches can lead to divisive results, as evidenced by Buitelaar and Stock (2010) who carried out research on Moroccan-Dutch Muslims in The Netherlands. These researchers note that, for descendants of Moroccan migrants in that country, and particularly for citizens of Muslim descent: “Creating homes that incorporate various sites of belonging, especially when one does not find one’s home culture represented in mainstream host culture, is an ongoing process of negotiation” (2010, p. 163). Buitelaar and Stock (2010) argue that this process is not assisted by simply imposing integrationist or citizenship policies, which, in the Dutch context, led to the creation of divisions in society:

The Netherlands has witnessed an increasing Islamization of the public debate in which Islam becomes a standard for integration. This is combined with policies trying to make Muslims abide by ‘typical Dutch’ values. In particular, secular freedoms pertaining to sexuality, women and freedom of speech are instrumentalized into a cultural program of inclusion and citizenship producing a demarcation between a free secular society and Muslim immigrants. (2010, p. 191)

As Ersanilli and Saharso (2011, p. 931) also observe, more “civic citizenship regimes”, such as the ones in France and the Netherlands, are no guarantee of a more inclusive society. They find that: “Although a civic conception of citizenship is reflected in policies, everyday reality reflects a ‘thicker’ notion of citizenship, which does not include people of a different ethnic origin, especially if they have a different skin color or religion” (2011, p. 932). However, in the conclusion to the book on Muslim Diaspora in the West which he entitles, and frames, as a “plea for positive and inclusive rhetoric”, Ghorashi (2010) suggests a more proactive and conciliatory stance:

What individuals need to do to become citizens is to take an additional step: not only to allow space but to make space as well. Making space involves the will to meet the other and requires the ability to step to the side in order to create a common, shared space between cultures, in which we can admit, meet, and connect with the other. (2010, p. 212)
Ghorashi’s suggestion appears to be echoed in Mackenzie and Guntarik’s (2015) study of Afghan Hazara settlement in Australia’s Dandenongs. In their final reflections on their study, Mackenzie and Guntarik highlight the critical role played by the Dandenong municipality in bringing the community together through proactive social inclusion, and social cohesion initiatives.

The role of broader social support structures in enabling individual agency cannot be underplayed. This article foregrounds the need for further research on the different phases of a migrant’s transition into society and as a significant component of their rite of passage towards citizenship, belonging and resettlement. … To this extent, the Greater Dandenong region offered a valuable opportunity to focus on a place that is open and willing to support ongoing cultural initiatives, reflected in the local government council’s commitment to promoting social inclusion and participation among new and emerging migrant and refugee communities. (p. 76)

Ghorashi’s, and Mackenzie and Guntarik’s strategies would fit with Cote’s suggestion for the development of a set of skills, a “tool kit” of resources that, used in ideal circumstances, will improve the chances for migrants to develop their cultural identity and sense of belonging to the host country (Cote 2002, p. 142). In all its apparent simplicity, his suggestion would help newcomers construct their new identity as they settle into their new social and cultural environment. What those resources should be will vary significantly, depending on the makeup and values of the dominant culture and the skills and needs of each individual. On their part, Ersanilli and Saharso (2011, p. 907) note that the development of inclusive social policies has “a positive effect on settlement country identification”.

For most religious families, religiosity and cultural maintenance are also two highly valued factors which seek to ensure that their children grow in a nurturing environment and follow the right path (Godina 2012; Mahoney et al. 2008; Vermeer 2011). Likewise, for most Muslim families, religiosity and cultural maintenance are two highly valued factors, with parents ensuring that their children follow the right path, the path of Islam, and are protected, and able to protect themselves, from the influences of Western lifestyles (Ross-
Sheriff, Tirmazi & Walsh 2007; Scourfield et al. 2013b; Stuart et al. 2010). This is achieved through strategies that include the teaching of the Qur’an and Arabic at home, careful choice of with whom their children can socialise (usually restricted to other Muslim children) and socialisation with other Muslim families.

In a study of family practices among South Asian families in the U.K., Becher (2008) finds that religious family practices in particular allow for all family members, including children, “in jointly shaping religious involvement” (p. 176). He also finds that, alongside religion, another key value for these families is the maintenance of culture and tradition, along with “the desirability (or inevitability) of the adoption of new cultural practices in response to the British context” (p. 177). Families manage this process of adjustment through what Becher describes as “cultural consumption”, whereby people from South Asian Muslim backgrounds “live their tradition and culture” on a regular basis by wearing traditional clothes, speaking their original language and engaging with people within their own community but, on the other hand, also engage with British cultural practices. This is achieved through partaking in certain everyday activities or practices common within the host society:

On the other hand, cultural transformation was associated with notions of ‘fitting in’, and enacted in the adoption and adaptation of British cultural practices – wearing British clothes, eating English food, embracing changes in role expectations (particularly the acceptability of women working), and forging ‘bonding’ connections in mixed or secular settings of school and work. (Becher 2008, p. 178)

The development and implementation of inclusive settlement policies also seems to play an important role in facilitating settlement and adaptation of first and second generation migrants, as highlighted by Bozorgmehr and Douglas (2011, p. 23) and Berry and Sabatier (2010). In their study on acculturation, discrimination and adaptation among second generation Iranian immigrant youth in Montreal and Paris, Berry and Sabatier (2010) in particular conclude:
Finally, the pattern of relationships between how youth acculturate and how well they adapt largely replicates the findings with adult immigrants. Those seeking to integrate adapt better than those who are marginalised, with assimilation and separation ways falling in between. However, this set of relationships is stronger and more consistent in Montreal than in Paris. This difference appears to match the differences in public policy and public attitudes between the two societies: it is more difficult to adapt well when one’s ethnicity is being questioned. (2010, p. 206)

On issues of the granting of residence or citizenship, Mundy (2008) argues that those using these acts as a strategy to unite increasingly diverse societies appears to have failed and he questions “whether it is time to abolish the idea of homeland” (p. 11). Mundy states that in a globalising world: “It is becoming increasingly impossible to maintain social cohesion with civilised liberal and compassionate values when nations have replaced trading protectionism with identity protectionism. The nations themselves must be replaced and redefined, not the people who live in them” (2008, p. 13). Mundy’s thoughts on this topic remain ever relevant as populations move, including a growing number of populations displaced by conflicts and poverty—5.9 million people in the first half of 2013, making a total of 38.7 million worldwide—and seeking safe havens across the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2013).

Unfortunately, the growing trend in the number of people seeking asylum is, in some countries, including Australia, met with equally growing policy and political obstacles, quite often openly sustained by negative public sentiment towards refugee and asylum seeker resettlement (Centre for Advocacy Support and Education (CASE) for Refugees 2013; Kaunert & Léonard 2011; Power 2014). In spite of the current state of affairs on the immigration policy front, Australia maintains a positive balance in the way it has historically handled immigration since the 1970s. This is recognised by researchers such as Jupp (2002) and Jayasuriya (2005; 2008), who nevertheless stress that Australia’s efforts in this area, particularly from a twenty-first century policy perspective,
have been far from consistent or fair. As Jupp (2002) argues in the introduction to his book on Australia’s immigration history:

It is argued here that, while Australian Immigration and multicultural policy has been a success, it is also much more of a contested area than was previously supposed. (2002, p. 2)

Likewise, in an opinion piece that remains current, Jayasuriya (2005) notes that multiculturalism, and resulting successful public policies that evolved from the “egalitarian multiculturalism” of the Whitlam era, through to the “liberal multiculturalism” of the Fraser and Galbally era, and “managerial multiculturalism” under the Hawke-Keating and Howard eras, “have been under strain” (p. 1). He further argues that:

Without discounting the undoubted success of these policies in facilitating migrant settlement and adaptation at a time of high immigration in a rapidly changing society, they are now seen as being no longer functional or relevant to the needs of new waves of migrants as well as second and third generation migrants of ethnic origins. Furthermore, the public perception of state sponsored multiculturalism and bureaucratically controlled public policies remains confused and shrouded in uncertainty. (Jayasuriya, 2005, p. 1)

It is in this confused and uncertain state in the Australian settlement and immigration policy arena that this research is undertaken, with asylum seekers’ presently being invited to apply for Temporary Humanitarian Concern (THC) visas (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre 2014; Refugee Council of Australia 2014), a move confirmed in December 2014 with the passage of new migration legislation by the Australian Senate (Barns 2014). Adding to the uncertainty for individuals or families affected by these decisions is the fact that they are presently “prevented from applying for any other visa, including a Protection Visa, unless the Minister for Immigration agrees to lift the application bar”. And also, that “temporary visas issued to boat arrivals would not be counted against the 13,750 places available” in Australia’s yearly humanitarian visa intake (Refugee Council of Australia 2014).
In their 2006 study, Mansouri, Leach and Traies find that, compared to Iraqi refugees on permanent protection visas (PPV), recently arrived Iraqi refugees on these temporary protection visas (TPV) experienced greater difficulty in acculturating because of their initial experience:

For TPV holders, however, the stigmatisation of onshore asylum seekers was an exception to this type of more broadly perceived institutional egalitarianism. Many were alarmed at the hostile reception they had received in their first dealings with Government officials; in particular, the refusal to recognise the hardships they had faced in Iraq and the legitimacy of the reasons for their flight. (2006, p. 399)

The same authors also find that both TPV and PPV refugees were concerned about Australia’s liberal family norms and values and the greater level of freedom granted to children. This was in clear contrast with the higher level of respect for parental authority expected by parents in Iraq, with the same authors finding that: “Many of these concerns stemmed from the perceived clash between the norms of their religious traditions, and the materialist and individualistic culture of Australia” (2006, p. 401). Tellingly, Mansouri, Leach and Traies also find that tensions in the home resulted from their children’s faster acculturation, although some of the parents recognised that part of this process could be due to generational changes already taking place back in Iraq. Ultimately, Mansouri, Leach and Traies find that, for most of the respondents they interviewed: “The combination of balancing acculturative needs and generational differences was seen to make the parenting role particularly difficult” (2006, p. 402).

These views on the challenges faced by Muslim parents in Australia are corroborated by other researchers, such as Akbarzadeh and Saeed (2001, p. 9) and Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury (2011, p. 419). On the issue of identity, Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury (2010, p. 420) and Lewig, Arney and Salveron (2010, p. 327) find that while most of the parents had a desire to hold on to their cultural identity and maintain their traditional and cultural values, they had been overtaken by their children’s rapid acculturation. However, in their
research, Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury (2011) note that parents also acknowledged that some compromise had to be negotiated and that the adjustment process had to be gradual, a view that was supported by their children:

For many parents, the transmission of culture to the next generation was extremely important, but should be flexible. In addition, the new Australian culture should only be adopted at a gradual pace. This is a position that was fully endorsed by young people—a flexible way of negotiating cultural values across generations, rather than the rigid system of values. (2011, p. 420)

3.4 ACCESSING SUPPORT OR GUIDANCE WHEN NEEDED

This section provides a brief overview on the role of religiosity on family and couple relationships and of the types of services or supports religious families, in particular those of the Muslim faith, may choose to access if needed, starting with a brief discussion on the topic of marital conflict. I will not delve into specific therapeutic models of intervention; rather, I will briefly explore what the literature says about some of the factors that guide or influence Muslim parents’ choices or decisions when they are seeking support in relation to family or parenting issues. Referring to findings from research undertaken in Western countries, including Australia, I focus on three forms of help-seeking behaviours that families may be able to access should they be unable to resolve issues on their own. This may include: seeking counsel or mediation with immediate family members; seeking counsel or mediation from religious or community leaders; or accessing professional counselling or therapeutic services.

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that families will often attempt to resolve their problems or difficulties on their own, in order to save face or protect family privacy (Graham, Bradshaw & Trew 2010, p. 341; Lewig, Arney & Salveron 2010, p. 328; Nazari 2013, p. 91; Pe-Pua et al. 2010). Religious families may in these cases resort to religious texts or divine inspiration to resolve their problems or seek solace (Khan 2006, p. 42; Lambert & Dollahite
Research findings also show that, in general, and when exercised and interpreted sensibly, religiosity can become a powerful tool to strengthen family and couple relationships, resolve conflict (Lambert & Dollahite 2006; Mahoney et al. 2003), buffer the effects of marriage inequality (DeMaris, Mahoney & Pargament 2010), or improve parenting practices (Howard et al. 2007).

However, while findings on this topic appear mostly positive, researchers stress the variability in outcomes for families, with some of them noting that religiosity may in some cases lead to conflict or exacerbate problems. This is stressed by Marks’ (2006) review of the research addressing religion and relational health. He identifies three specific dimensions of religion normally correlated with healthier intergenerational and marital relationships—religious practices, religious beliefs and religious community—that may lead to inconsistent results in family relational health, depending on the manner or context within which those dimensions are applied. In brief, Marks summarises the possible adverse effects of each of those dimensions thus:

Religious practices are reportedly beneficial to marriage and parent–child relationships for many families and individuals, but compulsory family worship may have ill effects. ... Religious beliefs are reportedly influential in promoting long-term marriage, marital satisfaction, and marital quality when shared but there is some evidence that indicates religious beliefs may be more bane than boon in the context of inter-faith marriages ... Religious community is correlated with marital stability and quality when couples are actively involved together but religious affiliation alone is insignificant in most studies. (Marks 2006, p. 603)

These findings appear similar to those of Curtis and Ellison’s (2002) study on religious heterogamy and marital conflict among religious couples, which notes that the conflict can result from “the net effect of theological differences” between the couple in relation to such areas as finances, housework or gender roles. Curtis and Ellison conclude that their findings “contribute to a growing body of research indicating that religious factors—and particularly religious
disparities among partners—may have important implications for levels and types of marital conflict” (2002, p. 571).

3.4.1 Managing Marital Conflict

Focusing on Muslim families, and as highlighted throughout this literature review, it is important to acknowledge the religious ideology and cultural belief system underpinning Muslim family life, which, as in other major religions, upholds the commitment to lifelong partnership as Muslim marriage’s central value (Macfarlane 2012d, p. 1). These strong underpinnings play a key role in the choices that Muslim families make when faced with difficulties and are seen by some researchers as contributing to their resilience (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977; Rippin 1990). Other researchers note how strong religious ideology and cultural belief systems support Muslim family relationships and parenting (Oweis et al. 2012), strengthening them and also contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflict (Lambert & Dollahite 2006).

However, as is inevitable in the world of human relationships, marital or family conflict and parenting difficulties do occur, and Muslim families are certainly not immune to it (Azadarmaki & Bahar 2006; Bakar 2011; Rozario 2011). While religiousness and cultural belief systems may provide the tools to resolve marital or parent and child conflicts, research also shows that, when taken to heart or applied strictly, religious beliefs can lead to entrenched positions and possible escalation of conflict (Pe-Pua et al. 2010; Rozario 2011; Curtis & Ellison 2002). The resolution of these conflicts in Muslim countries, where the legal system is based on Shari’ah, can become more complex (Abu-Odeh 2004; Kamali 2011; Macfarlane 2012b, p. 21). Kamali notes in particular some of the issues that arise from different legal interpretations of Qur’anic verses relating to, among other things, gender equality, marital relations and family life. As he observes in relation to the state of affairs in the area of women’s rights across Muslim countries:
Many Muslim countries have introduced egalitarian laws and constitutions in the post-colonial period, which have had, however, a limited effect on curbing entrenched prejudicial practices concerning women. The problems so encountered often need to be read in the context of their own set of conditions in every country and region. Law reform on women’s rights in Southeast Asia and North Africa has been relatively more successful than other regions of the Muslim world. (2011, p. 41)

And on the specific topic of violence in the home, or intimate partner violence (IPV), Rippin (1993), Ibrahim and Abdalla (2010) and Macfarlane (2012) stress that, notwithstanding such behaviours being present across most societies, in Muslim societies it is usually attributed to Qur’anic verse 4:34, which reads:

As to those (wives) on whose part ye fear rebellion and desertion admonish them (first); (in case that does not reform their conduct) banish them to beds apart; (lastly, if they still prove to be incorrigible, ye are permitted to) beat them (with a tooth-brush or something like it, in order to awaken in them the sentiment of self-respect and the consciousness of the seriousness of their guilt in itself and in respect of its consequences for the family life, and in a manner which causes no injury or pain to them). Then if they obey you (by returning to the path of rectitude), seek not a way (of harassment or ill-treatment) against them. Verily, Allah is Most High, Great (wherefore it does not behove you to tyrannise over your wives). (Qur’an 4:34)

The use of this verse as justification or as an excuse to legitimise domestic violence or IPV has long been the subject of analysis by eminent Muslim writers, such as Ansari (n.d-a). In his examination of verse 4:34, Ansari addresses each of the three ways in which this verse allows a husband to handle a “serious breach of loyalty to the marital bond on the part of the wife” (p. 205). Of the three methods available—immediate divorce, legal action or personal action or remedy—Ansari argues for the latter, which he sees as reducing exposure to the public gaze and likely damage to the wife or the family as a whole.

However, in suggesting this approach, Ansari cautions Muslims on the use of wife beating as a remedy, reminding them of four important facts. Firstly, that the Qur’an “merely permitted” but did not make it compulsory to use this
remedy. Secondly, that, although it is permitted, it was actively discouraged by the Holy Prophet. Thirdly, that He stressed that the beating should only be of a “symbolic or nominal type”. Fourthly, and according to Ansari’s view, given that the function of the Qur’an is “to provide guidance to human beings belonging to all stages of social evolution”:

While unthinkable in respect of people belonging to the higher stages of social evolution, [this remedy] may yet form the only proper and ‘natural’ corrective instrument in the case of those who stand at the lower ladders of social and psychological refinement. (n.d-b, p. 206)

This particular interpretation of verse 4:34 is criticised by authors such as Rippin (1993), who, arguing that it comes from a modernist interpretation of Islam, notes that:

It is Modernists who encounter the greatest problem in dealing with this passage. To declare the law appropriate for an earlier time, appropriate for a stage when people were still evolving morally, is to suggest that even the legal contents of the Qur’an—the existence of God, his omnipotence and majesty—remains as the everlasting message of the scripture. (p. 102)

Many contemporary Muslim writers make clearer statements against the interpretation of verse 4:34 as an excuse for IPV. At the conclusion of their detailed examination of this verse’s use in legal, social and religious contexts, Ibrahim and Abdalla (2010) stress that it can be safely stated that it is not Islamic law that leads to IPV in Muslim societies. They note that, in reality, the misinterpretation or mistranslation of this verse is often due to a number of factors, such as cultural norms and practices, and a multitude of other variables, such as language, ethnicity, age and strength of religious belief. And the same authors argue that:

The cultural norms and practices of some Muslims, particularly those from strongly patriarchal societies, may assign an inferior status or secondary role

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20 Rippin (1993, p. 109) describes Fazlur Rahman Ansari as a “fervent Modernist” who, in approaching the text of the Qur’an, wished to “differentiate legal regulations from moral regulations, the former being contingent, the latter non-contingent. Legal rulings ruling must be considered binding in a moral sense even if not in their literal wording”.

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to women that may subject some women to abuse in their relationships. It is our contention, therefore, that most of the cases of wife abuse can be explained by the husband’s ignorance of the basic teachings of Islam on the kind and just treatment of women. (Ibrahim & Abdalla 2010, p. 344)

3.4.1.1  Seeking support within the family

If you fear a breach between the two [i.e. husband and wife in dispute] appoint arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, God will cause their reconciliation: for God has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things. (Qur’an 4:35)

Bakar notes that this Qur’anic verse recognises the important role that members of the extended family on both sides should have in resolving marital disputes, a view that is also supported by Ansari (n.d-b, pp. 207-208). Bakar also recognises that this approach to the resolution of marital disputes or conflict was more effective when at least three generations (children, parents and grandparents) lived close together. However, he stresses that where this ideal setting is not present, all efforts should be made to compensate for the loss of close family relationships in current modern life, “since the family institution and therefore society as well have suffered a great deal from the consequences of this loss” (2011, p. 19). So, according to Bakar and other Muslim writers, such as Tarazi (1995), Abbott et al (2012, p. 263) and Dadoo and Gunduz (2011), one of the first options for the resolution of marital disputes or other difficulties within the Muslim family system is the extended family. Dadoo and Gunduz also note that this is the chosen approach within other cultural groups because of the many advantages it offers:

An extended structure offers many advantages, including stability, coherence, and physical and psychological support, particularly in times of need. In Muslim culture, akin to other traditional cultures, respect and esteem increase with age. (2011, p. 221)

Unfortunately, for many families in Muslim and non-Muslim societies, this ideal scenario of three-generation families living in close proximity may often not be the reality. The changing family landscape has forced some Muslim
countries around the world to focus on social research and the development of social policies, health and social services to respond to the needs of families and individuals (Fakhr El-Islam, Malasi & Abu-Dagga 1998; Moghadam 2004; Oweis et al. 2012). In many of those countries, the focus on the strengthening of the traditional family and the hopes of the revival of its supportive and nurturing role is also strong. Bakar (2011) takes this focus on reviving the traditional family system one step further by challenging followers of other “traditional religions” to step forward and work together towards that goal, recommending, inter-alia, that:

Muslim groups need to conduct more dialogues with non-Muslim groups on the common challenges confronting family values and the family institution with the view of finding common and better solutions to these problems. (2011, p. 33)

On a positive note, research undertaken with Muslims living in Western countries reveals that the role of the family as a provider of resources, support and maintenance of religion and culture remains central (Hynie, Guruge & Shakya 2012; McMichael, Gifford & Correa-Velez 2011; Stuart et al. 2010). This is the case even when the family is reduced to the nuclear type, with only the mother, father and children. In their study of young Muslims in Australia, McMichael et al (2011) found that young people consider their families as central to their lives and as a key source of support: “The family is often described as providing a sense of belonging, shared understandings, guidance and designated roles” (p. 183). However, while families will always prefer to keep problems or difficulties private, and find their own resolutions, there are times when they will require outside help.

3.4.1.2 The role of the Mosque, religious and community leaders

While seeking support from within the immediate family may be the preferred option for many families, this may not always provide a viable option to resolve the problems they may be facing. In such cases, Muslim families or couples
may decide to seek the help of Muslim religious authorities, such as Imams\textsuperscript{21}, community leaders or Shaykhs\textsuperscript{22} (Savaya & Cohen 2005; Macfarlane 2012a; Abdullah 2007). These authors note that assistance from Imams or Shaykhs may be accessed through the local Mosque in cases of separation or religious divorce, or for mediation in relation to other family problems. And for Muslims in the diaspora, Mosques provide more than just a space for religious practice and education, becoming a centre where Muslims community members can also access religious education, information and social support (Ali, Milstein & Marzuk 2005; Borell & Gerdner 2011; Hodge 2005; Macfarlane 2012d; Yasmeen 2008). Hodge (2005) notes that while in traditional Muslim countries, Mosques tend to be places where Muslim gather for prayers: “In North America, numerous mosques have added to the services they offer, changing their characters substantially, to provide a greater degree of social support to the Islamic community” (p. 167). In their report on the needs of Australian Muslim families, Pe-Pua et al. (2010) also find that: “Irrespective of their cultural and linguistic background, Muslim families, young people and service providers all highlighted the importance of mosques as ‘places of social networking’” (p. 66).

However, growing demand on services provided by local Mosques in Australia raises questions about the capacity of religious or community leaders to provide

\textsuperscript{21} \textbf{Imam} – “One who stands in front; a role model for the Muslim community in all its spiritual and secular undertakings. The title is used interchangeably with the word \textit{khalifah} for the political head of the Sunni Muslim state. In legal writings the term is applied to the leader of the congregational prayers in the mosque ... Sunni Muslims use the title for their prominent jurists, who are also regarded as the founders of their legal schools, such as Abu Hanifah and Shafii. In Shii Islam the imam is the divinely appointed successor of Muhammad and is regarded as infallible, with the ability to make binding decisions in all areas of human activity ... In North America, in the absence of official ordainment, religious leaders connected with different Islamic centers often use the title to indicate their religious standing in the community”. (Esposito 2003, p. 102)

\textsuperscript{22} \textbf{Shaykh} – “A pre-Islamic honorific title. Meaning embraces concepts such as ‘leader’, ‘patriarch’, ‘notable’, ‘elder’, ‘chief’, and ‘counsellor’. The term ‘shaykh al-din’ has been applied to men who possess scriptural learning. Heads of religious orders are called shaykhs, as are Qur’anic scholars, jurists, and those who preach and lead prayers in the mosque. A shaykh’s reputation traditionally depended on his ability to resolve disputes, a detailed knowledge of customary law (urf), an ability to dispense hospitality on a grand scale, and an ability to lead in times of raiding and warfare. Among tribespeople, the title is not inherited, and one can attain or lose that rank”. (Esposito 2003, p. 219)
effective support to families and individuals, given the great demand on them (Ali, Milstein & Marzuk 2005; Pe-Pua et al. 2010, p. 54). Moreover, Macfarlane’s (2012b) research into the provision of counselling or mediation by Imams in the U.S., mainly in cases involving incidents of IPV, reveals that the quality of those services is often inconsistent. She notes that some Imams in the U.S. do not address women’s need for protection from their violent partners:

Some imams actively discourage women suffering abuse from contacting or appealing for assistance to outside agencies, including police, refuges and the courts, suggesting that it is somehow ‘un-Islamic’. Even when there is no explicit discouragement, there is a feeling of helpless passivity surrounding these imams. (Macfarlane 2012b, p. 32)

Macfarlane further notes that this approach to IPV comes from Imams who apply continuous pressure on couples to reconcile, discouraging them from seeking support from outside agencies which they see as “un-Islamic” or too “rights-based, even in the face of substantial evidence of prolonged domestic violence. Women face a battle not only with their violent spouse but also with their community if they report the abuse” (p. 32). However, Macfarlane (2012) also stresses that: “Other imams are clear about their responsibility to involve the police in cases of abuse and routinely contact the authorities when they hear an allegation of abuse. They anticipate and explicitly counter any misapprehension that it is disloyal or ‘un-Islamic’ to involve outside authorities”. She notes, however, that this group is smaller than those who “discourage or tacitly reject outside assistance” (p. 32).

Some of the research in these areas points to the fact that many of these clergymen or community leaders do not possess any qualifications in the helping professions, having been appointed to those positions based on their religious knowledge. Also, across many non-Muslim countries, Imams may be trained overseas and appointed to their positions from overseas, without the input of the local congregation (Pe-Pua et al. 2010, pp. 54-55). Some of them may also preach and practise different branches of Islam (Ghorashi & Moghissi
and that may lead to conflicting advice and practices in the areas of family law and women’s issues in Western countries. Research findings and recommendations resulting from community consultations also reveal concerns in relation to the lack of professional qualifications and training of Imams and, in certain cases, a limited knowledge of local support systems and a lack of understanding about the issues affecting local Muslim families (Ali, Milstein & Marzuk 2005, p. 204; Pe-Pua et al. 2010; Jurak 2005; Dar Al Shifah 2003, p. 20). As Pe-Pua et al. (2010) find in relation to religious leaders in the Australian context:

While they may be very well trained and knowledgeable around religious issues, the quick turnover limited their understanding of the Australian service system and of the underlying social issues experienced by local Muslim families. (p. 55)

In spite of some of the shortfalls identified by current research, there is also a consensus that the role of the Mosque and Muslim community and religious leaders in the area of family and individual support remains one of critical importance for Muslim communities in the diaspora.

### 3.4.1.3 Professional counselling and therapy

For most families, when the family, religious or community options fail to resolve relationship or parenting problems or difficulties, families may have to resort to the services of private or state-run counselling or mediation services. In their studies on the role of religion and spirituality on family assessments, and marriage and family therapy, Nedumaruthumchalil (2009), Moncher and Josephson (2004) and Walsh (2010) urge practitioners in the mental health and helping professions to carefully explore and assess their client families’ religious and spiritual dimensions and to include them in their treatment plan. This, they stress, must nevertheless be undertaken in an ethical manner, with careful consideration given to the seeking of informed consent in situations where the collaboration with, or referral to, religious leaders may be sought. On this particular topic, Moncher and Josephson (2004) assert that:
Clinicians are most helpful to families when they recognize that for many individuals, suffering and distress are spiritual concerns and their patients’ religion can be a powerful therapeutic resource. (p. 65)

While in majority Muslim countries, families and individuals are more likely to access counselling or therapeutic services delivered by qualified Muslim practitioners who are better equipped to adopt this approach (Azadarmaki & Bahar 2006; Dakir et al. 2012; Savaya & Cohen 2005, p. 729), this may not be the case in the Muslim diaspora. This is due to several factors linked to community size, or the lack of qualified Muslim practitioners.

As a result, and in recognition of the critical importance of religion and the cultural diversity across the Islamic diaspora, a significant volume of the literature focuses on the need for professionals in the mental health and helping professions to develop the cross-cultural skills to work with service recipients from Muslim backgrounds (Abbott, Springer & Hollist 2012; Ali, Liu & Humedian 2004; Cook-Masaud & Wiggins 2011; Daneshpour 1998; Graham, Bradshaw & Trew 2010; Hodge 2005; Scourfield et al. 2013b; Williams 2005). There are two key messages from research for non-Muslim professionals providing counselling or therapeutic services to Muslim couples or families. One is the importance of partnering or collaborating with Muslim religious people in the therapeutic process and the prevention of IPV (Ibrahim & Abdalla 2010, p. 343; Kennedy et al. 2010). The other is the need for practitioners to develop cross-cultural capacity, so that theirs is a “value-based practice that respects and is sensitive to Islamic principles and teachings” (Ibrahim & Abdalla 2010, p. 343), an approach also supported by Abdullah (2007), Ibrahim and Dykeman (2011), and Lewig, Arney and Salveron (2010). The research is also clear on the need for these two approaches to be used concurrently in order to maximise the outcome for clients (Abdullah 2007, p. 51; Cook-Masaud & Wiggins 2011, p. 255).
On the importance of engaging collaboratively with Muslim religious people in the therapeutic process, Abdullah stresses that:

For counselors who encounter Muslim clients, understanding the dynamics of Muslim communal life and counseling trends within the community, and assessing them in relation to their intervention plans, as well as engaging in collaborative efforts with stakeholders in Muslim communities, can have significant mutual benefit in the counseling encounter. (2007, p. 51)

Reflecting on therapeutic practices with Muslim clients in the U.S., Kennedy et al. (2010, pp. 364-365) note that, while a therapist’s knowledge and understanding of Islamic culture is important, “experts in Islamic studies are able to offer more specific and case-related feedback that may enhance therapy provided to the Muslim population”. These authors provide guidance on how to use this collaborative approach in therapy with Muslim clients, noting that, since Islam is not a consonant, unified group, the therapist must tailor the treatment to the individual client’s relationship with Islam. For that reason, he recommends that the Islamic component of the collaboration be implemented in four stages. The first stage deals with “choosing the consultant”, who should be someone who is familiar with the client’s “ethnoregional” religious group, be conversant with various aspects of Islamic practice and be aware of various issues commonly affecting the Muslim community. The second stage is described as “working with self of the therapist and Islam”. This stage involves ensuring that the non-Muslim therapist becomes aware of their possible stereotypical views of Islam, Islamic culture, and Muslims and “how this understanding might or might not be relevant to the client”. The third stage deals with “Islamic cultural and religious assessment”. This process is implemented at the point where client and therapist have established a degree of trust where the client permits the engagement of a religious consultant. From this point, the therapist discusses their initial sense of religiosity of their client and shares information that will allow the consultant to make an initial cultural and religious assessment. The fourth and final stage of this collaborative therapeutic process is described as “Islamic cultural and religious intervention”. During this stage, “the therapist and consultant should discuss
the formal cultural and religiosity assessment as well as the possibility of cultural or religiosity-based interventions” (Kennedy et al. 2010, p. 365).

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter illustrates the reach of modernity and globalisation, or “globalised modernity”, as Madigan (2009) describes it, and how this phenomenon leaves no country or culture untouched, with Muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike describing the tensions it causes within the Islamic ummah. Writing on this topic, Hassan (2008, p. 100) notes that, in some predominantly Muslim countries, this is leading to a tightening of religious practices across family and religious settings, against a backdrop of difficult economic circumstances. However, there is also agreement among researchers that the Muslim world displays strong resilience and commitment to Islam, which is demonstrated by individual Muslims’ willingness to adopt and practice Islam (Hassan 2008; Rahman 1979; Rippin 1993). These researchers note that modernity and globalisation is also affecting families in Western societies who, like their Muslim counterparts, try to protect their families via a return to traditional ways ('Abd al 'Ati 1977; Bakar 2011).

The effects of mass-communication that was created by the advent of the internet and the digital age, and the rapid industrialisation in some developing countries, receive particular attention from researchers like Ahmed and Bould (2004); Madigan (2009); Rozario (2011); and Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman and Schvanevedlt (2005). Most see these developments as presenting both advantages and challenges for Muslims all over the world, provided that they are used in a sensible manner. Researchers such as Madigan (2009, p. 1) stress that “globalised modernity” had the effect of radically changing the “power structures of many civilisations” and that, “in the contemporary struggle between patriarchy and the forces of modernity, religions are themselves experiencing the turmoil that accompanies any major social transformation”. In some countries, such as the UAE and Iran, researchers find that most people
are happy with the affluence that modernisation brings, with access to higher
education, social mobility and wealth. However, research also finds that this
affluence has negative effects on family life, with higher rates of divorce and the
breakdown of the family unit, brought about by young people moving
sometimes a long way from the family home in search of employment or
further education (Azadarmaki & Bahar 2006; Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale &
Chinichian 2011).

In spite of this experience of modern life across majority Muslim countries,
many Muslim families resettling in Western countries may not be better
prepared for life in their adopted countries. As Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale and
Chinichian (2011) and Te Lindert et al. (2008) note, the immigration process
presents a major life challenge for families, mainly when it involves not just a
major geographical move, but also significant social and cultural change.
For many Muslim families, this experience is made more complex and trying by
the current social and political climate, where Islam continues to be seen as a
risk (Ryan & Vachelli 2013), and in some cases as well, due to the effect of
restrictive immigration or social policies (Brah 2007; Grillo 2008; O'Neill 2010;
Samers 2010). The media also plays a role in placing undue stress on Muslim
individuals and families, quite often keeping alive negative depictions of
Muslims that subsequently lead to incidents of discrimination or antagonism
(Aslan 2009; Ciftci 2012; Kabir 2004; Rousseau & Jamil 2010).

Muslim parents living in Western liberal societies are faced with the challenges
of fulfilling and upholding Islam’s moral and behavioural rules while their
children are exposed to, and engaged with, Western lifestyles and mores
(Bakar 2011; Hamilton 1995). For some of those parents, their parenting tasks
are made all the more challenging by the absence of help from immediate or
extended family and by living in an individualistic society, leading to the need
for considerable cultural adjustments (Moghissi, Goodman & Rahnema 2009;
Ramadan 2004; Ryan & Vachelli 2013). Research on Muslim families’
experience of resettlement reveals that parents who are unable to negotiate and adjust to the host culture are likely to find themselves in intergenerational conflict situations (Arnett 2006; Moghissi 2010; Nassehi-Behman 2010). In some circumstances, parents who use strict forms of discipline, such as corporal punishment, may find themselves in breach of laws for the protection of children, which take into consideration the best interests of the child at the expense of the parents’ rights (Freeman 1998-1999; Hamilton 1995; Walter, Isenegger & Bala 1995).

And it is not only parenting and parent/child relationships that can be negatively affected by resettlement in a new society and cultural environment. Research undertaken across Western European countries and the U.S. provides conclusive evidence of the significant effect that it also has on family relationships. In their research on Somalis living in Finland, Degni, Pöntinen and Mölsä (2006) find that the adjustments to life in the new country led to significant changes in family dynamics and structure, with husbands required to become more involved in household and child-rearing tasks.

Economic necessities, and the lack of extended family support, also mean that quite often wives will have to engage in paid employment, hence removing their husband’s traditional role as breadwinners. Research on Iranian families who resettled in the U.K., the U.S., Canada, and the Netherlands (Bozorgmehr & Douglas 2011; Nassehi-Behman 2010; Shirpak, Maticka-Tindale & Chinichian 2011; Te Lindert et al. 2008) tells similar stories, with researchers also finding that couples were forced to negotiate or accept more egalitarian relationships. However, some of these researchers note that, while fathers and mothers alike found these changes liberating, they could also lead to potential conflict.

On a positive side, the development of a sense of identity and of belonging to the host country, its community, social and political environment may assist
individuals and families in their settlement process (Mansouri & Wood 2008; Stepen 2008). Research shows that families can achieve this while maintaining their connection to their cultural and religious heritage through the “lens of ritual” and use of life-cycle events and traditions, including those with religious foundations (Grillo 2008). Muslim migrant families are helped in this process by the strength and effectiveness of Islamic teachings, which authors such as Ahmad (1984) and Hooker (2004) see as a notable phenomenon in the face of Islam’s vast cultural and ethnic diversity. But in spite of this strength, immigration policies and the social and political environment can have an adverse effect on Muslim settlement. As a result, findings from research reveal the increasingly complex and challenging processes that families and individuals, mainly refugees and asylum seekers, have to negotiate during their immigration and settlement journey (Buitelaar & Stock 2010; Cote 2002; Onder 1996). These trends are evident in the current Australian context, where immigration and settlement policies, mainly those targeting asylum seekers, have, according to some commentators, recently become particularly restrictive and even punitive (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre 2014; Barns 2014).

In this chapter, I also explored issues around Muslim families’ decisions on accessing family or parenting services or support, some insights into their preferences and the type of services—religious, community or professional—they may choose in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. I include a brief discussion on issues of IPV and the prevalent discourse around the interpretation of verse 4:34 as an excuse for IPV. In this section, I included the views of Islamic scholars such as Ibrahim and Abdalla (2010), who, after detailed examination of this verse’s use in legal, social and religious contexts, stress that it can be safely stated that it is not Islamic law that leads to IPV in Muslim societies. They note that, in reality, the misinterpretation or mistranslation of this verse is often due to a number of factors, such as cultural norms and practices.
4. METHODOLOGY

Although the data can ‘speak’ to us as analyses emerge out of the data, it is through our active, mental work that we develop interpretations, and this is the more significant part of treating our work where we knit together seemingly disparate data and convey their meanings. In some respects, this is the most frustrating aspect of doing research. I, at least frequently, have the uneasy, gnawing feeling that the meaning is escaping me, although I know there’s more to it than what I’ve said so far. (McCutcheon 1999, p. 284)

In this passage, McCutcheon shares her own reflections on the qualitative data analysis process and the search for meaning within rich and detailed data collected. This chapter outlines the steps that I took from the inception of this research, including the thinking behind the chosen design and methodology, the processes for the collection and analysis of the data, and the final weaving of all the living stories into the research’s analysis and conclusions. A number of important factors emerged during the design stage. Chief among them is the great cultural and ethnic diversity within the Muslim community. The Australian Muslim community encompasses people born locally (or non-Muslims who converted to Islam) and those who arrived in Australia from many overseas countries (Kabir 2004; Saeed 2003). Because I chose to pursue a very wide line of inquiry, the study had to capture, as much as possible: this cultural and ethnic diversity; the different settlement paths; the role of religious beliefs and practice in participants’ lives; and their views on identity, belonging and experience of life in Australia.

In order to achieve these demographics, the sample had to include Muslim participants who: were born in Australia to Muslim parents (or who had converted to Islam); originated from across the Muslim diaspora; settled under different migration programs, such as business, skilled, or humanitarian; or had arrived in recent years as asylum seekers. Methods for the recruitment of participants were multifaceted and included: snowball sampling; e-mails to Muslim community organisations, associations or local Mosques; and contact with non-government settlement services. Ultimately, snowball sampling was
the most effective method, resulting in the recruitment of the 31 participants, including six living in regional WA.

From the outset, this research was placed firmly within the post-positivist, naturalistic paradigm, its design supporting the chosen qualitative methodological approach. The recruitment, interviewing, and transcription processes took place concurrently between March 2009 and April 2011, with the preparation of transcripts for analysis following closely. Most interviews were held at participants’ homes or at venues of their choice, leading to interviews that were rich in content and consistently covered the research questions to the point of “saturation” (Corbin & Holt 2005). Each of these interviews became truly humbling and enriching, with participants sharing their lived experiences. In the brief time I spent with them, they took me through their families’ journey into Australia and their experiences as parents, some of them also recalling their own experiences as children growing up in Australia and illustrating their points with private family stories. In many instances, it was difficult to end the interviews; there was much more to talk about, and there were many more stories to share and explore.

The use of the ATLAS.Ti computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) became a useful tool in the research process, given the large and rich amount of information collected from participants. The detailed process of validation and data analysis made me conversant with each interview, a factor that greatly helped in the coding and thematic analysis processes. I conclude this chapter with a brief exercise on reflexivity, where I provide some examples of how I applied it to my research, and an outline of ways confidentiality and other ethical issues were addressed as the research progressed through its different stages.
4.1 DESIGN

Ways of knowing are guided by assumptions concerning what we are about when we inquire and by assumptions concerning the nature of the phenomenon into which we inquire. (Schwandt 1990, p. 262)

Schwandt makes this statement in his article on the study of methodology in the post-positivistic culture of inquiry. With it, he notes the important link between methodology and epistemology, because “the study of methodology is not simply to examine the exercise of method, it is to study a way of knowing” (p. 262). In the conclusion to his paper, he stresses that, irrespective of our belief that scientific, constructivist or critical theory modes of investigation in the social sciences are different types of inquiry, “what is most important is that we recognise that these are human practices reflecting lived conduct rooted in our attempts to make sense of complex social and moral reality” (p. 275).

This research uses a qualitative research methodology that provides the necessary flexibility to explore private and potentially complex issues related to family life and parenting within the context of migration and settlement in a new social environment, facilitating the collection of participants’ rich settlement and life experiences. A key feature in this research’s methodology is the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews and one focus group session. This approach emphasises the “learning from participants in a setting”, where the researcher learns from the stories told by participants (Creswell & Maietta 2002), predominantly using “face-to-face rather than remote forms of data collection” (Norris & Walker 2005: 133). As Barbour and Schostak (2005) describe:

Clearly, the interview is much more than just a tool, like a drill to screw deeper into the discursive structures that frame the worlds of ‘subjects’. It is a way of seeing, or rather a condition for seeing anything at all. (p. 43)
Figure 1 provides a schematic display of the research design that, in all its apparent simplicity and linearity, hides the many activities and processes that took place.

Reading as widely as possible and exploring literature from pre and post-Islamic times to contemporary Islamic issues were important first steps into my research. Reading “widely rather than narrowly” is what Somekh et al. (2005, p. 337) recommend, noting that an important part of research “is reading that opens up for you other research and sheds an interesting light on your own”. The secret, they say, is “to treat reading irreverently” (p. 337). My earlier exploration of Islam for the development of the research proposal was the start of my exploration of the realm of Islam and an essential preparatory activity for a non-Muslim researcher about to embark on research into Muslim family life and parenting. This gave me important historical information on the genesis of Islam and allowed me to start making sense of its prevalent values and social mores.
This initial preparation process is consistent with what Lincoln and Guba (1991, p. 235) describe as the “orientation and overview” phase of naturalistic inquiry. During this initial phase, the researcher will “get some handle on what is salient (that is, what one needs to find out about)”. This process continued with my literature review, which was equally broad and required a comprehensive re-write in order to focus on the research topics. Again referencing Lincoln and Guba, these processes, though lengthy, helped me to determine the boundaries for the research:

Determining the focus of an inquiry serves two major purposes. First, such focusing establishes the boundaries for a study; it defines the terrain, as it were, that is to be considered the proper territory of the inquiry. If the research problem deals with an apparent contradiction offered to a certain already-grounded theory by a new “fact”, the territories defined by the other categories are not germane. (Lincoln & Guba 1991, p. 227)

Being clear on the focus and boundaries of my research was critical, as people’s stories are held within the context of their identities, culture and lived experiences (al-Hibri 1982; Engineer 2005).

The purposeful sampling strategy used for recruiting participants was consistent with a qualitative approach methodology and was used until the “point of redundancy” was reached (Lincoln & Guba 1991, p. 202). The gradual ongoing interview/transcription/data analysis process that took place over a twelve-month period made this sampling strategy possible and is supported by naturalistic inquiry’s emergent design feature (Lincoln & Guba 1991, p. 41). Following on from the use of qualitative, naturalistic design, inductive data analysis is the preferred process used, because, among other things, and as Lincoln and Guba stress, “that process is more likely to identify the multiple realities to be found in those data [and] because inductive data analysis is more likely to identify the mutually shaping influences that interact” (p. 40). This data analysis was facilitated by the use of the software package ATLAS.Ti.
4.2 METHODS

4.2.1 The Interviews

Put most simply, interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation. (Holstein & Gubrium 2003, p. 67)

I took to the interviews with a degree of confidence stemming from my counselling and research experience, but also with some degree of concern. This was mainly due to my awareness of the impact that the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and extremist terrorism elsewhere around the world, and the unending media coverage of Islamic extremism, has on the wider community, and on people of Muslim backgrounds in particular. The approach I used in my interviews is consistent with that of Wells (2011, p. 30) or Elliott (2005, pp. 18-35), who stress the need for the qualitative researcher to create the right environment to elicit rich descriptive accounts of individuals’ lives, while capturing the context in which their stories evolve. As a result, the interviews were active, as I tried to elicit and clarify information from participants. Addressing the process of active interviewing, Holstein and Gubrium (2003, p. 68) point out that: “Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter.”

Facilitating and encouraging the flow of information and minimising interruptions are important factors in naturalist research design. The interviews were carried out in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner that accommodated participants’ requests in relation to time and venue. This included ensuring that interview times did not clash with prayer times or other special occasions, and allowing female participants to choose a venue where there could be some privacy, but where they were near other fellow Muslims. Eleven interviews were held at participants’ homes, with an equal
number (including the focus group) held at the Muslim Women’s Support Centre in Cannington; only two interviews were held at public venues chosen by participants. This contributed to most interviews’ taking place within a focused environment that provided ideal conditions for electronic recording. The need for a sensitive and respectful approach in the preparation and undertaking of interviews is necessary in order to engage participants and establish rapport with them. However, as Fontana and James (1994, p. 367) caution, while rapport must be established, the researcher must avoid becoming too involved and gain trust, as:

Gaining trust is essential to an interviewer’s success, and even once it is gained trust can be very fragile indeed; any faux pas by the researcher may destroy days, weeks, or months of painstakingly gained trust. (1994, p. 367)

These are important considerations when using interviews as a method of data collection, and they are unavoidable, owing to the “up close and personal nature” of naturalistic enquiry (Norris & Walker 2005, p. 133).

The interviews started with the provision of written information on the research, including confidentiality, and seeking informed consent for the interview and electronic recording. Lincoln and Guba (1991) note that seeking informed consent from participants is particularly important when the inquiry is guided by the naturalistic paradigm, because, “to the legal and moral reasons for seeking consent we may add the special sensitivity of the naturalistic approach” (pp. 255-256). Only in one particular case did a participant request that their name not be mentioned throughout the interview. This was due to their wish for complete anonymity. Some of the participants declined to sign the consent form; this was not mandatory. In these cases, participants’ verbal consent was obtained and recorded electronically.

Once these initial steps were completed, the interviews started with some questions about family composition and, where relevant, participants’ history
of arrival in Australia. This led to the discussion of particular issues or challenges that eventually emerged for them or their family. This approach facilitated the flow of information and the discussion of parenting and family relationship issues. Invariably, participants appeared to become gradually at ease as the interview progressed, and the information flowed with little hesitation. This outcome can be attributed to the interview style, combined with the use of prompts, and the establishment of trust and rapport between participants and myself (Arksey & Knight 1999, p. 101).

The interviews were guided by the schedule I had previously developed (see Appendix 2) in order to answer the research questions: i) issues or challenges that emerged for participants and their family following settlement; ii) how they or their family dealt with those issues or challenges; iii) child-rearing styles and parenting strategies used; and, iv) how they sought parenting or relationship advice or support when needed. This schedule—not handed out to participants—was useful during the initial interviews, allowing me to deal with broader (but related) topics arising from the open-ended questions, while ensuring that I did not stray from the key research questions and helping me maintain consistency throughout the data collection process. This process is consistent with the naturalistic interview technique where the interviewer paces the interview, keeping it productive and essentially maintaining flexibility in order to follow up “promising leads or return to earlier points that seem to require fuller development” (Lincoln & Guba 1991, pp. 270-271). The interviews lasted from one to two hours, which was within the expected range, with most interviews lasting an average of 1½ hours. Interviews ended at the point where the participants and I thought that the topics had been covered, with an open invitation for a further meeting should they want to add to their stories.
4.2.2 Recruiting Participants

This research looks specifically into Muslim parenting and family relationships within the context of migration, settlement, and life in Australia. This is a topic addressed to varying depth in the context of research on Muslim settlement in Western Australia (Kabir 2004; Yasmeen 2008; Yasmeen & Al Khudairi 1998), although similar research has been more extensively undertaken in Australia’s Eastern seaboard, in particular New South Wales and Victoria (Akbarzadeh & Saeed 2001; Awad 2013; Mansouri & Wood 2008; Pe-Pua et al. 2010; Saeed 2003). This higher level of research activity is probably due to the higher number of Muslim families and communities that have settled, and continue settling, in that part of Australia.

However, recent population and immigration statistics show that the number of Muslim families and individuals settling in WA increased by nearly 50% in the five years since the 2006 census (Australia Bureau of Statistics 2015), as Table 1 below demonstrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Australia Growth</th>
<th>NSW Growth</th>
<th>WA Growth</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>147,487</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>200,885</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>102,288</td>
<td>12,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>281,578</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>140,097</td>
<td>19,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>424,405</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>168,789</td>
<td>23,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>476,300</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>219,377</td>
<td>34,581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The desired characteristics for the sample were Muslim parents living in Western Australia, with some of them having recently arrived in Australia as humanitarian entrants or asylum seekers (refugees) within the previous five years. Participants in this research are Australian-born Muslims and Muslims who settled in Australia as early as 1979, or as recently as 2009, and reside in Western Australia. They were recruited using purposive or purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba 1991; Miller & Salkind 2002). There were no parameters placed on qualifications, employment status, marital status or age, and arrangements were in place for seeking parental consent should young people under 18 years of age offer to participate. The recruitment process was multifaceted and included:

- e-mail broadcasts through the Centre for Muslim States and Societies (CMSS) network (see Appendix 3); the content in the information sheet was adapted for this e-mail correspondence, which was also sent out to other organisations and individuals
- a small advertisement published in a local community newspaper seeking research participants
- contact with funded non-government services providing Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) or Settlement Grants Program (SGP) services
- approaches to local Muslim community organisations and local Muslim community and religious leaders
- snowball sampling (word of mouth).

The contact with HSS and SGP service providers in regional and metropolitan areas funded by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) (formerly the Department of Immigration and Citizenship) sought the participation of recently arrived humanitarian entrants. Unfortunately, only two service providers responded to my requests for assistance, facilitating a total of four individual interviews and the focus group. Reluctance by key

23 In early 2014, the management and funding of the HSS and SGP programs were transferred from the DIBP to the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).
government departments, or their funded agencies, to collaborate with this research is probably related to the highly politicised and sometimes controversial nature of immigration policy and practice, and arises from the practice of “gate keeping” by organisations (Wolff 2000, p. 199).

The outcome of attempts to recruit participants from regional areas, such as the South-West, the Murchison, and the Great Southern regions of Western Australia was equally disappointing. An exception was a Shire Council in Western Australia’s Great Southern region. This Shire has documented success in their resettlement programs, multicultural policies and programs and provided invaluable assistance with the recruitment of six participants. These participants provided some insight into the different experiences of settlement in that particular regional area. However, information obtained from these interviews does not allow for comparisons with settlement experiences in metropolitan areas. This is nevertheless a topic worth exploring further, as other regional shire councils look forward to replicating their counterpart’s successes with its resettlement program in partnership with DIBP (Collier 2011, pp. 24-25; Grylls 2011, pp. 14-15).

Because of the sample’s diversity and multifaceted recruitment and data collection processes, the research was time consuming and demanding, but it was significantly assisted by a small university grant that covered the costs for the professional transcription of interviews. Arguably, the offer of inducements could possibly have assisted with the recruitment of participants; however, as a PhD candidate, I had a reduced capacity for using such inducements. McLean and Campbell (2003) highlight the complexities of recruiting research informants in multiethnic communities in the U.K. and mention the use of financial or material inducements to increase participation. In their 2003 research, they identify six overarching factors which may affect responses of each ethnic group to invitations to participate: informants’ organisational affiliation; honorarium payment; informants’ gender and age; institutional
context; style of interview (length, semi-structured nature); and previous experience of research. McLean and Campbell suggest that information under each of these factors, together with each individual community’s characteristics, has to be taken into account in planning recruitment among minority (and majority) ethnic groups (p. 59).

Ultimately, snowball sampling and word of mouth, an approach promoted by Mangen (1999, p. 113) and Gomm (2004, p. 94), were the two main methods used, enabling the research to exceed the initial target of 15 to 20 interviews, with the majority of participants residing in the Perth metropolitan area. This higher number of participants led to a sample that largely captured some of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Muslim community in Western Australia. It also helped to provide a good overview of settlement experiences and their effect on family functioning and parenting, including some reflections on pre and post-settlement experiences. Only one focus group session was held, with three participants and the assistance of an interpreter, the only occasion that an interpreter was required during the data collection process. This focus group was unplanned and resulted from a request from the facilitating agency, as the participants interviewed were attending a meeting there on that date. The interpreter was a staff member at the agency and had been working with the participants.

The recruitment and interview of participants was concluded when I assessed that no new information was being generated, in line with what Lincoln and Guba (1991) describe as the “redundancy criterion” or Corbin and Holt (2005, p. 51) describe as “data saturation”. This criterion is consistent with the method of purposive (naturalistic) sampling, which is very different from conventional sampling because “it is based on informational, not statistical, consideration. Its purpose is to maximise information, not facilitate generalisation” (Lincoln & Guba 1991, p. 202). Table 2 provides an overview of the sample numbers and main characteristics.
Interviews:
- Total number of participants — 31
- Total interviews — 24
- Gender: 13 males
- 18 females
- 5 couples interviewed jointly
- 18 individual interviews
- A focus group with 3 participants
- 11 participants arrived as refugees between 2 and 17 years ago

Table 2: Sample number and characteristics.

The diversity of life experiences among participants extends to other areas that include:

- Humanitarian entrants—11 participants arrived in Australia as refugees, some as illegal maritime arrivals.\(^{24}\)
- Relationship issues—eight participants (one male and seven females) experienced separation or divorce.
- Relationship status/parenting—seven participants (one male and six females) were single parents.
- Childhood experiences—eight participants were born, or raised from a young age, in Australia and are now raising their own children.

The last provided an opportunity to explore how participants’ own experiences as children growing up in Australia influenced their own parenting style, or helped them develop specific parenting strategies.

\(^{24}\) Illegal maritime arrival (IMA) is a term used by the Australian Government to describe asylum seekers who arrive on Christmas Island or the Australian mainland by sea or by plane. These IMAs are currently not provided permanent protection and have the option of returning voluntarily to their country of origin (DIBP, 2015).
4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Narratives do not mirror, they refract the past. Imagination and strategic interests influence how storytellers choose to connect events and make them meaningful for others. Narratives are useful in research precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. The “truths” of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future. (Riessman 2004, p. 708)

Each of the transcribed interviews was stored electronically and analysed using the ATLAS.Ti software. In matters of CAQDAS use, authors such as Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor (2003, p. 208), Miller and Salkind (2002, p. 108) and Friese (2012) highlight the usefulness of these tools, but stress the need for proper integration into the research process. As Friese summarises:

Software frees you from all those tasks that a machine can do much more effectively, like modifying code words and coded segments, retrieving data based on various criteria, searching for words, integrating material in one place, attaching notes and finding them again, counting the numbers of coded incidences, offering overviews at various stages of a project and so on. (2012, p. 1)

All interviews were electronically recorded except for two that were manually recorded upon participants’ request. All electronically recorded interviews were professionally transcribed, and completed transcripts were checked against the original voice recordings. This process ensured the removal of pauses or repetition, and the replacement of some of the words missed or misunderstood by transcribers because of some of the participants’ strong accents, or background noises. This data checking and validation process contributed to added clarity without changing content or meaning (Arksey & Knight 1999, p. 146). The importance of this process is heightened by the fact that the interviews encapsulated the theoretical constructs for the research—identity formation and acculturation theories. This is stressed by Kowal and O’Connell (2000, p. 249), who note the fact that “the creation and use of transcripts are theory-loaded constructive processes” that affect all aspects of transcription. Statistical information from the ABS 2011 population census and
DIBP immigration statistics is used within relevant sections of this research as appropriate. These statistics provide context to the research and illustrate the distribution of the Muslim population across Australia.

The interactive nature of the interviews and richness of information collected influenced my decision to analyse the interview material using a thematic analysis. Riessman notes that, with thematic analysis: “Emphasis is on the content of a text, ‘what’ is said more than ‘how’ it is said, the ‘told’ rather than the ‘telling’. An (unacknowledged) philosophy of language underpins the approach: language is a direct and unambiguous route to meaning” (Riessman 2004, p. 706). These principles guided me in the task of identifying the emerging themes and determining the main family or groupings (see Table 3). As would be expected in studies of this kind, the interviews provide a great amount of rich and complex information.

The codes created are not individual or completely separate entities; they overlap and interconnect, all of them contributing to answering the research questions. This process of data analysis and coding took place as interview transcripts became available. These themes are captured within quotations—988 in total—and coded accordingly. In total, there are 128 codes grouped under 15 Code Families (CF) as shown on Table 3, which shows a screen grab from Atlas.Ti. The number in brackets shown in front of each CF indicates the number of codes contained within each of those CFs. The Atlas.Ti screen grab shown on Table 4 shows all codes contained within the CF Parenting, and the number of associated quotations contained within the Code ‘Challenges—values or parenting’ (inset). The coding (or indexing) and thematic analysis was carried out on a gradual, systematic basis over a period of 12 months and assisted by the use of the note taking and memo writing tools available within ATLAS.Ti. Kelle (2000) highlights the usefulness of CAQDAS in the backing of theoretical concepts, noting that: “Through the comparative analysis of textual
passages both abstract theoretical concepts and also everyday coding categories can progressively be given empirical content” (p. 280).

Table 3: Code families generated with Atlas Ti, after all data was coded.

Table 4: Themes located within the Code Family Parenting, showing sub-themes under the Code ‘Challenges—values or parenting’ (inset).
4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.4.1 Reflexivity

This is where, as a researcher and professional, my duty of disclosure is discharged or, as Bishop and Shepherd (2011) and Elliott (2005, pp. 152-170) describe, I apply reflexivity to my research. As Lincoln and Guba (1991, p. 185) assert: “Surely it is better to be aware of how one’s values can influence one’s judgement than to deny that such an influence could be occurring at all”. True to this principle, during my research journey, I considered how my professional and personal values could influence the data collection, data analysis, or writing up process. As Elliot argues, “Reflexivity means the tendency critically to examine and analytically to reflect upon the nature of research and the role of the researcher in carrying out and writing empirical work” (Elliott 2005, p. 153). How is reflexivity demonstrated in my research?

With the topic of religion and religiosity inevitably prominent in this research, given the pervasiveness of Islamic teachings and values in Muslim life, what effect did my non-Muslim, Western European upbringing have on the research outcome?

If anything, it would appear that my non-Muslim status led to participants’ ensuring that I understood their responses or views on particular themes by including, where necessary, information that gave context or background to their answers. During the interviews, participants also stressed what they considered positive aspects of Islamic family life and parenting. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008, p. 11, Chapter 3) identify this phenomenon, noting that interviewees do not limit themselves to narrating their story; as they do it, they may adjust it to the setting and their own assumptions about the interviewer. And they make the point that: “Interviewers’ self-disclosures aim to produce loquacity from interviewees, but interviewees too make assumptions about interviewers that influence the claims they (the interviewees) can make to category entitlement” (p. 11). Ultimately, I considered that including a disclosure about my own religious background in
the prologue to the interviews was unnecessary and could lead to a loss of focus. A very personal decision maybe, but one that goes with naturalistic enquiry where, as Norris and Walker also note: “Who you think you are and how others see you make a big difference to what you can do and learn through naturalistic enquiry” (Norris & Walker 2005, p. 133).

The topic of parenting, and how parents manage their children’s day-to-day activities and social interactions, is another area that I had to ensure was analysed and reported without influence of my own personal and professional experience and values. I was confronted with a question on this particular topic during my seminar presentation at the Centre for Muslim and Non-Muslim Understanding at the University of South Australia: Why the focus on Muslims in your research? Don’t all migrant parents face these same challenges and issues when resettling or living in a Western liberal society? My immediate reaction was to say, yes! I am aware that that is the case through my own personal experience, my previous research and my professional experience. The research is about Muslim parents and families, however, and, as some contemporary Muslim scholars point out, Muslim parents are likely to be more concerned about the challenges they face when resettling or living in secular Western countries, given the more liberal lifestyles and values that are prevalent in those countries (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh 2010; Pels 2000). In this research, I do not “pass judgement” on Muslim parents’ ability to address those challenges but rather, through my research, and by learning about their lived experiences, I identify factors and strategies that may help them to do so more effectively.

Therefore, in spite of my personal and professional background and closeness to the topic areas, I maintain that I do not bring preconceived ideas or thoughts into this research. On the contrary, my professional experience gives me the advantage of having an understanding of the helping professions, of the welfare sector in general, and the community and non-government cultural
diversity sector in particular. As Lincoln and Guba (1991, p. 137) assert, “Objectivity cannot be a veil that obscures the need for balance”. Still, a perceived lack of neutrality or objectivity is a dilemma in which many researchers may find themselves, and its appropriate management, mainly in what concerns questions of bias, is required. Andrews (2008, p. 87) stresses this unavoidable fact and further notes that: “All of us bring to our research knowledge which we have acquired through our life's experiences, and indeed how we make sense of what we observe and hear is very much influenced by that framework of understanding”.

This dialectical process within the professional/researcher/practitioner self is ongoing but, as Bishop and Shepherd (2011) note, it is often taking place in the background, reflexively, and is difficult to identify and articulate. Acknowledging these limitations, and reflecting on their own experience of narrative research, the same authors make the point that researchers “are ethically obliged to ensure that reflexive accounts explicitly acknowledge that we cannot fully capture our role in data production” (p. 1290). And they conclude:

Hindsight and distance do not allow us to see the past. They provide a different view of this. Our memories are obscured and reimagined over time. Narrative epistemology helps us to open up a space where we can recognize this; where we can be explicit about what we can and cannot achieve through our reflexive accounts. To improve our research skills and to enhance researcher transparency, we should continue to be reflexive; to throw as much light as possible onto our research practices and processes. We should do so, however, within a framework that more overtly recognizes the reconstructed nature of our reflections. This will contribute to creating more nuanced and ethical accounts of our qualitative research endeavors. (Bishop & Shepherd 2011, p. 1291)

4.4.2 Ethics

Ethics refers to that complex of ideals showing how individuals should relate to one another in particular situations, to principles of conduct guiding those relationships, and to the kind of reasoning one engages in when thinking about such ideas and principles. (Smith 1999, p. 141)
The importance of carefully considering ethical issues in narrative research is highlighted by Coulter (2009) and Clandinin and Murphy (2009). As Coulter stresses, “We must always conduct research under the banner that reads ‘Do no harm.’ Because of the emotional impact of telling, writing, and reading stories, narrative researchers are deeply obligated to their participants” (2009, p. 611).

Ethical issues were included within the initial proposal and closely addressed as part of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) application. These processes helped me account for factors that could affect the recruitment of participants, interviews, and the collection, storage and use of information. The information sheet and consent forms (see Appendix 1) were developed in accordance with UWA’s HREC guidelines. The information sheet also provides: a brief summary of the research and the topics covered during the interviews; information on issues of consent and the handling of the information collected; confidentiality; and participant’s access to counselling support should the interviews cause any adverse effect. This latter strategy was included because of the possibility that some of the participants could have experienced torture or trauma. The information sheet and consent form were handed out to participants on the day of the interview.

All original voice files and electronic verbatim transcripts were stored in a password-protected drive. All interview transcripts uploaded onto the ATLAS.Ti software have original names and other identifying information removed. These transcripts were password encrypted before being emailed to each participant for review and comment; the password was sent to participants separately via SMS to their personal mobile phone. Participants were invited to provide feedback within two weeks of receiving the transcript (this was double the time indicated in point five of the information sheet) and were also made aware that a ‘no reply’ would lead to the use of the interview material in its original form. There was no feedback received from participants, and hence all data was used in its original form. All participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any stage prior to its completion and have their interview records destroyed. They were also made
aware that excerpts from the interviews would be used in the final document, but that their contributions would be modified in order to ensure that anonymity was maintained.

4.4.3 Limitations of the Research

One of the limitations of this study relates to sample size and mix that, while ethnically and culturally diverse, cannot provide an all-inclusive representation of the great ethnic and cultural diversity of the Muslim diaspora in Australia. It is also important to point out that, since 2009, the latest year of arrival for participants in this research, the makeup of Muslims settling in Australia is likely to have changed significantly. This is mainly due to the effect of Australian Government migration policy and the arrival of Muslims with higher professional and educational qualifications seeking employment opportunities in the Australian business and mineral resources sector. On the humanitarian front, the Australian Government has also now turned its focus to the offshore resettlement stream, with up to 4,000 additional places set aside for refugees fleeing the conflicts in Syria and Iraq (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014a).
5. MUSLIM FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA

In this chapter, I briefly introduce the participants in this research and provide some information on their cultural background, settlement history, qualifications, and family circumstances. I divide them into three groups according to their settlement path and country of birth. This grouping facilitates the analytical process and provides context for the findings. I discuss the themes identified, which are grouped under three main topics: settlement experiences and life in Australia; seeking help or advice in relation to family or parenting issues; and identity and belonging. I undertake this analysis against the background of current research in the areas of immigration, settlement, and identity and belonging, with a focus on Islamic scholarship.

5.1 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The experiences of family life and parenting for the various participants in this research are significantly different, depending on a number of different factors. These factors are related to their migration path into Australia, their settlement experience, being born in Australia, or having arrived with their families at a young age. The effect of the migration path on settlement experiences and outcomes is also reported by Australian researchers Fozdar and Hartley (2013), Mansouri, Leach and Traies (2006), and Yasmeen and Al Khudairi (1998). For the purpose of this analysis, I have divided participants into three major groupings according to those migration paths:

Group 1 — The humanitarian or asylum seeker group (humanitarian)

Group 2 — The non-humanitarian group (encompassing skilled, business or family reunion visas)

Group 3 — Those born in Australia, or born overseas but who arrived in Australia as young children.
Table 5 (page 129) provides an overview of participants’ country of birth (and heritage, if Australian born), number of years in Australia, gender, number of children, and reason for immigration to Australia at the time of the interviews. Participants’ first names are fictional in order to ensure anonymity.25

A large number of the participants (n=23) arrived in Australia between 1979 and 2009. These participants are among Groups 1 and 2. In Group 1 (n=12) Ashkan, Simon, Abdul, Said, Salman, Aadel, Mazen, Mehdi, Ayam, Latifa, Noushin and Mahnoor all arrived in Australia between 1987 and 2009 through Australia’s Humanitarian Program26 offshore resettlement, or onshore, as asylum seekers on Christmas Island. Upon arrival, some of them faced uncertainty about their visa status, having been granted TPVs and consequently being unable to apply immediately for family reunification.

In Group 2 (n=11), Maryam, Lucy, Dean and his wife Jasreen, Mohammad and his wife Aisha, Nader, Noor, Azlan, Sara and Leena arrived under the skilled, business, or family reunion visa categories. Participants in this group had some advantages over those in Group 1, with most being fluent in the English

25 Pseudonyms used are consistent with participants’ original names and cultural identity.

26 Humanitarian – “Entrants to Australia under the Humanitarian Program. This program is comprised of two components: offshore resettlement for people in humanitarian need overseas; and onshore protection for those people already in Australia who arrived on temporary visas or in an unauthorised manner, and who claim Australia’s protection. The Humanitarian component of settler arrivals data includes only those persons with offshore resettlement visas” (DIBP definitions, 2014).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of Birth (heritage)</th>
<th>Years in Australia *</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Reason for immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aadel</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asylum seeker/Refugee</td>
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Table 5: Participant information.

* Years in Australia at time of interview

** Born overseas; shows years in Australia since arriving as a child.
language and being able to access housing and employment upon arrival. The third group (n=8) share their experiences as Australian born Muslims, or migrant children growing up in Australia. They provide an insight into how the experiences of being first or second-generation Australian, or having acculturated from an early age, may have influenced family dynamics and parenting styles in their adult life. Sharing these latter experiences are Australian born Alaa, Zahra, Suria, Nilam, and Joanne (Nilam and Joanne were interviewed with their husbands Azlan and Aadel respectively), and three participants who arrived in Australia as young children, Mahdi, Fatima and Sama.

5.2 THE SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

5.2.1 Partings, Reunifications and New Beginnings: the Refugee Experience

So I went from Iran and into another country into exile, at a time when my family was enjoying a good comfortable life, somehow luxurious life, respected among people. For them it was tragedy, changing from that kind of life, sending the girls to a country such as [Middle Eastern country], living in poverty ... for years in poverty in [Middle Eastern country], and then we came to Australia. (Ashkan)

Ashkan’s statement mirrors the experiences of other participants who had to resettle because of conflicts or persecution in their home countries. Some of them, such as Abdul, Latifa, Salman, Said, Mehdi and Mazen, travelled on their own to Australia and, upon arrival, applied for family reunification. Simon and Alaa’s refugee journey dates back to 1991, when they arrived in Australia from Lebanon. For many of the participants, the journey to Australia was long, often dangerous, and took them through a number of other countries until they arrived at their final destination. For some, Australia was not their preferred destination, but their circumstances left them little choice; they had to leave because of concerns for their safety in order to find a safer place for their families. The lack of choice in destination country for refugees fleeing
persecution is well documented in research (Jacobs 2011; O’Neill 2010; Samers 2010; Spinks 2013).

For participants in the humanitarian group and their families (Group 1), the effects of separation presented additional challenges to their settlement process: not knowing whether their families were safe back home, or in neighbouring countries, and always worrying whether their family reunification (sponsorship) applications in Australia would be accepted. Their applications took several years to be processed, and for participants like Said, the prospect of being issued with a temporary protection visa following his arrival on Christmas Island added to the stress. By the time his application for family reunification was approved, he had been separated from his family for six years, not knowing whether they were safe. These findings are consistent with those of contemporary Australian and international research on asylum seekers and refugees (Jacobs 2011; Samers 2010), with Jacobs stressing the “significant emotional upheaval, particularly for refugees who are forced to experience acute hardship on their voyages” (Jacobs 2011, p. 22). On this particular issue of family reunification, Mansouri et al. report that refugees on TPVs were left feeling that Australia had not effectively provided them with protection, as that protection should be extended to their families (2006, p. 407).

This was the case for Latifa, Abdul, and Said, who arrived in Australia via Christmas Island. Abdul arrived on his own in 2001 and was joined by his wife, daughters and other family members seven years later, in 2008. Abdul revealed that Australia was not his first choice; however, the urgency in leaving the dangerous situation in his country in order to find a safe haven for his family, and his limited financial capacity, left him with no choice as to destination:

No! It wasn’t a choice. I just get prepared to go Australia but I left for some reason. I did in Taliban time. My father died in the war, then I had to leave, then I come to Pakistan. Then I had to pay some money to the people who to … and eh! I think so if I had more money I might be going somewhere else, but because I had a little money so I just come to Australia. So Australia was sort of a cheap on that time.
Abdul, Said, Salman and Mazen recalled the process that took place upon their arrival in Australia, and the anxious, and quite often lengthy, process of bringing their families to Australia. Abdul arrived in 2001 and was sent from Christmas Island to a mainland detention centre. He lodged his application for family reunification in 2004 and waited four years for its outcome; he was reunited with his family in 2008. Salman arrived in 1987, and it took him two years to get his family to join him in Australia. Said described his arrival in Australia in 1999 and the steps he took to get his family over, a process that took eight years to complete:

I was [on my own], I don’t know about nearly 6 years without my family, my wife my children. After 6 years throughout my family, my friends find out my family after me they gone to Iran, and for little work for short time nearly 6/7 months they’ve been in Iran and they pushed them to go back to Afghanistan, because they can’t go back to Afghanistan and they come to Pakistan, Quetta, which is one state of that Pakistan. … In 2006 I travel, go to find my family and then I put their case to Embassy. It took 2 years I think - one year and a half to process and then I sponsored. (Said)

This poignant comment highlights a common experience among participants who arrived as asylum seekers. Once granted protection visas, and despite all the support provided by the Australian Government through the HSS and SGP services, and other state or local community organisations, the resettlement process was challenging and took a long time. The negative effects of separation from family as a result of the refugee journey, and the uncertainty of reunification that follows, is well documented by researchers such as Stuart et al. (2010), McMichael, Gifford and Correa-Velez (2011) and Hua (2008). Some of the factors contributing to the temporary separation and trauma in refugee populations are well documented and widely reported in research (Australian Human Rights Commission 2010; Samers 2010; Australian Human Rights Commission 2013). As McMichael, Gifford and Correa-Velez (2011) find in their study, undertaken with refugee young people in Melbourne, Australia: for refugee families who resettled in Australia, the experiences of trauma and family loss or separation contribute to an exacerbation in tensions between parents and their children.
Ashkan, Abdul, Said, Salman, Mehdi and Aadel described some of the trauma that they experienced before fleeing their home countries and the time it took for all family members to feel safe after their arrival in Australia. Said described how the children would pray for some time after their arrival in Australia: “[The] children, you know, all praying fear always something happen and then slowly, slowly they everything going out, and then now yeah! [feeling safe]”. Some of the trauma experienced by participants or their family members caused significant emotional and psychological harm, which they reported as having long-lasting effects. Mehdi described violent incidents in Afghanistan during which a number of his wife’s family members were killed in front of her. He stressed that these incidents had a profound effect on her, and added that she had since suffered from mental health problems.

Ashkan referred to his own experience to highlight the plight of refugees and, in particular, the post-settlement difficulties faced by some Muslim refugee families. He stressed that their difficulties during the resettlement period cannot only be attributed to their cultural or religious beliefs, but in fact to the trauma they suffered before resettlement:

I try to be very sincere with myself; and I know that I am victim of trauma; and my family even, are also victims of trauma. … Many of the Muslim families here, of course they have, many of them have, the remaining of that culture; everybody share that culture. … Probably they are not aware of that [trauma]. Perhaps some of them do not treat their family good, not because of their culture; it is because they are coming out from trauma. (Ashkan)

Ashkan also provided his own personal account of the situation he left behind in his home country, Iran, pointedly stressing the profound effect it still has on its people and the people of other countries affected by armed conflict:

Even for those who are healthy, even for those that are in power it is traumatic. Ordinary people they are under the pressure, very disastrous pressure. Those who are wealthy they should keep their wealth secure, because they are in danger, in every moment, because there is no law, there is no security for them. (Ashkan)
Because of their experiences, a majority of participants in the humanitarian group described the overwhelming sense of safety and freedom that they felt once they were allowed to resettle in the community. Said reflected on his own experience of resettlement, noting the respect for human life in Australia and his happiness since the family’s ultimate reunification. He stressed in particular the newfound safety and freedoms, including that of religious practice:

Since when I arrived in Australia before my family. I was ... I loved the country because this really nice country and respectful country for every religions ... and when I come here, I see oh! This is human life in here. (Said)

Simon also recalled how he and his wife felt safe and how their life changed for the better:

[When] I came to Australia, I felt very safe. You can sleep, it is very quiet; you get your confidence back because, really, I mean, in our country, you would not know when Intelligence would knock on your door. So here, in the first six months you don’t think about those issues; only it is safe, you feel confident and you feel very happy, because you got your freedom back, or you got your human rights back. That’s the issue. (Simon)

In spite of the challenges they faced during their personal journeys, some of the participants who arrived as refugees or asylum seekers reported positively on their experiences of life in Australia and the support they received. Said highlighted the support he received from the local community in two country towns in Western Australia’s Great Southern region. He mentioned ways the local people had helped him and the welcoming social environment:

Albany people is very kind people, very helpful, friendly and they help a lot and since I come to Katanning then here I meet [Council officer] and he’s very kind person. He’s really good and he helped me a lot of ... for a lot of reasons for a lot of things Yeah! Before when I tried to bring my family over here was really big difficult for me because too much to do and all, where I go, what I do. (Said)

Abdul, also a resident of the Great Southern, likewise commented positively on the support of the local Shire Council and their community engagement strategies. He noted, however, the paucity of settlement support services and
employment opportunities in regional areas. Said and Abdul’s views also
reveal the contrast that often exists between central government immigration
policy intent and practice, and the proactive support provided by communities
in resettlement areas, who often take an active voluntary role in supporting and
advocating for migrants and refugees resettling within their local areas.
Local government often boosts this important role in country areas such as in
the case of the Shire of Katanning (Yasmeen 2008, p. 78) or the City of Stirling,
in Perth’s northern metropolitan area, by encouraging greater interaction
between different ethnic groups and making venues available for social and
cultural activities. The important role of local government and community in
resettlement is highlighted in current research (Fozdar & Hartley 2013; Pe-Pua
et al. 2010) and reported in the media (Barrett 2014).

5.2.2 In Search of a Better Life; Resettling by Choice.

We came to this country as proud migrants for the betterment of our family
life and for better prospects of our children. I found that I was accepted
almost straight away and I assimilated well, and I guess a lot of that is because
I walked into a profession that I was familiar with. … I did not come into a
workforce saying ‘oh yeah I’m Mohammad, and I’m a Muslim’. I did not
broadcast that fact that I am a Muslim. However, my actions I think spoke
louder than words and in my workplace people realised that I was different.
They realised I was different … They you know, and we went through
summers of fasting and winters of fasting and they said to me, you know, ‘we
admire you because we don’t know that we can do it’. (Mohammad)

In this statement, Mohammad describes his experience as a South African
skilled migrant settling in Australia in 1986. He and his wife, Aisha, are among
the 12 participants who arrived in Australia under other than a humanitarian or
protection visa (Group 2). For some of the participants who had settled earlier,
such as Mohammad and Aisha, and Noor, the lack of halal\(^{27}\) food outlets was,
as Noor described, quite a challenge in the early days, as there were not many
halal butchers available or restaurants serving halal foods, particularly in

\(^{27}\) Halal – what is lawful or permitted; a Quranic term often associated with established dietary
restrictions.
Adjusting to life in Perth in the early 1980s and 1990s required some resourcefulness and creativity on the part of these participants, who shared their stories of how they went about sourcing halal foods and locating places of worship (Yasmeen & Al Khudairi 1998). Similar stories of settlement in Perth in the 1980s can easily be found among migrants who arrived from Eastern European or South East Asian countries, where trips to farms in Perth’s outskirts for buying certain food products were a regular occurrence. However, these were no obstacle for successful settlement; they simply required some creativity or adjustments.

Noor noted that her children did not resent the lack of opportunities to go on outings and dining out, and until halal foods and restaurants became more available, they would go out and eat vegetarian pizzas. While recalling her early settlement experiences in Australia, she made the point that all people should try to integrate in their new culture and society, stating: “If you are living in one culture you cannot live another culture fully. You are living with different people, amongst different religions; you need to be able to meet everyone and relate to everyone”. Current research on migration, such as that by Fozdar and Hartley (2013) and Collier (2011) finds that, for migrants arriving under the skilled migrant categories, decisions around these particular factors and employment opportunities influenced choice of area of residence.

The experiences of participants in the skilled and family reunion group, most of whom resettled by choice, was largely unaffected by experiences of trauma, and, for many of them, language was not a barrier to successful settlement. These participants were able to find housing or employment earlier upon settlement and adjust to the new social environment, which helped them in developing a sense of inclusion (Yasmeen 2008). For some, this was helped by their higher educational qualifications or highly sought-after skills, and by arriving from countries, such as Singapore and South Africa, that have a more Westernised lifestyle. Researchers such as Samers (2010, p. 237) also point to
the fact that states seem to privilege and facilitate this type of skilled or wealthy migration for economic reasons. Most of the participants in this group spoke the English language fluently, and Australia was their country of choice. As a result, their settlement experience was less stressful. Some of the other participants in this group, such as Nader, Ayam, Dean and his wife, Jasreen, had lived in other Western countries previously and had decided to make Australia their permanent home.

For Lucy, who arrived from South Africa with her family in 2005, adjusting to life in Perth was not hard: “I think the culture within South Africa is also very sort of Western; it’s hard to put a definition, but Western based in the sense that South Africa, the way the schools work and the communities are. So it’s more Western than your traditional, say India, Pakistan”. For Lucy and her family, life in Perth was also a relief from the constant concerns about their safety while living in South Africa:

My children were small, my daughter still remembers. And it’s just that, that constant fear and, and not knowing the noise and, outside, is it someone trying to break in. And when, if my husband comes home late from work I’m always afraid that something’s happened at the shop, that someone’s broken in or. So when we came here just that, not, not having that crime was, made it such a fantastic experience, that you could allow your children to walk to school. (Lucy)

Although happy at being in Perth, Dean and Jasreen, originally from Singapore, were nevertheless concerned about some of the aspects of the night-life and drinking culture, which they thought had limited their adult daughter’s ability to socialise more widely:

Coming to Australia is like, the image of Australia is that it’s very open society, very welcoming and you don’t get to know all of the nuances below the surface. When you actually live here you realise that, for want of a better word, it’s quite a screwed-up society. There are a lot of serious deep-seated problems, not only with people who drive cars too fast … And they know, they already make it, as they say in the papers, there are big problems with this binge drinking and Northbridge and this that. (Dean)
And regardless of the resettlement path, family reunification at the end of a period of separation, or starting life in a new social and community environment, presents its own challenges, and is usually followed by periods of readjustment for families and their children. As a result, there are other aspects and experiences of family life that are shared by participants in this research. These include: negotiations in relation to outside work, which sometimes involve partners having to work in places where alcohol may be served; working long hours; or the sharing of child-rearing responsibilities and some of the household chores when one of the partners requires extra time to further their education in order to improve the family’s future prospects. Another common topic is also the lack of extended family networks, with the resulting loss of interaction with, and support from, close relatives. These themes occur across the immigration literature, and the experiences reported by participants in this research are consistent with those findings, which highlight the often-difficult negotiations that take place within Muslim and non-Muslim families alike (Azadarmaki & Bahar 2006; Bakar 2011; Kulic & Rayyan 2006; Madigan 2009; Pe-Pua et al. 2010).

Four of the research participants reported on their experiences of moving away from their families. One of them, Nader, described how the need for extended family support had contributed to his and his wife’s decision to settle in Australia, where his mother-in-law had already settled. However, he remained in contact with, and continued financially supporting, the family that stayed behind. Nader reported on the difficult choices that he had to make in order to survive and to help other family members abroad:

Like, [my wife] is working now in a Casino, and that was the only job she was able to get. So for me, is, it’s not easy you know, for me as a Muslim or my wife is working at night in a Casino, you know. But I still, there is things like, you cannot change everything just like this. You can just fight your life to survive at least. So what are we doing? I’m trying to survive, that’s the only thing. Okay there is, there is another way to survive, that’s what Islam says. (Nader)
Another participant, Lucy, spoke about the lack of extended family support in Australia and how her family, in particular the children, had felt that change:

And it was just, [in South Africa] we lived with my mother-in-law so that was a bit difficult because now there was no one to take care of my small one if we wanted to go and get things done. That was the only real change that I found when I came here. We didn’t have the extended family to, if we had to go down to, we had to go to with the youngest one a few times and things then we had to take him with, and that’s always difficult when you have a toddler… standing in line (laughs). (Lucy)

Ashkan also felt the absence of extended family contact and support. However, he stressed that this also had the effect of bringing his family closer together and “changing the relationship for better”.

Mazen mentioned the negotiation that took place between him and his wife about the new way of life, how to rebuild their family life in Australia, and the compromises that had to be reached:

When I moved here my priority was to complete my degree and then I complete my degree at first I complete my English Course … to [do further tertiary studies] have big impact on my study have big impact my relationship with my family so; however I have very good wife she’s patient and she’s very good and she’s educated. So I was happy that, she is … she is a [professional] and she understands when I’m talking about, you know study and talking about you know, how to live in Australia you have to be articulate you have to be at a high level, you know to live in such a society; and she agree with me. (Mazen)

When they first arrived in 1991, Simon and Alaa also had to negotiate issues around gender roles and employment, as Simon was unemployed and Alaa needed to go to work. For Simon, those were not easy decisions to make, because of his cultural upbringing and concerns for his wife’s safety as well. However, he acknowledged that times had changed, and even in Lebanon, women’s traditional roles were also changing:

At the beginning it was a bit hard, because we have got our own custom when you marry a woman back home. But here, she was born here, she worked.
I mean, when she used to go work I used to get upset, because she used to go to work, and I was home. Inside us, we feel it is bad, why is it not working this way. But when we go back to Lebanon now, the same thing is happening: women working, men working; society changes. (Simon)

The experiences of participants in Group 2, most of whom resettled in Australia by choice and in a planned manner, contrasts with those of participants in Group 1. The settlement experiences for participants in Group 2 reflect the benefit of having access to employment, housing and a stable financial situation. Participants in this group also benefitted from having English language skills and, for some of them, from having lived in secular countries with Western lifestyle, which helped them adjust to life in Australia. Overall, this set of circumstances contributes to the development of a sense of social inclusion, with one of the main downsides to their settlement experience being the lack of family support in Australia. However, even this lack of family support was seen as a positive by some of the participants, as it had brought the family unit closer together and improved relationships.

5.2.3 Shared Experiences of Racism and Discrimination

For most participants, there were shared, not so-pleasant experiences, caused mainly by racist or discriminatory behaviours from some people in the community. Some participants, even those born in Australia, referred to the influence of mass media in sometimes stirring the anti-Muslim sentiment in the general population. Their reports seem to point to an increase in those behaviours in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York, with some of the participants reporting how they or their families were targeted while out in public places, or experienced discrimination in relation to employment or education opportunities. Some of the participants thought that the media had, and still has in some instances, a significant role in stoking racist sentiment in the community. These experiences are well documented and researched (Jacobs 2011; O'Neill 2010), and were highlighted at a recent international conference in Sydney (Kozaki 2013). And it is not just Muslims
who are singled out; as Jacobs (2010, pp. 82-85) and O’Neill (2010, pp. 124-133) note, the negative media attention is often indiscriminate in the targeting of other ethnic minority groups and the negative reporting on asylum seekers and refugees.

Mohammad and Lucy recalled their frightening experiences when prayers at a local Mosque were disrupted by vandals, and, on one occasion shots were fired:

I’m there at Mirrabooka most times and you find these yobbos driving past; they’re driving past and from their cars they, they come tearing down the road and screaming “Satan rules! Satan rules!” and these kind of things. ‘Death to all Muslim! Death to all Muslims!’ … And we were in the Mosque that time when there was a shooting at the Mirrabooka Mosque. (Mohammad)

Simon, Sara, Mahdi, Sama and Mazen reported some of the events that affected them or their families. Simon recalled that, owing to his work experience, he had managed to find work in the first six months after his arrival in Australia. However, one day, one of his work mates asked him whether he was a Muslim or a Christian; he replied “I’m Muslim”, and seven days later he was fired. Simon commented: “That’s in 1991, and until now I am not sure if I was not good at what I was doing or what, or what the case was”. Sara, who arrived from Iran in 2001, reported that she had suffered a similarly discriminatory incident when she initially looked for work. Sara decided that she needed to get a job to help the family. However, the timing of her arrival in Australia, shortly after the September 11 events, could not have been worse. She recalls that she was dissuaded from following a course of study she was hoping would lead to an administration job at the Perth airport. Although she met the necessary requirements to enrol in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) course, the relevant lecturer refused her enrolment because of her religion. This incident left Sara distraught to the point that she thought that in order to live in Australia she would have “to put my religion aside and don’t talk about it and that was it”.
Simon also recalled how September 11 changed the community’s perception towards Muslims:

Since September 11, the drive changed to us, to Muslim society and Muslim; and I am not saying all Australians, some of the Australians, because I have got very good Australian friends, they are very good, they are like brothers; they understand. But they said, “If we didn’t meet you, as a person, with what we see on TV”, we will talk about Muslim society; and a lot of Muslim society in Australia, they give wrong images of Islam and Muslims in the world. (Simon)

Sama, who arrived with her parents in 1986, similarly reported that she saw a change in some people’s attitudes and behaviour towards Muslims from September 11 onwards:

That wasn’t, since I came to Australia as a Muslim and then I also practising Muslim prior to the September 11 things were really good. So since the September of 11 that’s when actually I can sense a lot of discrimination and a lot of abuse I think, especially among Australian men towards us because of what, because of just we cover and then I find also with my daughter; she is 18 and she wears scarf too out of her own choice often umm! She actually got thrown with beer bottle and always miss her. (Sama)

Mazen and Mahdi reported how the situation affected everyone in their families, including the children’s being targeted by other students at school. Mahdi recalled that, just before his research interview took place, his sons had told him about a question that a friend had asked him at school:

Well yeah I mean my son came last week and he’s six years old in year 1 and he said, “Dad have you got a gun?” I said “why?” He goes one of his friends said to him. He said “He asked me where you’re from? I told him”. “You’re from Afghanistan?” And he said to me “has your Dad got a gun?” I mean that’s a basic example. That’s a basic simple example. I think the problem is not with new comers. It’s the mentally of what’s perceived and what’s shaped through our media and through the news. That’s really shaping our children. (Mahdi)

Mahdi’s story supports Mazen’s views on the role of the media in sometimes feeding the indiscriminate racist mood in the community. He recalled how his wife decided to remain at home in the aftermath of September 11:
 Anything from the media those too is active, became active so you have to find you know a way and actually my wife stay five months at home. She won’t get out because of the violence against Muslim women for some incidence and they reported to the Police I think is after the 11th September. Unfortunately that’s all these incidents happen from people who listen to this. This is them who brainwash people. They don’t know about what’s … who they are Muslim, or they are Sikh, or Hindus they don’t know. Just they see the scarf and they get frustrated. (Mazen)

In spite of these experiences, participants reported overall satisfaction with their life in Australia, with some of them, such as Noor and those participants residing in Katanning, reporting no negative reactions post-September 11. Some of them stressed that incidents of discrimination or racism had not discouraged them from pursuing a fairer society and educating others in the community about the true meaning of Islam. Other participants’ desire to set the record straight on Islam and engage in dialogue led to personal efforts to educate or inform their non-Muslim counterparts in relation to the true message of Islam, in an attempt to dispel some of the fears they may hold about Muslims in general. But in order to achieve a more effective way to do this, participants suggested that Muslim community groups should be more proactive in spreading these messages across the community and encourage cross-cultural interaction and interfaith dialogue. Sama strongly supported this move as one of the main strategies to promote community understanding and harmony. She concluded:

   To my opinion I think Islamic knowledge is also very important and at the same time we also need to actually learn the Australian culture. I think as a Muslim it is no good for us to live in this country and then we don’t know any about the Australian culture. … We need to be able to speak in the language that the Australian can understand. We need to use the associative terms so that when it comes to Islam umm! … It’s the Muslim and Islam is being under siege at the moment you know, so we need to actually educate ourselves and interact with the Australian because they do fear Islam and they should not be worried about Islam itself. (Sama)

However, as research shows, these efforts need to be broad based, multifaceted, and supported by strong multicultural social policy (Jayasuriya 2005; Yasmeen
2008). The lack of reporting of any particular increase in racist or intimidating behaviour by participants living in the Great Southern town may be a reflection of that town’s ethnically and religiously diverse population, and the visible, long-term presence of Malay Muslim residents who have settled, and successfully integrated in the town, from the Christmas and Cocos Islands between 1973 and 1974 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014d). This may also have been helped by the proactive community development work of the local Shire Council (Graham 2013), which in March 2015 included the Shire’s application to be declared by the Refugee Council of Australia as a “Refugee Welcome Zone” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2015). At this point, it is important to note the valuable work that many other Local Government Authorities (LGA) across metropolitan and regional areas in Western Australia are developing and implementing in the areas of multiculturalism and social cohesion (Department of Local Government and Communities 2010). The valuable work of LGAs in these areas is also highlighted in study of Afghan Hazara immigrant settlement in Dandenong, Victoria.

At the same time, families also appear to have developed the resilience that allows them to lead a normal everyday life, in an environment where conflict or terrorist activities by extremist Islamic groups in some countries around the world regularly feature on news headlines. During his interview, when reporting his satisfaction with life in Australia and how he was respected in the community, Said felt compelled to stress his appreciation for Australia’s acceptance of him and his family, and his opposition to Islamic extremism. On his part, Mohammad communicated his understanding of what Islam and Muslims stood for, instead of the generalised sense of Muslims as threats.

Muslims or Islam is not about terrorism or being second best or being suppressed or oppressed and it’s about equality. And I showed them that this is, what Islam has taught me, and hopefully my behaviour, my actions would rub off and maybe they can learn a thing or two from me. And similarly I can learn a thing or two from them. (Mohammad)
Along similar lines, Nader stated:

So, so this is one of the things when you see about it. It’s realistic. Just be rea-, take the reality, it’s in front of you, just look at it you know. So, let’s just show the people here that Islam is, is a very peaceful religion. (Nader)

5.3 IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Obviously, identity is something which is fluid and it changes over the course of your life, but I also identify myself as an Australian. I think, I do that more now than I did when I was younger. I was more hardcore about my Islamic identity and my religion. Now, I feel that I’m Australian in the sense that I wish… aahhh! It’s not, I probably … not in the positivist way. I think it’s more because I wish I had more of a cultural connection with my heritage and because I don’t have that, all I know is what I have lived here in Australia, everything that I’ve adopted … my mannerisms, the way I speak, the way that I dress. I know that if I go to Indonesia it will be a different culture and I don’t think that’s necessarily a good thing, but it just makes me aware of how Australian I really am, and that’s not to say it’s a bad thing either, but I would love to be comfortable with multiple identities; and I think, I think I am but I haven’t explored the Indonesian identity as much as I would like. (Fatima)

Born in Indonesia to a father of Western background and an Indonesian Muslim mother, Fatima arrived at a very young age in Australia. A participant in Group 3, she provides an insight into how she developed her sense of identity. Fatima’s statement shows that she is comfortable with her Australian identity, but that she also remains committed to exploring her heritage. Importantly, her central point of reference is her Australian identity, with Islam, which she embraced at the age of 13, a key component of that identity. Moreover, during her interview, Fatima mentioned her determination to ensure that her children maintain that same balanced sense of identity as Australian Muslims, but still within a behavioural framework underpinned by Islamic values. Fatima’s account shows how people’s personal journey through life and within their family of origin powerfully influences and shapes their identity and way of life (Kroger 2002).
Another participant in this group, Mahdi, also reported having a strong Australian identity. Having arrived as a 10 or 12-year-old child from Afghanistan with his family in 1985, he was also able to maintain strong connections with his Afghani heritage:

I’ve been in Australia for a number of years eh! As a child I came with my family from Afghanistan. I was from Kandahar so I’ve got glimpses of Afghanistan in my mind. What I mean by that is because as a child there’s limited life was spent in there. So most of my education and my upbringing was in Australia. So my exposure to Afghanistan is limited but because I was within the family I’ve learnt a lot you know about Afghanistan eh! And being in an Afghan culture, Muslim dominated, and culture so yeah it was umm! My background. (Mahdi)

Mahdi also thought that he had integrated into Australian society and had a strong Australian identity. However, he is able to, without any difficulty, seamlessly combine his cultural and religious self in such a way that most people he works and socialises with cannot identify him as a Muslim. This makes him wonder what people’s reactions would be should he practise his faith in a more overt way, or changed the way he looks, remarking that this would probably affect the way people interacted with him:

I think, I think overall if you really look at it, I feel as though personally I don’t think it’s just Islam that’s suffered. Islam is being … because of lack of education Muslims are being known to be terrorist since September 11 in the minds of the average person out there and they’re known to be bogey mans you know, people that you should be scared of. That’s what I feel as though. So I feel as though if I had a beard and I went out of the way completely and started practising my religion to the best of my ability I would feel as though well yeah there will be some sort of tension towards me, because I grew up and I’m blending in and I’ve integrated. I don’t feel it because people don’t see me as a Muslim. If they would have known me as a practising Muslim I think in a way yeah I am limited now in being able to go out there and practise how I want to practise. (Mahdi)

Australian-born Zahra recalled her experience of growing up in a family of mixed heritage, her mother of Turkish background, and an Australian-born father, a Muslim convert. Islam had a central role in her family, and even though she always identified strongly with Australia, for her it was important
to feel accepted by the Muslim community. However, Zahra’s father’s Australian background and conversion to Islam, by virtue of his marriage to a Muslim woman, later led to some occasions where he was discriminated against by members of the Muslim community. As Scourfield et al. (2013a) and Woodlock (2011) find from their research, these are tensions likely to occur in the complex area of interethnic and religious relationships, mainly in groups where conflicts of values and identity may occur. As a result of that phenomenon, for Zahra, the family became the central point of reference and provided her with a sense of religious belonging. This outcome is consistent with the finding of Scourfield et al. (2013a) that an especially dominant theme which came from participants in their research was the importance of prioritising Muslim identity (202). As Zahra put it:

There wasn’t … we didn’t really have any major dramas growing up either. But the family has stuck to the Muslim community and my Dad still had a lot of like non-Muslim friends as well umm! But he wouldn’t get as close as he was with his friends that he would meet at the mosque and things like that with him being Australian. But even then in the mosque sometimes some people are a bit funny if you are not a born Muslim as well so there’s that bit of discrimination sometimes you can get even in the Muslim communities so he kind of sometimes feel like he didn’t belong there either so yeah our family was … was our sense of belonging. (Zahra)

Although they were not born in Australia, Fatima, Mahdi, and Zahra’s sense of identity is in harmony with that of Australian-born Muslims who, as Woodlock (2011, p. 403) finds, “are largely able to harmonize their Australian and Muslim identities”. Their eagerness in staying in touch with their ethnic heritage, and their positive reflections on that heritage, also support Kabir’s argument that “biculturalism should be regarded as a good thing” (2011, p. 256), as it contributes to the development of a balanced sense of identity.

Group 2 participants Mohammad and Aisha reported a strong identification and belonging to Australia, a sentiment that was enhanced with the growth of their family in Australia. As Mohammad proudly reported.
Then we’ve come as a family of four, those many years ago, we are now a family of eight. So our family has grown and I mean it’s doubled … We have not only our own children, we have in-law children and we have grandchildren, and I would like to know that my grandchildren are accepted as Australian because they are Australian, and we are naturalised Australian with the same rights as any other Australian, and I don’t, I frown upon the fact that I may be stereotyped into that box and ‘you’re a Muslim’. I’m a Muslim but I am an Australian first and foremost. (Mohammad)

Mohammad and Aisha’s sense of identity and belonging were assisted not only by the successful process of citizenship, which at its core encompasses the idea of belonging (Ilcan 2002), but also the birth of the family’s Australian generation. Other key ingredients in Mohammad and Aisha’s settlement, and the development of a strong sense of belonging, or inclusion, can be attributed to long-term stable employment, income, and active community engagement (Yasmeen 2008).

For Sara, however, the difficulties she experienced with her teenage children in the wake of her settlement in Australia made her adjustment to the new social environment difficult. She thought that her children’s rapid acculturation to Australia’s social values and lifestyle had a detrimental effect on their upbringing. This appears to have been exacerbated by her young children’s apparent unwillingness, or inability, to acknowledge or maintain their Iranian heritage. Sara found it difficult to help her children strike a balance between the two cultures. Santisteban and Mitrani (2003) and Stuart et al. (2010) identify the potential for conflict arising from differing acculturating responses within the family unit, with the former noting that this situation can threaten family bonds (Santisteban & Mitrani 2003, p. 123). In an attempt to improve her younger son’s behaviour after four years in Australia, she resorted to taking him on a holiday to Iran.

But in 2005 I went back home. At the time my son you know the youngest one he was a bit older and then he saw you know how people are nice to each other how you know and still he is talking about it. That’s why I’m saying I
think it does, you know, it does affect, you know. It does a lot helping to go over there and seeing what I’m talking about. (Sara)

Sara claims that her son’s exposure to Iranian culture and lifestyle during his holiday back home did make a difference and helped him become in touch with his heritage. This is a strategy sometimes used by some migrant families, hoping that their children’s exposure to their cultural and ethnic roots will strengthen their connection with their roots and improve their behaviours (Stuart et al. 2010).

For Aadel, a participant from Group 1, the process of acculturation and identity formation was built around the relationship with his Australian-born wife and newborn child. Aadel and Joanne share information about their culture and heritage with one another. Aadel has successfully acculturated and identifies with Australia, but with strong connections to his cultural roots. For him, his family and their newborn child are central to his identity, which, coupled with a sense of appreciation for what Australia has offered, contributes to a strong sense of belonging:

You know, as a Muslim I am accepted; but I believe I am not in my own place yet in this society, because of course I am new in this society. I am an Australian and I am happy with that; and I think that here there is more opportunity for me here; it can prepare for me an opportunity, another opportunity, to become more global. (Aadel)

Other participants in this group, such as Said, Abdul and Simon, reported on the opportunity, safety and freedom that coming to Australia provided to them and their families, all key ingredients in the development of a sense of belonging to Australia (Pe-Pua et al. 2010, p. v; Yasmeen 2008). Conversely, experiences of discrimination or racism, such as the ones reported by Sara, Simon, Mohammad, and Lucy, have the potential to create a sense of exclusion and negativity (Fozdar & Hartley 2012; Pe-Pua et al. 2010; Yasmeen 2008).
Another participant in Group 1, Mazen, described some of his children’s experiences in the education system as a way to illustrate how assumptions made by professionals in education settings can have potential negative repercussions on young Australian-born Muslims’ developing sense of identity. He mentioned an episode that took place at the end of one of his daughter’s school debating competitions, when one of the judges described her as an overseas born person:

So her topic was ‘Australia is a great country’ and she was talking about how other stuff that people living in Australia they didn’t visit or discover yet all the wealth you know is talking generally about the things that are great in Australia … and when she finished eh! the guy eh! one of the judges he say something actually he say, ‘Oh! That’s good to see somebody come to this country from somewhere and talking about Australia, we learn a lot of things from you’. After the finish I went to the judge I say how you assume that she’s come from different country (laughs); and he said ‘because the appearance’. I’m sorry if she … I say she’s born here. Sorry you can’t assume that. That actually made her very upset that he assumed because she wearing scarf. She is actually I say she is talking about her country and he was apologetic … is like he say apologetic for that, for what he said. (Mazen)

As Britto (2008, p. 854) finds in her research on ethnic identity formation of Arab Muslim children in contemporary U.S. society, incidents such as this one reflect some of the stereotyping, and sometimes discriminating, behaviour targeted at students, particularly girls, who wear the traditional Muslim headdress. It also shows what appears to be the confusing of religion (Islam) with ethnic identity, which, she argues, is mostly caused by ignorance. This can ultimately lead to a sense of exclusion and isolation from the academic environment (Britto 2008, p. 854). At the same time, however, Mazen observed that these negative experiences contributed to building up his children’s resilience and even stronger sense of identity and belonging as Australians:

That one they used to they have very good resistance. They have very good, very patient. They build up this notion of you know I’m here; so doesn’t matter so don’t worry … They are proud to be in Australia. They are proud to be born in to be you know a part of this society however challenges are there. (Mazen)
Overall, participants’ responses on the topic of identity and belonging appear to be consistent with Saeed’s (2003) contention that, while there may be some Muslims who may be afraid of losing their ethnic and cultural identity in Australia, “there are many more who are confident that they can be Australians as well as Muslims, and who believe there is no conflict between the two” (p. 141). And he further stresses that: “In Australia, there is no inherent contradiction between being Christian and Australian, or being Jewish and Australian. Likewise, there is no contradiction between being Muslim and Australian” (p. 142).

5.3.1 Community and Social Relationships

A lot of Muslims multicultural people, from Algeria, from Egypt, from Lebanon, they’re all different; different customs, practising religion in different ways. So it is really a very big issue, because the leaders are not participating very well in the community, they are not leaders in any way. So that is why we are getting people talking about it, especially in Australia. Here in Australia there should be more communication in the Muslim society and with each other. (Simon)

In this statement, Simon shares his views on Muslim community relationships in Perth at the time of his interview. His views echo the sentiments of other participants, who thought that the Muslim community in Western Australia should become more involved and proactive in efforts to address issues affecting the community and also in educating the wider community about what true Islam stands for. He was not alone on this count; according to other participants, among some of the initiatives that a strong Muslim representation could work towards would be increased interfaith dialogue and lobbying in relation to issues affecting Muslims in Western Australia. These views are consistent with findings and recommendations contained in reports on the needs, hopes and aspirations of Australian Muslims by Pe-Pua et al. (2010) and Akbarzadeh et al. (2009).
Dean and Jasreen, who were interviewed shortly after arriving from Singapore, shared their concerns about the lack of places of worship, and thought that the one they had recently visited had not been particularly welcoming:

D. Well it’s a concern for a Muslim coming from a country where there’s a Mosque on every corner with a big Muslim community to a country where there is, I wouldn’t say little community, and only really two major Mosques obviously a minor one, which is a prayer hall which is at UWA …

J. … and when you, it was very … in Singapore it is very culturally diverse, every... you have all races coming and it’s... but here it’s very, I’m not sure, maybe we’ve got it wrong. But the one that we visited was all of a particular race and we, we felt a little bit out of place. (Dean and Jasreen)

Nader stressed the importance for Muslims to be able to gather and associate regardless of the branch of Islam they pursued, and he also saw the act of worshipping as one of the main ways to bring Muslims together. He emphasised the fact that Islam directed Muslims to treat others with respect, including people from other religious beliefs:

I’m against religious problems or, because it’s not anymore, honestly, it’s not anymore religious, it’s politic religious, you know. They mix it together and they made this problem about Sunni and Shi’a and until now everybody get confused because they say just kind of ‘I’m a Shi’ite’ but nobody knows I’m a Shi’ite because I, they ask me ‘what are you?’ I say I’m a Muslim and thanks hamdullah I’m Muslim. This is the important thing. … So for all Muslims here, just forget about your backgrounds. You want to survive here or you wanna live here, live as a Muslim that’s good. (Nader)

Nader’s views on the practice of Islam, and the need for unity among Muslims regardless of branch or affiliation, were echoed by other participants, such as Mohammad, Aisha, and Salman, with the last stating:

What’s missing here is Islamic community, Muslim community not coming together, not working together on these [social] issues you know and not pulling their resources together. You know I mean if you if the Muslims together ... come together here we have a lot of us together you know including political pressure on the government. (Salman)
This encouragement for more active participation in community and social activities by Muslim community members is reflected in the recommendations in the report by Akbarzadeh et al. (2009), with one of those recommendations stating that: “Muslims could be encouraged to engage in political and social processes: to join political parties, to campaign and lobby on issues that concern them, to write letters for publication in media, etc.” (p. 44). However, as Akbarzadeh and Saeed (2001) stress, the needs and aspirations of Muslims in Australia must be discussed with prudence, as:

Muslim settlers come from diverse social settings and they reflect that diversity in their attitudes to their new home. Social status, degree of piety, affiliation with the Shi’a or the Sunni branch of Islam and national traditions all have an influence on their priorities and needs. (p. 6)

Suria, Said and Abdul’s reports reflect these thoughts, in that the Afghan and Malay communities in their country town did not come together at major religious events or for prayers at the only Mosque in town. This appears to be related to the Afghani and Malay communities’ following different branches of Islam—Sunni for Malays and Shi’ite for Afghani—with members of the minority Afghan community preferring to gather separately for celebrations of the Muslim calendar and regular prayer times.

I. So you don’t, you don’t go to the local Mosque? You teach your children the Qur’an at home?

S. Yeah teach at home that’s right!

I. You don’t use the local Mosque?

S. Ah! Sometime if we need yeah, we use it, because they different … we different religion, the Mosque using most of the Malaysian people which is Sunni …

I. Sunni, yeah!

S. … and we are Shi’ite … but they didn’t mind if we go there for pray, they didn’t mind but …

I. you’ve got your own prayer room at home

S. That’s right we are at home, we pray there if you reading Qur’an or if Islamic kind things if you try to do at home. (Said)
Abdul, also a Shi’ite Muslim, supports this stance and provides further details on the developments that led to the Afghani community’s decision to ‘go it alone’ with certain religious and social events in town:

A. Yeah! We have a … probably we don’t have a big community here in Katanning, a very small community and eh! before when we were only, mainly when our family arrived, there was … we don’t have a some sort of prayer - I mean religion programs or something like that to celebrate things much. But since the families arrived here so we … we do have a umm! which is Eid and the … and there the two Eids and the … because we are a Shi’ite Muslim so we have the … the people who knows the Muharram …

I. The Muharram, yeah!

A. the Muharram as well. Yeah! We have a little bit of difficulties with those days to celebrate because we’re not a big community to have the place or … so we have a little bit of difficulty to organise this celebration and especially Ashura, we do celebrate them and organise them in our houses but the houses are very small. It is not bigger enough for 7/8 families.

I. So like in terms of the local Mosque, do you go there?

A. No, we don’t go to the local Mosque. They never invite us in the local Mosque. We do have a … we do have a friends with … which are working with us. They also live here, we are Muslims, but they never seriously invite us to come to Mosque we can celebrate things there or … no they never invite us. (Abdul)

At the start of the 21st century, Akbarzadeh (2001) identified the development of a third phase of Muslim identity development in Australia. He saw that new phase as a qualitative shift from a sense of community in the early 20th century, to one that was then characterised by the growth of ethnic congregations, which tended to detract from the concept of a unified ummah, noting that:

The concept of a unified umma, though not openly challenged by Muslims, is now qualified with reference to ethnicity. This has led to the growing influence of ethnic and sectarian Islam among Muslims in Australia. (Akbarzadeh 2001, p. 323)

However, participants’ voices seem to reveal a move away from this phase, with the current development of parallel Muslim identities: those who focus on ethnic identities; and those who focus on a unified ummah identity (Akbarzadeh
et al. 2009; Macfarlane 2012c). Akbarzadeh et al. (2009) find that: “Maintaining an Australian identity as well as an ethnic identity is important to Muslims, but religious identity appears to play the most important role amongst observant Muslims.” (p. 46). A shift in the sense of community among Australian Muslims is also felt across the Australian Aboriginal Muslim community who, although not aligning according to any specific branch of Islam, find themselves excluded from some places of worship. “Several Indigenous Muslims, disheartened by the factious nature of the broader Muslim community, have withdrawn, opting to practise their faith in private.” (Stephenson 2010, p. 230)

5.3.2 Religious Practice

You can gather, do Jumu’ah28. Jumu’ah is beautiful things. You know Friday praying with all Muslims together. Never worry or care about what kind of Muslim you are, as much as you care about him, what a human being he is. Don’t worry about any person you are dealing with, what kind of religious he is - Muslim, Christian, Jew, any kind of Chris-, of religious. Don’t worry about that. Do your things what, what your Islam tells you. (Nader)

In this statement, Nader talks about the important role religion plays in his life, and how he personally does not distinguish between the Sunni or Shi’ite branches of Islam. This topic of Sunni vs Shi’ite was raised by eight of the participants in the context of their religious practice, education and community relationships. However, participants’ focus was on the actual essence of Islam, its message for Muslims and humankind, and the need for dialogue and working relationships. Noor, a Sunni Muslim, did not make a distinction between the different branches of Islam, as she considered Islam as only one religion.

Ashkan declared his Shi’ite following, acknowledging the difference between the two branches of Islam and professing to have a critical, but dialogical relationship with Sunni Muslims:

28 Muslim Friday prayers
And about Shi’ite Muslims - I am a Shi’a Muslim - and especially the Shi’a religious Muslim, they are very traditional; the religious Sunni Muslims are as well very traditional, very fundamentalist. So, if I want to have a relationship with them, definitely I would have a critical relationship with them; a criticising relationship with them; thoughts of course, thoughts. I am ready to have a relationship with everybody, but I have my own ideas. (Ashkan)

And he also had a very personal view in relation to the practice of Islam, not abiding by any particular tradition, but deciding his own and how he follows it in an informed manner:

For me, I decide the traditions for myself; I determine the traditions and religious rules for myself, and I do not follow any tradition … I try my best … tradition, in my opinion, tradition has a meaning: the unconscious beliefs; unconscious beliefs. (Ashkan)

Similarly, Aadel and Joanne choose to practice Islam in their own way, do not identify with a particular branch of Islam, and do not feel the need to go into a Mosque to pray:

When I say I’m Muslim okay I’m Muslim for myself not for people. Not like other people that oh! I have to put beard to showing myself that I’m Muslim or something; yeah it’s personal things. I never show myself that Oh! I have to go to pray. 11 years I haven’t been to Mosque. Maybe I went a few times to church with J., my family yeah … with her parents. We have a Mosque for Shi’ite you know Shi’ite and Sunni … if I want to pray okay why I have to go and show myself? I want to pray here, I want to pray while I’m walking. And I just say, “Thanks God for lovely day” or “Thanks for this nice view” that’s a pray for my ideology, you know. So I don’t want to show myself — I do this, I do that. So no … no practical just name. (Aadel)

Religion has an important place for them and their child, but the focus is on openness and interfaith knowledge and understanding. Aadel and Joanne gave an example of how they will guide their child and educate him on religion:

At home if maybe … maybe something happens I would tell him ‘Oh! Look son this is, this is wrong.’ We’ll show him, like myself I study back home I was called philosophy of three religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Philosophy of them comparing each other you know. So I know lots of information about Christianity and about Jews and all this stuff. So I like to
teach my son you know about Judaism about Christianity about Islam about other religions so he has some idea about open minded instead of just one you know. (Aadel)

Mahdi, who is married to a Christian wife, provided his own views on the main religious groupings, and the arrangements for religious practice within the family. These were negotiated with his wife in view of the different religious following between them. Of particular importance for Mahdi was the need for their children to grow up with a proper set of morals and values that are consistent with Abrahamic religious beliefs:

We have this agreement that the kids were to follow me and my belief and she’s accepted that even though my mother in law didn't like that idea … I believe… look, the underlying I have to be honest with myself the underlying umm! roots of Islam really is driven from Judaism and Christianity because the Old Testament is what Islam is predominantly all about although there’s changes; but those changes to me is minor because overall the teaching to be good, the teaching of the morals engraved into the particular person still is the same thing. There’s not much difference … Either you pray in your heart or you take a few minutes and go and do your prayers. But at the end of the day what are we praying to? What is Christian, Judaism, Muslims what are we praying to, we are praying to the same God. Yeah. (Mahdi)

Dean and Jasreen, participants in Group 2, stressed how religiosity has a central role in their lives; they stressed that Islam was more than a religion; it is a way of life:

Religion is, is the way we lead our lives. So it’s slightly more than certain religions that say you have to declare you are and that’s it. Islam goes one step further by saying you have to declare that you are, now you have to practice it … If you’re a Muslim you’ve got to say you are, and then you have to do it … it’s a way of life. (Dean and Jasreen)

Their views on Islam as a way of life are consistent with the views among Muslims that Islam is more than just a religion, and that its influence spans the whole way of life. Dean and Jasreen also spoke on the importance of participation in religious festivals and celebrations that they prefer to celebrate with like-minded Muslims, regardless of Islamic affiliation.
D. We, we have certain, as you’re aware probably, we have certain religious festivals throughout the year, there’s Ramadan which our big fasting month, and one of the problems that we find is that, moving to a country which is, is not got the same facilities as Singapore is, that you, you need to be able to link into, once again a like-minded community of, of multi-racial Muslims who can then say okay fine. Because we tend to have dinner with each other in different houses, breaking the fast, et cetera, it’s a community thing. Prayers at the Mosque.

J. We miss that. (Dean and Jasreen)

Following his religious practice in his town, where the only Mosque serves the local Malay Muslim community, that follows the Sunni branch of Islam, did not pose a problem to Said. He, and other fellow Shi’ite Muslims living there, are still free to attend the Mosque; however, most of them have their own prayer room at home. In Perth, with some choice in relation to places where he can worship, Nader is happy to attend any Mosque, consistent with his view that Muslims should congregate regardless of the branch of Islam they follow, because a Mosque is the house of Allah:

So, so for me in this country, okay, I am happy to hear there is a Mosque, I don’t care what kind of Mosque, I don’t care what kind of nationalities. At the end when I say it’s a Mosque, it’s the house of Allah. It’s not their house, it’s not their place. I don’t care if they are Sunni, Shi’ite, any kind of Islam, as much as I care this is a Mosque. (Nader)

Participants’ voices in this area reveal that unity in faith coexists with the well-documented Sunni and Shi’a divide, and the great ethnic, social, cultural, political and economic diversity within the Muslim community (Yasmeen 2008, p. 22). Their voices also delineate a picture of religious practice consistent with Saeed’s observation that, among Muslims, the practice of Islam may vary from culture to culture (Saeed 2003, p. 37), and also that its followers have “varying degrees of commitment to Islam” (p. 53).

Among some of the participants in Group 3, their awakening to religious practice took place in their teenage years and was often a self-driven process.
Suria, born in Christmas Island and of Malay background, recalls that, as a young child, she was never taught about Islam in a detailed manner. This is still reflected in the way she practices Islam and, in spite of her husband being a devout Muslim who follows expected practices, she still has a relaxed, but respectful, approach to religious practice:

Oh! Being a Muslim wasn’t really … we didn’t really talk about that we are Muslims because I even didn’t know I was a Muslim so to me everyone was the same. My mum didn’t tell me you are Muslim, so I didn’t really catch it until probably when I went to Sunday school (laughs) … So that’s probably when I was 11 years old or something. So there was a big gap and I didn’t know why she got me to pray, fast, because my Mum told me, never ask us. When your parents tell you something just do it. [My husband] yes, he is very religious (laughs) … He practises umm! You know, to a T, so everything has to be the Qur’an way but there’s no way, you know. Like … like, we went to Sydney last week and it was in the plane, and I said to him we don’t know where directions Kaaba is so I refused to pray. So he said, “you cannot leave prayer. Prayer, you know is compulsory you cannot leave no matter where you are, you have to pray.” I said, “Yes, I don’t know because we are flying”. “Which way is Kaaba?” and he said, “only God would know that you are” [in the plane] … you know. (Suria)

Sama, who arrived in Australia from Indonesia with her family in 1986, noted that, although her parents were Muslim, to her understanding they did not know Islam quite well: “They know Islam only through the tradition. It’s not Islam there umm! The true Islam that we know of and they only know the basic and the majority of things that they know is actually umm! Indonesian tradition”. This triggered in Sama the desire to learn more about Islam; she became a practising Muslim at the age of 16 by her own choice. And Fatima recalled her awakening to Islam as a teenager, how she regularly performed her daily prayers at school and sought spiritual guidance from religious leaders:

During my recess they would play basketball, I would go to the Mosque, I went to learn, I would pray. Also I would go during lunch time to the Sheik’s office and he would give me Islamic lessons, one on one tutoring, and if I had any questions about Islam and I was full of questions, ‘well why is this forbidden’ and ‘why is this …’ and I would … we would debate and that was my way of learning about Islam. Asking confrontational questions or things that I really wanted to know about and they loved that and they welcomed those challenges. So I would do that … I would wake up in the middle of the
night and do extra prayers; that was because there was so many things that the Prophet Mohammed did and he said that if you do these things it brings you closer to God and you know I just felt this spiritual awakening. (Fatima)

Saeed (2003, p. 59) identifies this trend among the Muslim community in Australia, which he attributes to parents’ lack of interest in religion, or difficulties associated with the family’s settlement process. This late learning process results in young Muslims like Sama, Suria or Fatima having to decide which texts and knowledge on Islam they will choose and which theological path they will follow (Yasmeen 2008, p. 41).

5.4 SEEKING HELP OR ADVICE WHEN NEEDED

For Muslim families requiring assistance with family or relationship issues, religious guidance recommends as the first option that they access support from within the family. This is highlighted by Yasmeen and Al Khudairi (1998, p. 35), Daneshpour (1998, p. 364), and Springer, Abbott and Reisbig (2009, p. 231), with the latter noting that this option is supported by Islamic religious texts:

Distressed Muslim couples are enjoined by the Qur’an to first seek reconciliation by consulting one or more relatives from each side of the family.

The wife as well as the husband can choose a mediator. (p. 231)

Although seeking assistance or support for family issues from relatives on either side of the family may be one of the preferred strategies among families from some cultural or ethnic groups, for Muslim families this guidance is specified in the Holy Qur’an. This preference to seek family support in the first place was mentioned by Lucy, Zahra and Joanne, with Joanne noting, without wanting to generalise, that for many Muslim families, and in particular those from new and emerging backgrounds, or the Afghan community, “you don’t talk about your family issues outside of your family”. This view was reflected in other participants’ voices; they reported that any difficulties with their
children’s behaviours, or with their own relationships, should be resolved within the family unit.

In some cases, this position appeared to be non-negotiable. Maryam found herself in such a predicament when she started experiencing domestic violence at the hands of her new Australian husband. She became completely dependent on him and his family for guidance and support, and with nowhere else to go:

So it started off like that, that I got, I was being controlled. I didn’t realise that I was, cos I was relying on my, you know, parents-in-law and my husband for support and for guidance to have, actually do things. (Maryam)

Another participant, Suria, recalled her own experience when facing serious relationship difficulties after 10 years of marriage, to the point where she requested her husband to end the relationship. However, his reaction to her request was to remind her that “Muslims cannot divorce because that’s the biggest sin”, and also that, as far as he was concerned, there was no reason for a divorce just because she had had a nervous breakdown. In the sequence of this incident, Suria left the house with the children, and went to her parents’ house, only to be told that she should go back and resolve her problems:

So I said I didn’t care (laughs) so I took all my children and left for my Mum, and my Mum said, ‘what you doing here? Go back home and deal with it’; so there was like from A to B; there was nothing there … there was no help, so I had to deal with everything myself sort of thing. (Suria)

When asked whether she would seek outside assistance for parenting issues, Suria replied that her husband would not allow her to do that, because he did not want anyone else to know about it. This approach to seeking help for family problems can also be restrictive for persons who cannot access a family support network. This is an issue also identified by Yasmeen and Al Khudairi (1998, p. 35), Daneshpour (1998, p. 363) and Pe-Pua et al. (2010, p. 49).
Some of the participants described how they searched for answers to their problems in particular Qur'anic passages, or prayed for divine inspiration or intervention. Noor described how she had prayed to God to come to her son’s aid when he was having relationship troubles; and another participant, Nader, described this approach when seeking a solution for a particular problem:

This khirah, Salat Khirah\[sic\] is that you ask, you’re asking God about something. You wanna do something, you have a problem, you wanna do something, you don’t know if you have, you can go, you can go yes for it or no and you’re confused about it. There is this praying called Khirah and this Khirah you ask God and you will have a sign, Inshallah [God willing], that you will receive a sign from Allah that if it’s positive or negative. (Nader)

This approach is not limited to Muslim people and can also be found across other religious groups, as noted by Daneshpour (1998, p. 365) and Lambert and Dollahite (2006), with the last reporting from their clinical experience that:

In particular, couples’ religious beliefs appear to influence their religious practices, which influence their shared purpose, relational virtues, commitment to permanence, and willingness to forgive. For example, participants’ religious belief that they can speak to God through prayer seemed to influence their reliance on prayer as a means of resolving or overcoming marital conflict. (p. 446)

When unable to obtain support or advice from close family members on either side of the family, or find answers to their troubles through prayer or divine guidance, participants reported that they would seek advice or support from their local religious person, an Imam or Sheik. However, some of them reported their concerns about the lack of qualifications of religious leaders, and that community leaders or elders could create further difficulties through loss of confidentiality. This is a common outlook among Muslims living the diaspora, as is identified by Ali, Milstein and Marzuk (2005, pp. 204-205), and Ozyurt (2010, pp. 298-299).

\[29\] The prayer name used by this participant during the interview is correctly transcribed. However, the correct name of the prayer is “Salat al-Istikhara”.
These issues are also identified in current research by Springer, Abbott and Reisbig (2009), Pe-Pua et al. (2010, p. 54) and Ozyurt (2010, p. 303), who stress the drawbacks for couples or families using Imams or Sheiks who are often not qualified to provide counselling or mediation services. As Pe-Pua et al. (2010) note, this is exacerbated by the lack of local knowledge and the quick turnover of religious leaders within some congregations, leaders who are also often religiously trained in their countries of origin before coming to Australia:

Participants were also worried about the religious leaders’ limited awareness of the formal support services available, and what they perceived to be their lack of understanding of social problems affecting Australian Muslim families … While they may be very well trained and knowledgeable around religious issues, the quick turnover limited their understanding of the Australian service system and of the underlying social issues experienced by local Muslim families. (Pe-Pua et al. 2010, p. 55)

While Islamic religious guidance points to the centrality of the family, or religious leaders, to help resolve family problems or conflict, some participants reported that following this path did not always provide the desired outcomes. Suria and Maryam’s experiences reveal that, in some situations, this may perpetuate or even worsen the situation. Their views were similar to that of other participants in this research, mainly female, who thought that accessing universal services would actually be an advantage rather than a drawback. In such cases, those participants felt that seeking advice or assistance from a religious person, community leader or elder was unlikely to provide any real options or solutions and could instead lead to a continuation of the problems. This could be the case when dealing with marital relationship problems, including domestic violence, or when managing parent-teen relationship difficulties.

These risks are not limited to Muslim communities; they can also be identified among members of other cultural groups and are partly due to the prevalence of patriarchal norms in those communities and societies (Merry 2001, p. 335). The risks inherent in seeking assistance within family or from religious leaders,
particularly in situations of IPV, are highlighted by Macfarlane (2012b). Macfarlane’s views appear to contradict those from Pe-Pua et al. (2010, p. 60), who suggest that, in spite of the significant barriers stopping people from accessing external services, such as social stigma and cultural norms, families and service providers should actively involve Imams or community elders as mediators to avoid the breakdown of families and divorce.

In some of the responses, participants also mentioned that access to government or non-government counselling or support services for resolving family or parenting issues would be considered as a last resort. This was because of their perception that these services did not employ professionals who would be able to understand fundamental aspects of Muslim life or have an understanding of Islam and the values and principles underpinning Muslim family life. This, they thought, would make it difficult for those practitioners to be able to take an unbiased, non-judgemental position in relation to any given situation. Pe-Pua et al. (2010, p. 64) make similar findings, noting some of the barriers for access, such as workers not being of the same gender, language barriers, distrust or poor quality of services. Participants’ opinions were divided as to whether there should be more Muslim-specific family support or counselling services, or whether these should be mostly universal. They generally considered that, in the absence of Muslim-specific services, universal social services should have Muslim background practitioners among their staff or, at the least, they should ensure that their staff were cross-culturally competent and had the capacity to work with people from Muslim backgrounds. This approach is supported by Yasmeen and Al Khudairi (1998, pp. 97-98), Pe-Pua et al. (2010, pp. 67-68), Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury (2011, p. 422), and Graham, Bradshaw and Trew (2010). On this particular topic, the last unambiguously conclude that:

Ultimately, it is cultural sensitivity that is of the utmost importance. Both the agencies and the service providers need to learn more about Islamic cultural traditions and, rather than judge or scorn the unfamiliar, welcome the diversity and adapt services to best fit these norms. (Graham, Bradshaw & Trew 2010, p. 344)
This need for longer-term settlement support, including in some cases therapeutic counselling, is highlighted by Fozdar and Hartley (2012, p. 4).

5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I introduced participants in this research, providing information about their origins and history of arrival in Australia. The topics I discuss—settlement, experience of life in Australia, community and social relationships, identity and belonging, and religious practice—provide important background information before moving into Chapter 6, where their experiences with parenting are explored. For the purpose of this research, I divided participants into three separate groups according to their immigration journey:

- the humanitarian or asylum seeker group (humanitarian)
- the non-humanitarian group (encompassing skilled, business or family reunion visas)
- those born in Australia, or born overseas but who arrived in Australia as young children.

This distinction between the journeys undertaken by participants is important, as these journeys shaped, to some extent, their initial settlement experiences in Australia and their acculturation process.

The significance of the ‘journey type’ was evident through the voices of participants in the first group, who resettled through the humanitarian program or as asylum seekers. Their stories reveal the often dangerous paths they took to Australia and highlight the fact that, for some, there was no choice of resettlement country. It also reveals the ways some of them were affected by immigration policies that delayed reunification with their families and brought them anxiety as to their families’ welfare. In spite of these initial experiences, participants in this group reported overall satisfaction with their resettlement in
Australia, with some in the humanitarian group taking the opportunity to stress how they appreciated Australia’s protection and their new freedoms. Of note in their stories are their reports of how they benefitted from the help and assistance offered by local government or members of their local community, which helped them to rebuild their lives and to develop a positive sense of identity and belonging. Their views highlight the positive role played by local government and communities, roles that I do not explore in detail in this research, but which would be worth exploring further, in particular the role of local government, and whether this tier of government should assume a more active role in the settlement services area.

On issues of identity and belonging, participants in the third group, those born in Australia or who arrived at a young age, appeared to have developed the strongest sense of identity and belonging to Australia. And while Schottmann (2013) notes the “palpable frustration among many young Australian Muslims about perceived pressures to have to continually prove their credentials as citizens” (p. 422), participants in this research appeared to embrace the Australian identity naturally, but with an unwavering connection to their religious beliefs and consciousness as regards their ethnic and cultural heritage. As Hopkins (2011) notes, this is an important combination and counteracts societal views of Muslim-Australians as a singular, hybrid category, a view cultivated by mass media. For participants who arrived in the non-humanitarian group, length of residence in Australia, and the arrival of first and second generation family members appeared to strengthen their sense of identity and belonging. Importantly, these sentiments are being passed on to their Australian-born children, who, as one of the participants observed, become more resilient and determined in the face of societal ignorance, racism or discrimination.

Shared by most participants were the not-so-pleasant experiences caused by incidents of discrimination and vilification that they experienced from time to
time, and the lack of extended family support. In relation to the former, participants commented on the role of the media, which they accused of stoking anti-Muslim sentiment; this heightened their concerns for the safety of family members. As current research shows, this is, unfortunately, a state of affairs that is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, given the ongoing situation in the Middle East, intensified by the recent terrorist attacks in Sydney and elsewhere around the world, and the anti-terrorism measures and countering violent extremism activities that are being implemented across Australia (Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department 2014).

For participants in the humanitarian group, the process of identity formation appeared to vary, depending on their experiences. For some of them, relationship and parenting difficulties and experiences of discrimination appear to have made the acculturation process harder. For others, developing a sense of identity was a very personal journey, coupled with the starting of a family with Australian-born partners, the birth of children in Australia, and for others, the birth of the first and second Australian family members. Ultimately, participants’ development of a healthy sense of identity and of belonging to Australia seems to be linked to their ability to maintain links with their own cultural and religious identity, which they are determined to pass on to their offspring.

On issues of community and social relationships, some of the participants expressed the view that Muslim community members in Western Australia should become more involved in relation to problems or issues affecting the community. These views are reflected in recommendations from current research and recommendations arising from reports commissioned by Australia’s DIBP (Akbarzadeh et al. 2009; Pe-Pua et al. 2010). Participants were also of the view that Muslims should make an effort to unite, or gather at key dates of the Islamic calendar, regardless of the branch of Islam they followed. However, these calls for community unity from some of the participants were
contrasted by other participants’ voices that appeared to question whether such unity can ever be achieved, a view that is supported by Akbarzadeh (2001). The same author also notes the unlikelihood of this goal ever being achieved given the multiplicity of national identities within the Islamic world and the sectarian divide that has become more evident in the early part of the twenty-first century.

Some of the participants addressed this set of circumstances by building their own family prayer rooms and gathering with like-minded community members for celebrating special dates of the Islamic calendar, according to their particular beliefs. The same principles applied in relation to participants’ religious practice; some professed to follow their Islamic faith, independent of ideological path and according to their own tradition; others followed the Shi’ite or Sunni tradition; and others preferred to follow it in a very personal way, without the access to Mosques. A common thread from all participants, however, was the observance of Salat, praying to Allah five times a day, one of the five pillars of Islamic faith, and other important dates and celebrations of the Islamic calendar. This revealed a significant unity in values and practice, in spite of the well-reported divide between the two main branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi’a, and the great diversity across the Muslim community.

Finally, help-seeking pathways for family or relationship problems was mostly consistent with religious teachings and can be grouped into four main categories: support from within the couple’s own family system; seeking wisdom or solace through prayer or reading from Holy Texts; or seeking counsel or mediation from respected religious or community leaders. The fourth and final option was accessing universal social services, one that, in spite of also being the last on the list of preferences, appeared to be preferred by some of the female participants. This was because of the fact that some of the participants either feared that personal or family confidentiality could be compromised, or had concerns about the lack of appropriate skills from
community or religious leaders, who, in most instances, provide voluntary services. Current Australian and international research supports the latter findings. Importantly, their preference for universal services was based on their view that seeking assistance from the family, particularly in situations of family and domestic violence, was unlikely to present a solution. As a result, they suggested that, in the absence of Muslim-specific professional counselling or mediation services, universal social services should have staff from Muslim background, or have cross-culturally competent staff who have the capacity to work with people from Muslim backgrounds.

In the next chapter, I explore the subject of parenting, a topic that generated a great deal of comment by research participants, the importance of religious teachings in the context of parenting, participants’ parenting styles and practices, and the values and norms framing these activities. In the next chapter, I will also explore the factors that influence the parenting practices of first or second-generation Muslims, or those who arrived at a young age (Group 3).
6. PARENTING

In this chapter, I explore the theme of parenting, the topic that generated the greatest amount of comment by research participants. Sub-themes I discuss include the importance of religious teachings in the context of parenting, the management of family affairs, and the values and norms framing these activities. The first section describes how participants manage their children within the Australian cultural context and their different strategies, and how they identify spaces in which they wish their children to operate or which they prefer to avoid. These spaces exist in normative areas in reference to both what is Islamic and what is un-Islamic, what is halal and what is haram\(^{30}\). Participants describe the changes they had to negotiate and adjustments they had to make to some of their parenting practices during the settlement process.

The interviews also provided an insight into the factors that influence the parenting practices of first or second-generation Muslims or those who arrived at a young age (Group 3). Other sub-themes identified and discussed in this chapter relate to children’s socialisation, the challenges this presented to participants and how they addressed those challenges. One of these sub-themes is the use of the internet and social media, where parents wish to exercise their right and responsibility to ‘parent’ their children and shelter them from the moral dangers that these media present. In the second section, I present and discuss participants’ decisions on the academic and religious education of their children, providing an insight into ways Muslim parents deal with their children’s interaction with the education system. This chapter concludes with an outline of parenting strategies participants found worked best for them.

\(^{30}\) **Haram** – What is forbidden or inviolable under Islamic law.
6.1 PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES

6.1.1 Values and Norms

We haven’t brought them up like our mum and dad; they come and speak with us, openly. We have always discussed things openly … because we know, we do not cross the line we draw, not we, we do not cross the line that God drew for us. (Alaa and Simon)

This statement from, Alaa and Simon’s interview describes a child-rearing style characterised by an open, dialogical relationship with their children, but still in keeping with religious values. Noor and Lucy (Group 2) shared their views in relation to the role of religious values and norms in their lives and in their parenting practices, with Lucy stressing parents’ critical role in ensuring that they do the right thing for their children, who are God’s gifts to them:

What about the gift from Allah. And the gift, yes! He gave you a gift, He gave you perfect girls. They are just good and healthy … you know, so why don’t you just take care of them and, and how you, how you raise them, it’s up to you how you raise them. You want them to be bad, you raise them in a bad way. You want them to be good, you raise them in a good way. (Lucy)

Salman, a Group 1 participant, stated that his parenting values and norms were based on Islamic religious principles and values. He reflected on the challenges and worries Muslim parents faced in Australia, stressing that they should nevertheless learn parenting skills relevant to Australia and be prepared to compromise in some areas, a point that he illustrated using the following metaphor:

So the point about … the whole point was how our values as Muslims and the values of the mainstream Australia in … you know they are in conflict on these issues and these are some things you cannot compromise because that’s part of your faith. You know and it’s something you cannot change because that is your faith you know. Unless of course you say I’m no longer a Muslim I can do whatever you do … I mean we bring them [children] to the society and then we tell them don’t behave like them. Now it’s just like saying to somebody go and, you know, swim in that pool and don’t get wet. You know what I mean so I said it’s asking our children the impossible. So, but the thing is … some things you can’t compromise but others you can. (Salman)
Salman’s statement appears to illustrate the perceived conflict between Australian and Muslim values which sometimes underpins Muslim parents’ approach to parenting. Salman’s statement is also reflected in de Haan’s finding that “the parenting that is typical for migration can neither be explained by referring to how things were back home or by referring to those practices of mainstream parents in the new country” (2012, pp. 393–394). As I will discuss further in this chapter, faced with this situation, some of the participants appear to reassess their parenting practices in a way that preserves the values and norms they respect, while making some adjustments that give their children the ability, within clear limits, to establish and maintain relationships with their non-Muslim peer group.

Some of the participants in Group 3 described how their own childhood experiences shaped their parenting practices. Fatima outlined a very personal parenting style that was based on ensuring that her children saw her as a role model. She also made the point that parenting could not be based only on culture or tradition. For Fatima, the values and norms of Islam are upheld through dialogue and positive parent/child relationships, not enforcement:

I think parenting has to evolve to suit the proper age and there’s even a Hadith, a saying of Prophet Mohamed, peace be upon him, which said that, “let them play for seven years, then educate them for seven years and then be their friend for seven years and then you treat them as an equal as a brother or a sister” … See, there’s a difference between culture and religion. A lot of people just follow their culture and their parenting is so heavy handed even when they’re like 25, they talk down to their children. They don’t give them enough power to make decisions and they don’t kind of build that relationship with them. (Fatima)

Zahra recalled that she did not follow her parents’ child-rearing style, but rather developed her own style of parenting, using the skills and strategies she considered useful and positive:

I’ve taken that on board along with my own feelings about how I felt about my upbringing or relationships and just try to become everything that I’ve always wanted for my, you know, for myself but to become that for my
children and also anything I didn’t like growing up to make sure I don’t pass those traits on and that I rid myself of those traits if I have any that have been passed on. That’s the approach that I take because you know there’s nothing worse than repeating the same patterns and then you end up with the same problems. (Zahra)

Nilam, who was born to parents from Malay Muslim background and raised in a country town in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, was thankful for her own parents’ role in showing her the right path, something that helped her in her own role as a parent:

It’s very hard but I’m lucky to have parents that, you know, I’m not saying that they’re strict, but I’m very lucky to have parents that have brought me and showed me the path of, you know, the right way. Teaching me the right way and showing me the right way of the Muslim religion. (Nilam)

Sama was grateful for the education her parents had provided; however, unlike her parents, she had also provided her children with information about Islamic values and norms, and the behaviours that she expected from them:

I have to actually thank my parents for that you know because they give me the choices without umm! The difference between me and my parents I actually informed the children about Islam, my parents give me a lot of information on education and what’s that... that as a human being we’ve got responsibility and accountability but it’s not all work the same ways you know. So I’ve learnt their system I suppose because it give me the choice and as a human being you like to think that you’ve got the choice it’s not something that your parents forcing upon you. (Sama)

However, Mahdi, one of the participants in Group 3, described how he critically developed his own parenting style, with childhood experiences and education playing a more significant role than religion:

I think there’s probably more education that really shaped up my views towards bringing up my kids rather than my parents. But I think that underlying roots yeah were established by my parents; but education has been the biggest key because there’s a lot of things that my parents did not teach me which I went out and taught myself, self-taught, which I sort of bring about in my daily life is throughout educating myself. (Mahdi)
These parenting approaches are consistent with those endorsed by Rahim (2014). In one of his short parenting video lectures, he stresses, among other things, the important role Muslim parents have in teaching their children in accordance with Islamic principles, and establishing a positive and friendly relationship with them in order to get their foundations right. Participants’ comments and practices also seem to support the findings from Howard et al. (2007) and Vermeer (2011), who note the positive role of parental religiosity on child-rearing practices and outcomes for children. Both authors find that religiosity plays an important function in promoting positive parenting values and norms.

However, the transition, or acculturation into Australian society and lifestyle, is a process that, as reported by participants in Group 3, came at a certain emotional cost for some of them. Zahra, whose father was a Muslim convert from Anglo-Saxon background, felt unhappy with the discrimination she witnessed her father suffering even from within the Muslim community, because “even then in the Mosque sometimes some people are a bit funny if you are not a born Muslim”. And another participant, Sama, had her own soul-searching experience at the age of 14, shortly after arriving in Australia:

First of all I search the idea if God does really exist. That’s from at the age of 14 because I see the cultural difference. It wasn’t that bad back then but still you actually have that difference where drinking and where the boyfriend and girlfriend. It’s a lifestyle that I really actually don’t want to get involved yet it was faced in front of me. Like sort of put it forward in front of me I have to because this is the culture that I live in and umm! I tried to actually avoid the existence of God and I sort of don’t want to accept but it doesn’t give me any satisfaction. It gives me this guilty inside me that made me keep searching. (Sama)

There is a dearth of Australian studies on the topic of parenting experiences for first and second-generation Australian Muslims, a gap previously identified by Mah, O’Neill and Chapman (2012). In his study of first and second-generation Australian Muslims, Schottmann (2013) identifies this acculturation process and concludes that, while their parents may have adhered to their country of
origin’s cultural and religious practices, their offspring are forming a “distinctively Australian Muslim sub-culture of their own” (p. 422). Participants’ responses seem to show that, although culture and religion are often intertwined, some of them view them as distinct, and sometimes in conflict, but clearly opt in favour of religious norms. Statements in relation to parenting values and norms by most of the participants in Group 3 appear to support the view that first or second-generation Australian Muslims develop a parenting style that, while still framed in Islamic values and norms, sits comfortably within accepted Australian parenting practices. This conclusion also appears to be supported by Caliskan (2013), who found that second-generation Turkish Australian Muslim women have “a stronger attachment to their familial environments rather than their parental culture they grew up with” (p. 60).

6.2 DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES: PARENTS’ STRATEGIES

6.2.1 Socialisation, Peer Pressure, and Social Media

When asked about their parenting experiences and the main challenges they experienced upon settlement in Australia, Group 1 participants, Mohammad and Aisha, described how they trusted that their children would make the right choices for themselves. They reported that their children never got into drinking alcohol, smoking or sex during their teenage years. They attributed their success to teaching their children from an early age about expected Islamic values, norms and behaviours, and to closely guiding them in their decision making as they grew up:

They retained their values, they practise what we taught them and out in society they mix well with the community, they pretty much figured it out for themselves like ‘Oh I don’t want to do that so I’m not going there’. 
(Mohammad)
Another parenting strategy they used was not allowing their children to sleep over at their non-Muslim friends’ places, but allowing them to invite their friends over for sleepovers at their own home. Mohammad did not stop their children from making friends with children from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds:

They’ve got their friends, they’ve got their little group of friends but friends with similar values. They’ve got friends of all, you know, different backgrounds. (Mohammad)

Mohammad and Aisha’s approach to parenting was similar to those reported by other participants, such as Sama (Group 3) and Noor (Group 2). Sama reported that she trusted her daughter and sons alike to make decisions when going out, and Noor reported that she always taught her children the Islamic values. Noor’s main goal was for the children to be good Muslims. She worked hard to make sure that this happened and felt that she was successful in achieving this in different areas of their lives, such as ensuring that they did not get closely involved with people of the opposite sex before becoming adults. Noor described how she warned her children to avoid girlfriend/boyfriend relationships, hence the chances of having relationships out of wedlock, and that, when they did get into such relationships, they were serious about them. Noor also made efforts to ensure that her children became involved with the right friends. Like Mohammad, Noor noted that her children made friends with other mainly Muslim children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and that they eventually married Muslim partners. She reported that this strategy was helped by the fact that her ex-husband was involved with the local Mosque and that they all had very strong links there.

Participants also commented on the important role played by schools in their children’s socialisation, as these were the main environments where relationships were struck and a sense of Australian identity and belonging developed, a view consistent with the finding by Mansouri and Wood (2008). Some participants commented on the limits they had placed on children’s
outings, depending on their children’s age and stage of development, expected
dress codes, and whether alcoholic drinks or non-halal foods were available at
events they wanted to attend. Some participants stated that, quite often,
children decided by themselves to decline invitations to unsuitable parties or
activities to which they were invited by their friends.

Mazen, a Group 1 participant, reflected on this topic, commenting that some
aspects of Muslim day-to-day life, such as having to eat halal foods, limited the
options available for family outings and children’s socialisation opportunities:

Occasionally I go with them to a movie and eh! We eat in MacDonald’s
sometimes and it’s just … I need them just to be part of the society but
sometimes it’s very difficult. So we just eat fish and chips; so and some soft
drink but I think this is the challenge new one for my kids is that they are not
having many options in terms of entertainment here, yeah because of
limitations; say the challenges like eh! as I say the dress, the entertainment
things and the challenge probably the way that they present themselves to
others [dress] and I always say to them you don’t need to answer this question
if you are not happy with or not comfortable with. (Mazen)

Leena, a participant from Group 2, reported finding it challenging to deny their
children’s requests to go on outings with their friends and that they eventually
accepted her decisions in relation to this, but not without beforehand
questioning her about those decisions:

They accepted that … that they can’t do it but eh! It was a bit difficult for them
to understand why … why we have to do this? Why can’t we just live like
[other Australian kids]? … Why can’t we move out when we are 18 like the
Australian kids do? Why can’t we just get a job and provide? Why can’t we do
whatever we want? You know it’s like just do it forget the consequences.
(Leena)

Nevertheless, Leena would sometimes compromise, because she trusted her
children’s judgement and had raised them in a sound, Islamic way.
Sama similarly reported that she had learnt to let her children make the
decisions for themselves at some stage, as hard as this had been for her.
She also felt that they were well equipped to make the right judgement, and
that they would ultimately have to be responsible for their decisions before Allah:

So if my son do something that is not appropriate he will actually come and tell me and I will actually tell him ‘do you really need to do that’ and you know I sort of give him the information and again I give it to him—it’s all up to you, the choice is yours. You’ve got responsibility and you’ve got accountability. The most important thing for me is that on the day of judgement when I come to Allah I know that I’ve done my job and I’ve given you that choice because we also have got choices isn’t it ... the responsibility and accountability. (Sama)

Participants’ key strategy of reinforcing religious teachings and routinely reminding their children about appropriate behaviour—halal vs. haram—is consistent with what Mah, O’Neill and Chapman describe as the process of “internalization of faith through consistent practice” (2012, p. 93). These authors note that the value and effectiveness of this long-term strategy of repeating and reinforcing simple and clear messages about good vs. bad, or halal vs. haram, often framed in Qur’anic or Hadith references, appears to produce the desired behavioural results as children reach adolescence. Participants’ descriptions of their children’s self-exclusion from situations perceived as haram seem to be related to this strategy. Participants’ decisions to set boundaries on children’s choice of friends, in some cases limiting their socialisation to Muslim friends only and not allowing them to have sleepovers at friends’ places, appear to be influenced by their desire to protect their children from exposure to harmful behaviours or environments.

These parenting strategies are consistent with current research, which finds that parents tend to limit children’s “intimate out-group relationships” that they perceive as undesirable, unsafe, or that may potentially bring the family into disrepute, but yet do not limit children’s interaction with children from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds (Hunter et al. 2012; Munniksma et al. 2012). These researchers note, however, that gender also plays a significant role in participants’ stance regarding their children’s choice of peers, and in particular
on boyfriend/girlfriend or intimate relationships. Also, participants in this research appeared to give equal freedom of movement and choice to their male and female children, depending on factors such as age and maturity. However, intimate or sexual relationships were off limits, regardless of maturity or gender. This position is consistent with findings from research undertaken by Yahyahoui et al. (2012, p. 36).

On issues of drugs and alcohol use, many participants reported that they always tried to be open with their children about these issues and were confident that their children were aware of the dangers. However, Sama thought that there was a tendency among Muslim community members to treat drugs and alcohol as a taboo subject, rather than to talk openly about them. She felt that this attitude had to be replaced with one of willingness to discuss openly the subject of drug and alcohol use among young people in the Muslim community:

I find within the Muslim community that I know of when it comes to drug and alcohol they tend to actually fear. It’s like the fear of the unknown and so because of that not many people are willing to actually talk about it. But this sort of things it needs to be talked about it because our youth they’re going into that road. They might not tell the parents but they are there. I think it’s community education isn’t it? (Sama)

Sama supported this community education approach to drug and alcohol issues affecting young people, including those from her own community, because of her view that parents needed to adopt a new approach to parenting in order to deal better with the challenges these issues pose:

We Muslims need to wake up because we are living in a … such a dangerous time isn’t it? The time that we are living in now is not like any other time and for the foreigners Muslim we need to actually have this tool, that the way we brought up our children has to be slightly different from when they are actually brought up in their country, because our children have different view than us, see, and we need to actually, umm! have tolerance of that rather than to actually be hard on the children I think. This is my own opinion as a parent. (Sama)
Dean and Jasreen reported that they had been worried for their daughter who, although not having felt pressured to drink alcohol, felt compelled to accompany her University colleagues to the pub in order to socialise with her peer group. She confided to her parents that whenever she did this, she felt out of place, because she did not drink alcoholic beverages:

She’s been here [in Australia] so many years. But it’s now when the socialising has become a bit different, she’s finding it, “how do I fit in”, and I don’t want her to be isolated either. I don’t want her not, by all means we say go out, but she says “if I go I’m the only one not drinking and they’re all finding it odd”, you know. (Dean and Jasreen)

Simon reported that his children had a good group of friends, most of them from Muslim background, but fitting in was not easy, because of Muslim dress requirements:

I think she felt it herself; you see, she had a good group of friends, but I think it is the inadequacy of ... fitting in, being the same as others; it’s a hard thing, and you are wearing a long skirt, and the all of a sudden, you are wearing pants, and your friends are wearing shorts; she’s not used to that. (Simon)

Group 3 participant, Nilam, and her husband, Azlan, were also concerned about their children’s potential future exposure to alcohol or cigarette smoking through their contact with other young people in the country town where they live and their exposure to inappropriate content in television programmes:

A. ... and when they really grown up, and mean all, when they like all go to school like that, so it’s just the influence that umm! that we worried about, you know, with other religion because other religions is not very strict so yeah that’s ... that’s one of them and then umm! I mean like (speaks in another dialect and N translates).

N. Just influence by friends, and what they see. Ummh! What they see you know on Tele you know, especially with alcohol and umm! Cigarettes yeah! I’m ...I’m very concerned about that. (Azlan and Nilam)

Participants’ concerns in relation to their children’s exposure to the drug or alcohol scene, and other activities considered haram, were based both on clear religious guidance that forbids such activities, but also on their concerns for
their welfare. This topic is widely reported in research, with Buitelaar and Stock (2010); Pe-Pua et al. (2010); Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury (2011) and Ryan and Vachelli (2013) reporting Muslim parents’ difficulties in preventing children from engaging in activities that are forbidden under Islamic rules.

The topic of child discipline was raised in five of the 24 interviews and, in four of those interviews, was discussed in tandem with the topics of child protection and child vs. parental rights in the Western context. Aadel and Joanne discussed the topic of child protection from their own professional experience, describing how parents who have resettled in Australia from countries where a more authoritarian parenting style is the norm have difficulties adapting their parenting practices to what is expected in Australia. They stressed that it will be difficult, or nearly impossible, for some parents to change their child-rearing style overnight, and that one of the strategies to help them adapt is through the provision of information on parenting and the laws of the land, in particular child protection laws. Joanne also noted that this education process should be focused on empowering parents and providing them with alternative, non-physical discipline methods:

A. So they have the information but when they came here because of the shock, the new life, the new way, the new country maybe they forget. Maybe they forget so …

J. But, and also I mean to adjust your style of parenting overnight …

A. It takes time, it takes time I know, but that’s why I suggest to you know I used to work … to do to refresh, to remind them okay …

J. … “these are your rights, this is the law; this is what you can do this is what you can’t do” but actually equip them with umm! with strategies on how to do it differently … not as easy as just not hitting your kids but if you’ve got to contain a child who’s off the rails, then they’re used to physical discipline as you know. You know do you all of a sudden say “okay time out in your room” and do they respond to that, you know. (Aadel and Joanne)
One of the participants in Group 1, Leena, was forthright in her views on the topic of child discipline and her concerns about Australian laws which took away parents’ ability to smack, and ultimately control, their children:

Yeah in Australia I’ve seen on the news, not personally I don’t know but on the news I see that no smacking the child. If the child wants to kill himself like going out with the drugs and destroys his own life the parents have to do something to restrict him or … or even hit him. It’s not going to kill him just to hit him little bit on his leg or something just to scare him, showing that you’re in control. The child can’t be taking over parent. The parent is the carer, and the parents are adults; so the parents know what’s good for the children. They have lived their life, they have the experience. The child doesn’t know anything. Children can, young child can put his hand in the fire he doesn’t know he going to burn so the mother has to stop him. (Leena)

Leena thought that, instead of encouraging children to go against their parents, child protection authorities should remind them that their parents had their best interests at heart and wanted to take care of them, “so if they want to put this disciplines you have the rules of the house you have to follow them” (Leena). However, she stressed her support for actions taken by relevant authorities to protect children from unfit parents: “Unless the parents unfit, is a drug addict, he’s a drunken, he’s bashing the wife or bashing the … the father is bashing the wife or mother is neglecting the child leaving him alone and doing her own thing, then is a different case. Then you find foster care for the best of the child’s interest; but for discipline rules you don’t take the child away” (Leena).

Leena’s views on issues of child discipline and child protection were shared by Salman and Sara (Group 2). Salman pointed to the fact that, in his country of origin, parents were supported by the community and state authorities in disciplining their children: “Well back in Africa of course you know the parents have the power to discipline them you know, to physical lashes or you know a lot of ways of doing that and the government will support the parent” (Salman). Leena and Salman also referred to their professional experiences in Australia and commented on how they had spoken to parents who had felt
further disempowered when children threatened them with calling authorities when they were trying to discipline them, with Salman stating:

In this country young people are bosses, bossing around their parents that’s what they’re doing you know. Because they help you know about the rules, they are very smart; they tell each other you know; and they tell you … you can’t do anything to me, I can, you know … can do whatever I like … and the parents just are helpless, don’t know what to do. (Leena)

When commenting on the effect of these issues particularly on Muslim parents in Australia, Salman referred to religious texts:

As an Islamic community we don’t, there’s nowhere we can go because the government already contradict our parenting responsibilities. Now I’m not suggesting that Islam allows what you call children to be—violence against our children—no, it doesn’t. But it gives the parents power. In fact in the Qur’an umm! for example there’s a prophet saying that, ‘Paradise is at the feet of the mother’. In other words if you really want to go to Paradise you have to be very obedient, respectful and protective of your Mum. Okay! Now and there’s also another verse in the Koran that specifically orders Muslims to respect their parents, to look after them in their old age and not even show them a frown on the face, not even a frown, not even any sign of … of this what you call anger or dissatisfaction that … you know what I mean. (Salman)

Mazen, Aadel and Joanne noted that, for migrant parents in general, issues of child discipline are complex. They noted that intergenerational conflicts could potentially arise because of language barriers, which may leave parents dependent on their children for day-to-day activities, and children’s faster acculturation to Australian society and lifestyle. On the topic of child discipline, Mazen stressed that the protection of children from harm was not specific to Western societies, but was also integral to Islam, noting that, in spite of some migrant parents’ difficulty in understanding Western laws on child protection, the Qur’an was clear about parents’ duties to protect their children:

I know it’s a Western way, but even in the Qur’an there is similar things you know. You’re not allowed to hit the child, you’re not allowed to probably leave the child without food, or when the child is sick you have to look after the child. It’s mostly the principle is still there but it all comes to education I think. (Mazen)
Parental concerns regarding restrictions on child discipline practices, potential intervention by child protection agencies and perceived or actual loss of control over their children, including among parents from CaLD backgrounds, are widely reported in current research (de Haan 2012; Fozdar & Hartley 2012; Sims & Omaji 1999). Participants’ views on topics of child discipline are extensively reported in Muslim scholarship in the context of parents’ duties and responsibilities towards children and children’s duties towards their parents (‘Abd al 'Ati 1977; Ansari n.d-a; Bakar 2011; Omran 1992; Rippin 1990). Similarly, current research reflects participants’ views on issues of child discipline and parent/child conflict affecting families who resettle in Western countries (Arnett 2006; Moghissi 2010; Nassehi-Behman 2010).

Research undertaken by Freeman (1998-1999), Hamilton (1995), and Walter, Isenegger and Bala (1995) reveals that, in some circumstances, parents who use strict forms of discipline, such as corporal punishment, may find themselves in breach of laws for the protection of children, which take into consideration the best interests of the child at the expense of the parents’ rights. However, a majority of participants’ comments in relation to child-rearing strategies are mostly consistent with those advocated by Rahim (2014) or Tarazi (1995), who model an assertive parenting style, where smacking is only used as a last resort and in such a manner as to cause no harm (Tarazi 1995, pp. 196-197). Finally, Aadel and Joanne’s suggestions regarding the provision of parenting information and support within an Australian context are reflected in a 2010 report of the Australian Human Rights Commission (pp. 32–33) and Australian research by Yasmeen and Al Khudairi (1998).

Many participants raised matters related to their children’s access to the internet, television entertainment, and social media. Mazen reported that he ensured that his children were connected to the broader community, allowing them to use the internet and look up information that other children their age looked up; however, they did this with his guidance. This, he stressed, was
because “they are teenagers and they live in this country” (Mazen). On the topic of news, media, and the ongoing public discourse on Islam, Mazen acknowledged the complex, and sometimes confusing, web of information available. He ensured that his children learnt how to assess critically this news and information:

So and they became less interested in the media and they call some of the channels you know like they report wrongly, they report something you know on TV they won’t trust again they won’t go to other channels and they keep saying “oh! I like this channel.” I say, “Okay why you like this channel?” They say, “Because they may … they tell us the truth more than the other channels.” So they have this sense of connection. They connect to the, you know media that’s telling the truth, or the programme that’s telling the truth … So for me as a parent is I have to be there for them to say not for my own agenda, but I have to show them actually in the book teaching Islam; I also have to show them in the Qur’an if that’s … that’s wrong. (Mazen)

These concerns about the media’s portrayal of Islam and Muslims, and the broader effect this has on them and their families, were reported by other participants. In some cases, they described how, like Mazen, they tried to help their children understand the news and information broadcasts; others, like Nader, felt compelled to balance messages from what another participant, Fatima, described as “an ignorant media”:

So, and if you run after, when you see the media and you see what’s happening all around the world about Islam, I feel so sorry for that. But in my opinion I try to give the message of Islam that Islam is not like this. Islam is, is a very peaceful religious. (Nader)

On the topic of television entertainment, Suria (Group 2) reported her concerns about movies and music, in particular music videos. She found the latter harder to control:

I’m a bit concerned with my children as well it’s like the music. I try to censor it, but you can’t, it’s everywhere, you know. You go to friends’ houses listen to music and movies. My son is 14, and I know it sounds silly, but if there was a kissing scene on TV he still looks away. So he’s … he’s 14 and he’s shy so and he’ll turn it off, he … he will actually turn it off, not me. So my other kids will just go to other room or somewhere … But it’s mainly music I’m a bit
concerned … and the film clips a bit … too much skin I think. So that’s, that’s my number one concern. The movie I can actually control but the music. (Suria)

Alaa and Simon raised similar concerns, noting that children’s programmes had become more sexualised, with more regular depictions of people kissing. She also commented on the increasing difficulty of controlling children’s access to inappropriate adult content. Some participants were also concerned about the influence television entertainment could have on their children through the broadcasting of programmes modelling teenage drinking or smoking. Some of the participants addressed these issues by tuning into their home country’s TV programmes, or choosing an international satellite or internet channel with halal content, as Mazen, Nilam and Azlan did.

Participants’ views on the various forms of media, including internet and social media, are consistent with findings from current research, with Muslim scholars Bakar (2011) and Omran (1992) both raising concerns about the effect of these growing phenomena on traditional Islamic families and family institutions. There are, nevertheless, some positives arising from these new communication and media technologies, with some researchers noting that these technological advances have facilitated the wider and more equitable spreading of the message of Islam (Echchaibi 2011), also providing parents with the ability to choose adequate programming (with halal content), including news channels, from a wider selection of sources (Kamdar 2010; Meezan 2014; Aly 2007). Participants’ reactions to news media’s often sensationalist and uninformed reporting on Islam and Muslims, and their attempts to ‘set the record straight’ is consistent with Aly (2010), who finds “Personal interactions, alternative discourses or individuals who offer alternative constructions of reality challenge the legitimacy of the media discourse as a true representation of reality” (p. 32).
In this summary, I presented and discussed participants’ views on topics ranging from their children’s socialisation and peer relationships, to their concerns about their exposure to inappropriate or forbidden (haram) activities or environments. Although these issues affect many parents across the Western world, for religious parents, such as the participants in this research, these issues present a higher level of concern because of their religious frame of reference and their efforts to keep their offspring on the right path. In the next section, I present and analyse participants’ views in relation to another important parenting area: academic education.

6.2.2 Children’s Education

6.2.2.1 Islamic, private, or public school?

This section provides insights into the current discourse/concern in Australia and elsewhere about Islamic schools as the preferred provider of education for Muslim children. In Australia, this debate has at times been intense because of opposition from local communities or LGAs to the opening of, or expansion of existing, Islamic schools (Akbarzadeh et al. 2009; Dunn, Klocker & Salabay 2007; Maddox 2011). Against this background, participants provide a diversity of responses about interaction with Muslim schools and the wider private and public education system. Of note as well is children’s agency in the selection of schools, with some of the participants describing how they considered their children’s wishes when deciding what schools they would attend.

Some of the participants in Group 1, such as Ayam, and the three focus group participants reported positive experiences with one of the Islamic colleges in Perth. Ayam commented that her settlement in Australia had not been difficult because her children had attended that particular Islamic college and had not experienced problems with their education. However, a number of other participants held strong views in relation to the quality of teaching at that same college, choosing to send their children to public schools or to private schools from other religious denominations. These were the views put forward by
Mahdi and Ashkan. Having initially sent his daughter to a local Islamic college, Ashkan soon decided to transfer her into a public school. He thought that the education at that Islamic college was based on a model that replicated “the same decayed culture that exists in Africa and the Middle East … the same culture that teaching staff had themselves, consciously or unconsciously, escaped from”:

So it was a small Middle East in the midst of Australia, and the most degraded and rigid culture of Middle East. In the Middle East there are many intellectuals, many cultured people, but this school was the manifestation, the representation of the most reactionary, rigid and degraded parts of the culture of the Middle East. (Ashkan)

Another Group 1 participant, Fatima, also shared her “overly negative” experience at the same Islamic college, which she attended as a young person. She noted that, in spite of some “moments of happiness … the overall fact was one big ugly memory for me”:

I made a lot of wonderful friends and there were some wonderful books that I came across, but in terms of the overall structure the ethos, the … if I think about the top down approach from the administrators, their philosophy I felt was really outdated, it was stale … it was I felt, an environment that really suffocated my soul, and a lot of people felt that way. (Fatima)

While acknowledging the well-meaning efforts of the school’s administrator, Fatima assessed that person as not having the relevant educational background, and as running the school with a system that was “based on a model from the 1920s in Egypt” (Fatima), but in a very different social and cultural context. Fatima decided to send her children to a different Islamic college, which she reported as providing her children with the opportunity to be educated in a religious environment, but still facilitating their integration into the broader society:

Langford Islamic college has a reputation and I don’t know if this is maybe a crude way of putting it, but this is what other parents would say if you ask them, “it’s just like a public school but it has that Islamic twist”, meaning that they try to integrate you into the Islamic way of life, but give the children that Islamic identity as well, so that they try to set the children up for being able to
participate in the broader society, whereas these Muslim schools become these cultural ghettos, they really are very sheltered environments. (Fatima)

However, although happy with her choice and the quality of education provided by this college, Fatima would like to see the Islamic school system providing the kind of choices, such as vocational, sporting or arts programmes and progression to degrees in other areas of study, that are available in some private teaching institutions:

I would love my son to go in to a school like [Private college name] or another high quality school because there’s sporting programmes, there’s creative programmes, drama. Unfortunately the Muslims schools a lot of them are not geared up to have those extra programs and if they do have those programmes they are kind of thrown together and not done and pursued with passion, and it comes back to what they value. You go to this Muslim school they’ll want you to be a doctor, failing that, an engineer ... laughs ... or a pharmacist. And I know that’s in a lot of cultures, but I tell you being a student there’s rammed down your throat... Social sciences, Law doesn’t even, doesn’t even get a mention. Humanities, Arts is unknown. (Fatima)

Alaa and Simon had sent their daughters to an Islamic college in Sydney prior to moving to Perth and commented that they soon noticed the lower quality and standards of Islamic colleges in Perth. Singling out one of those colleges, they stated:

I am not putting anyone down, but this is a realistic issue; the teachers, they didn’t adapt to Western society. So when they teach you, they teach you in the back old ways. So the level of education is very low, and it made it pretty hard for us, because I don’t know how to read and write Arabic; English, I am fluent with everything, but Arabic I can speak, I can understand, but I cannot read and write. (Alaa and Simon)

As a result, in an effort to make sure that the children were comfortable with their culture, and their parents’ culture, Alaa and Simon moved them to the same Islamic college that Fatima had chosen, which they also found to have better standards of education.
Group 3 participant, Zahra, was also disillusioned and concerned with the quality of education within the Islamic education system, but she was also not prepared to send her children to other school systems. As a result, she decided to home school her children:

I’ve come from the Islamic school and I know what it’s like in there and I see you know the generations that are coming out of there and it’s not good enough for me personally and even public schools I’ve experienced that as well and you know some kids fall through the cracks and you know for me I want to make that effort for myself. So I have chosen to home school because of that and also through the relationship through having a close bond of trust and love and communication with my children and also trying to ask them what they’ve been going through as they grow up, and at the same time not sheltering them from the world, they still see and go through a lot. (Zahra)

When Lucy (Group 2) and her husband arrived in Perth from South Africa, they were initially planning to send their children to an Islamic college. However, one of the factors that turned them away from that option was their concern with the low standard of education in that particular college. However, for them this was not a big issue, because their children had been attending an Islamic school in South Africa, and they felt comfortable sending their children to a Catholic school: “[the children] were quite aware of their religious responsibilities … because in South Africa they’d been having that [Islamic] education” (Lucy). Also from South African background, Mohammad and Aisha shared this experience, deciding to send their children to a non-denominational public school, rather than an Islamic school, upon arriving in Australia, because their children already had their basic Islamic religious groundings:

So what we did was we involved them in one of the mainstream schools and for Islamic purposes we were capable enough of, of giving them faith. The basics were already given to them that they know this is what they needed to do, fasting, praying, and just be good to mankind. (Mohammad and Aisha)

For Mazen and his wife, the decision to send their children to a public, rather than an Islamic, school was based on two main factors. One was their concern that the children would feel excluded from mainstream society; the other was
related to the religious teaching at one of the main Islamic colleges, which Mazen said followed the Sunni Islamic teaching. Mazen stressed that this was an issue, as Sunni religious teachings are different from those of Shi’ites, who are seen by Sunnis as unbelievers:

What happens is that’s when I say from the beginning I don’t need for my children to feel that they are excluded from the mainstream. What I did is I need to have a big foundation, a good foundation for them just to get integrated and engage with the mainstream so that’s my idea at the beginning to why I sent my kids to public school. (Mazen)

Aadel and Joanne planned to send their child to the public school system rather than one of the main Islamic colleges, with Aadel also stressing that he would not be pushing Islam into his child, because he saw Islam as his own personal quest:

A. Well many times I told, my son … I mean when he grow up, I told my wife many times that if … I prefer to take him straightaway to mainstream school, no Islamic college, no nothing. You know, I don’t want to raise my kids from Qur’an Mohamed and all this things. I will teach him just like important things that he has to go through Islamic College. I don’t take Islam as a way of my life. When I deal with my family Islam is my personal, I deal with my religion just alone. I don’t enter it in my life with my wife or my kid, my son. So I guess we agree to take him to public school straightaway.

J. I mean I wouldn’t. There’s I think, the quality of religious education here would be an issue, but there’s no way, we’d send him here to that Islamic school. (Aadel and Joanne)

For Sara, who arrived in Perth in 2001, the experience with the education of her children in Australia was marked with significant difficulties, with her older teenage children leaving public school and rebelling against her and her husband. Sara attributed this to the school environment, their peers’ influence and the lack of support from the school. In contrast, Sama stated that she would like her children to attend an Islamic school, as she felt it would provide a more controlled environment and better education. However, she had allowed her children to move from an Islamic school to a public school in the
hope that, like her at their age, they would still be able to find the path to God and Islam.

Her children’s decision, and request, to move to a public school appeared to be related also to their desire to feel part of mainstream society, and she did not want to force them to stay at the Islamic school. Sama described how her older daughter had been at an Islamic school from kindergarten to year 10 and had to move to a public school because of problems such as peer pressure:

My preferred option would be Islamic school—yes, but at the same time umm! the children also at certain age they do actually make their own choice, and I do, and not all this choices I agree to, but I have to actually give them the support because umm! if I were to force my children all in the Muslim school that will not actually be productive because if you actually force somebody they won’t actually do well. (Sama)

Mehdi reported that he was happy with his son’s progress at a local public school and was encouraging his other children to be high achievers:

Yeah this here okay. If I tell my kids all if you do good job, if you do good study you become like rich and everything. Yeah that’s why I put my one son bigger son in [Name] College. He’s good now. He’s work … work experience to Pharmacy [organised] by the College. (Mehdi)

Mahdi and his wife decided to send their children to a local public school rather than an Islamic or Catholic school. Their decision was based on their search for quality in the school’s leadership, staff and education, rather than the religious content of the curriculum, or ethos. This decision was also influenced by Mahdi’s view that the strength of religious belief and following across Australian society has been in decline:

When we assessed the schools—where should our kids go to, we based it on the level of education rather than religion only because and also the demographic … If you’re situated in a particular area where the schools have got basically you know no morals, neither Christian, neither Catholic neither Muslims. Yeah! I think parents, those parents would be limited. Because nowadays I find as I mentioned earlier it’s from my … for me growing up in
this country I find that religion overall it’s not about Islam. Overall it’s declining. (Mahdi)

The four participants residing in a country town in the Great Southern region had no option of an Islamic school; their choices were limited to the three local public schools and a Catholic school. As a result, some of them had to provide their children with religious education and guidance after school hours. Nilam had the advantage, however, of being able to send her children to the local Mosque on weekends for religious classes:

Saturday and Sunday just for the Muslim kids where they do from 9 o’clock say till 12.30 just full on of learning Arabic, the Quran umm! just about … mostly about the religion, prayers, fasting, yeah! So that’s every weekend. (Nilam)

Abdul was most dissatisfied with the quality of school education in that same country town, more so than concerned with the lack of access to an Islamic school, to the point of commenting that he felt that sending children to school was almost a total waste of time:

I’m not sure about the education in other places, but this … in [town], this education is very zero like. The kids learn nothing from school. Nothing at all. Even if the children in the class 4 or class 5 is still there … you can compare to other countries’ class 1. So but what I think, but I’m not sure about the other places, but in [this country town] is eh! … The education is zero, especially there. (Abdul)

And he stressed that these poor educational outcomes were accompanied by a lack of moral education, an education that should start early in a child’s life:

Ah! I think so for the child is the early education. The moral education is important to make understand the child to this is right thing and this is the wrong thing … If once the child been sort of out of umm! sort of umm! behaviour it’s very hard to bring back that person and in my view you can do for short term but I don’t think so for … for long term. (Abdul)

His views were in contrast with those of Said, a Group 1 participant and a resident in the same country town, who reported his satisfaction with the
educational opportunities that were provided to his children in this country town.

6.2.2.2 Upholding religious education

All participants whose children attended non-Islamic schools made sure that help was at hand through the provision of religious and language education at home, or helping their children with questions fielded by their school friends during special celebrations like Ramadan. This was the case with Group 2 participants Mohammad and Aisha, who recalled their children coming back home a little upset by comments made by their schoolmates during the Ramadan fasting period. They felt that school staff could have explained to their classes the reason why some children were not bringing food to school, and ensure that they were not teased with food during the lunch break:

You know, how children can be nasty. They would say to them that “oh you’re mummy’s a meanie. Your mummy doesn’t give you food.” And you know, they would sort of pass comments like that, and the children would come home feeling a bit upset. (Mohammad and Aisha)

Mohammad and Aisha had to engage with the school and eventually were able to make a difference; they felt that, in a sense, their children had been pioneers, as this was happening in the early 1980s in Perth, when there were not many Muslim families living in their suburb.

On the topic of school environment and support for children and parents, another participant, Leena, suggested that public schools, in particular, should provide additional support for students to stop bullying incidents:

Not everyone can afford to send their kids to private schools so make the public school good and discipline and educational wise keep safe bullying able to keep the bullying yeah try and … I know can’t give that completely but try and control it keep … the teachers should keep an eye on the kids when they are on the ground. (Leena)
Leena’s children went to an Islamic school for their primary education and then moved to a private Catholic school. She was happy that this particular school provided the level of discipline she expected and a prayer room for Muslim children. However, she was disappointed that Muslim girls were not allowed to wear the hijab, and that there was no halal food available at the canteen:

They went to … first they went to Muslim school for primary school and then they went to Catholic school. Umm! Well Catholic school discipline was good. I wish they would allow the Muslim to wear … private school allowed the Muslim kids to, the girls to wear the hijab with their uniform which they didn’t. One good thing they did they allowed the prayer room, that they could go and pray lunch time … Halal lunches … that’d be one good help ‘cause sometimes children want to eat in canteen where other kids are eating and our kids can’t eat it because of the … you know it’s not allowed. (Leena)

For Abdul, schools have an important role in children’s education; they should complement parents’ efforts at home and teach sound values and norms very early in children’s lives, regardless of culture or religious backgrounds. He also observed that children of Afghan or Pakistani backgrounds were generally better behaved and more respectful to their elders than their Australian counterparts. Abdul saw this as a cultural trait:

So as our culture show and teach us as well so that’s a part of our culture as well. I think so the only children in [country town] they are very … at the moment it doesn’t matter the schools if … they have a good education, or not but think so the respect and family ways I think so pretty good there now and the people live in city. I think so, I find that out there … it still goes back to every particular family but I think so still [country town] no matter how many [Afghani] families about 6 or 7 they all the children I see I think so they well behaved too … well behaved, yeah! (Abdul)

For participants whose children went to non-Islamic schools, attention was given to providing them with clarification about religious information. For Lucy, this included ensuring that their children were aware of some of the differences, and also similarities, between Catholicism and Islam:

I think because, like the whole idea of who God is and what is heaven and who gets to heaven, and why, and, also because when we, we talk about the prophets that we say the names in Arabic, so we say Abraham, ah we say Ibrahim … so then he wants to know, so then who’s Abraham and Isaac …
obviously if you send your child to a Catholic school you have to accept they
go to the church and they, and we’ve, we’ve accepted all that because they’ve
allowed our children to go to Mosque on Fridays ... and trying to explain to
my younger one that when they say God they mean when we say Allah, they
also mean God. (Lucy)

For Lucy, the clarifications did not stop at the difference in the spelling of
names or the meaning of heaven or hell; it extended to children’s engagement
in other activities, such as singing and saying the Lord’s Prayer:

And there are two other Muslim boys in his class and he told me they don’t
sing the Australian anthem. I said, “no, you can sing the Australian anthem
there’s nothing wrong. You can even sing the Greek anthem. Just when they
say the Lord’s Prayer then you must read Surah Al-fatiah. Just because you’re
also just praising God but in your own, in your own way. And then you
should always stand when they stand for prayer because you always respect.”
But when they’re six and seven, that’s the harder, that’s harder with him. But
maybe it’s good because it’s making him ask questions and … you go into a
Catholic school, I say that that’s, there’s, there’s so many things in common
between the two. (Lucy)

For Lucy, the only limitation was that her daughter was not allowed to wear the
head scarf with the school uniform. She commented that, otherwise, the school
had been supportive and understanding in relation to the halal issue when the
children went on camp trips, and allowed the boys to go to the Mosque for
Jumu’ah. For Mazen, while his children were attending one of the Islamic
colleges, he had to be prepared to answer their questions on Islam itself, and
where necessary, correct the information or instruction they had been given
during history or religious classes:

My observation about the conflict at the moment with the school because the
school actually and they follow [Sunni] Wahhabist system in teaching and that
one is normally the Wahhabist consider Shiite as an unbeliever. (Mazen)

Dean and Jasreen noted that their daughter, who was doing music as part of her
tertiary education, sang in the choir at a Catholic Chapel in Perth for many
years. They recalled that they were always invited to attend her performances
and established good relationships with the Reverend and congregation
members on these occasions. They commented that they would like to see this kind of gesture reciprocated at their local Mosque:

D. [She did this] all through school and we haven’t got a problem with that, no problem at all. So sometimes we sit in because she is singing we visit. And I must admit, they are extremely welcoming. Am I correct to say that?

J. Yeah, yeah, yeah…

D. You almost feel when we visit or we sit, we sometimes sit, you know wait for her while she sings during, evensong, or mass or whatever and we are extremely welcome and we feel very good about it, yeah? Almost like, come sit down and we, then we become good friends with the Reverend and everybody and I’d like to see that in the Mosque as well which I didn’t. (Dean and Jasreen)

Finally, Group 3 participant Fatima reported that she was happy with her children’s education at her chosen Islamic college through to year 7. However, she has more ambitious plans for them when they reach high school age, and will, if she can, enrol them in a private school where they can further their education, remarking: “I would love for him to go to [private college] … laughs… you know, but 16 thousand dollars base line, you know, I’ve got two sons you know, I’m hoping that I’m gonna have a really good income by that time …laughs”. (Fatima)

6.2.2.3 Analysis of participants’ views on education

Participants’ views on the Australian education system, and in particular the Australian Islamic education system, suggest that decisions in relation to children’s education are always close to their hearts and carefully considered. This was reflected in most of the interviews, with participants discussing the rationale for their choices on children’s education. As Mah et al. (2012) note, in the eyes of orthodox-moderate Muslim parents in Australia, educational achievement is one of the five main themes, or elements, that define successful parenting (pp. 94–96). The importance of education within Islam is also highlighted by Mah, O’Neill and Chapman (2012, p. 95) and Afsaruddin (2005, p. 143), who note that seeking knowledge is an essential part of Muslim
endeavour. In support of this principle of Muslim life, they quote from Holy Texts and cite the Holy Prophet, who exhorted his followers by reminding them that: “The pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim”.

Participants’ choices were guided by a desire for their children to access the best possible education in an environment that exposed them to sound Islamic moral values and norms, a finding that is consistent with that of current Australian research (Eid 2008; Mah, O’Neill & Chapman 2012). For many, however, their desire to have their children attend an Islamic teaching institution in Australia may be frustrated by the lack of capacity within the private Islamic education sector or by their inability to access it because of their geographical location. This is the case in Western Australia, where all the Islamic teaching facilities, six in total, are located within the Perth metropolitan area. This lack of capacity was identified in Eid’s 2008 study of schooling for Muslim children in Australia. Based on information provided in a 2007 Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) report, Eid noted the existence of 30 Islamic schools across Australia, catering for 15,874 students.

Moving forward four years to 2011, the number of Islamic schools had grown to 32, catering for 20,198 students across Australia, an increase of 4,324 students or 23.2% over the four year period (Independent Schools Council of Australia 2011). However, in the same period, the Australian Muslim school-age population had grown by 44,437 or 33.6% overall (see Tables 6 and 7). And, in spite of an additional five Islamic schools’ being added to the 2014 report (Independent Schools Council of Australia 2014), this lack of capacity lingers on, occasionally creating some tensions in communities in the most populous suburbs in Australia’s eastern states, where Islamic college administrations try to squeeze as many students as possible into already crowded schools (McNeilage 2013; Sexton 2014; Shanahan 2013). Of note in the ABS statistics is the significant increase in the school-age Muslim population between 2006 and 2011 in South Australia (85%), Queensland (68.7%) and Western Australia.
(52.1%) (see Table 7). In Western Australia, there are presently four Islamic colleges: the Australian Islamic College (AIC), with its three campuses in Thornlie, Kewdale and Dianella; the Al Hidaya Islamic College in Bentley; the Langford Islamic College in Langford; and the Damla College in Ferndale. This lack of capacity within the

Islamic private school system was reflected in participants’ decisions regarding their children’s education, with most of them attending the secular public system, the main option available for those living outside the metropolitan area, or Christian or Catholic schools. However, schooling choices were also based on participants’ perceptions of the quality in the schools’ environment, education, resources and curriculum, including religious education, a point noted by Eid (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australia — Muslim children by age group</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS Census Year</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>% Variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>36,724</td>
<td>54,196</td>
<td>+47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>33,884</td>
<td>44,964</td>
<td>+32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>31,287</td>
<td>39,759</td>
<td>+27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>30,527</td>
<td>37,940</td>
<td>+24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132,422</td>
<td>176,859</td>
<td>+33.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Australian Muslim children by age group. ABS Census comparison 2006 and 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian States and Territories</th>
<th>Muslim Children 0–19 years of Age</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS Census Year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>67,014</td>
<td>82,909</td>
<td>+23.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>42,170</td>
<td>56,546</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>7,224</td>
<td>11,916</td>
<td>+68.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>3,908</td>
<td>7,230</td>
<td>+85.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>9,652</td>
<td>14,679</td>
<td>+52.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>+36.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>446</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>2,367</td>
<td>+61.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Territories</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Australian Muslim children by age group by states and territories. Comparison ABS Census 2006 and 2011.

For some participants, there were also concerns with the quality of education provided by one of those colleges, which some participants saw as backward and mostly based on the Sunni branch of Islam. In order to address this situation, parents who wanted to ensure that their children attended schools with an ethos based on strong religious values and moral standards resorted to enrolling their children in private Catholic or Christian colleges, or handpicked public schools. Participants thought that, although not catering for an Islamic educational framework, these schools provided their children with the values and moral foundations they desired. Some of the participants, however, decided to have their children attend public secular schools in order to ensure that they did not feel excluded from mainstream society, a phenomenon reported in research by Yasmeen (2008).

Participants who did not, or could not, send their children to Islamic schools developed strategies to help their children adjust to the secular or Christian school environment, and complemented their religious education at home or during Sunday school at their local Mosque. The latter included in many cases
the teaching of the Arabic language, the language of the Qur’an, which parents thought was essential to their children’s religious education and which Muslim educators see as essential in Australian Islamic Schools’ curriculum (Hall 1996). Other topics raised by participants who sent their children to public schools, or schools from other religious denominations, related to dress codes that limited their children’s ability to use the hijab, no access to halal foods or prayer facilities, and no availability of single sex classes, rather than co-educational.

Some of these topics are investigated in detail by Eid (2008, pp. 161-238), who concludes with a series of recommendations on ways non-Islamic schools could improve in these areas and better cater for the Muslim school population. His recommendations include the development of processes that may lead to Muslim parents’ becoming more involved with the school, strict monitoring of students’ use of the internet, more resources to accommodate special needs children, and a greater effort to cater for Muslim students’ cultural and religious needs. Eid stresses that these initiatives would probably lead to an increase in the intake of Muslim students across the non-Islamic school system (p. 230). Eid saves 12 of his recommendations for WA Islamic schools to consider (pp. 231–239). These recommendations reflect some of the comments made by participants in this research and cover: improved relationship and engagement with parents; improvements in the quality of Islamic education and public image; improvement to governance systems and processes; and the provision of counselling and support services for students.

A common theme raised by most participants during the interviews was the provision of religious education, and often Arabic language instruction, to their children at home. This was done on three different grounds: when children were attending non-Islamic teaching institutions; when children were attending Islamic teaching institutions from an Islamic branch different from that of their parents, i.e. Sunni vs. Shi’a; or when parents could not access a Mosque or madrassa for weekend religious education. Some of the participants reported
that they had set up a room in the house that was used for daily prayers and the provision of religious education to their children. This was the case with Alaa and Simon, Suria and her husband, Nilam and Azlan, Abdul, Said, and Zahra.

6.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I presented and analysed participants’ views on the subjects of parenting, the values and norms that guide their child-rearing practices, and their views on the subject of religious and academic education. Parenting styles and the values and norms reported by most participants are influenced by different experiences and factors, such as their cultural and ethnic background and family of origin. Religion plays a central role for all of them; this is reflected in the sets of mores and values they expect from their children, including avoidance of all activities considered haram (prohibited) under Islam—drinking alcohol, using drugs—or having intimate or sexual relationships. Participants’ comments on the topic of parenting reveal child-rearing styles generally characterised by an open, dialogical relationship with their children. They also stressed the expectation that their children treated them with respect, including upholding their instructions and directions and behaving with honesty. These values and mores are non-negotiable and are imparted to their children within an Islamic religious framework on a regular basis.

This approach to parenting, and in particular the regular teaching and reinforcing of religious values and norms to their children, is consistent with findings from Muslim scholars (‘Abd al ‘Ati 1977; Bakar 2011; Bari 2011; Beshir & Beshir 2004; Omran 1992; Tarazi 1995), with Mah, O’Neill and Chapman (2012, p. 93) describing this parenting strategy as the “internalization of faith through consistent practice.” Participants appear to use this approach in an effort to “immunise” their children against the influences of Western lifestyle. Other strategies mentioned by participants include only allowing their children to have sleepovers at their own homes, and encouraging them to form
relationships with other Muslim children. However, some of them allowed their children to establish and maintain relationships with non-Muslim friends, and most participants did not place any barriers on their children forming relationships with children from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Participants’ decisions in this area are consistent with current research, which finds that parents place these boundaries on their children’s socialisation because of their fear of losing control over them, or that their children’s actions may bring embarrassment to the family because of their exposure to behaviours or activities that may be sinful (haram) (Degni, Pöntinen & Mölsä 2006; Renzaho, McCabe & Sainsbury 2011; Ryan & Vachelli 2013).

The topic of child discipline was mentioned by five of the participants and led to discussions on the themes of child protection and parent vs. child rights. Some of the participants referred to their personal and also professional experiences in relation to these issues. These participants commented that limits on the use of child physical discipline imposed by Australian child protection laws presented a challenge for many migrant parents, who were faced with having to change radically their child disciplining practices. They further noted that parents’ authority was sometimes challenged by children who threatened to call the authorities on them. Participants’ views on these topics were consistent with findings from contemporary research on Muslim parents’ experience of resettlement in Western societies (Arnett 2006; Moghissi 2010; Nassehi-Behman 2010).

However, a majority of research participants’ comments in relation to their child-rearing practices are generally consistent with a supportive and dialogical parent/child relationship, where physical discipline is used as a last resort and applied in a non-harmful manner (Rahim 2014; Tarazi 1995). Although critical of the constraints placed on parents’ use of physical discipline, and the perceived tensions between religious and legal interpretations of children’s rights, participants unanimously recognised the need for migrant parents to
adjust their parenting strategies to those generally expected in Australia. Participants were also unanimous on the need to provide migrant parents with information and education on child protection laws and expected parenting practices in Australia during the initial stages of settlement, a finding reflected in current research (Australian Human Rights Commission 2010; Yasmeen & Al Khudairi 1998).

Children’s socialisation, the effect of peer pressure, children’s use of social media, their exposure to alcohol and drugs, and television entertainment were topics that generated vigorous comments during the interviews. Again, participants across all groups were unanimous in their views about the challenges they faced in trying to shield their growing children from the negative effects of Western culture. Some of them allowed their children to watch television and use the internet or social media under careful guidance. Some participants stressed the importance of having this guidance in place in order to explain and balance the information broadcast by different news media, in particular from the “ignorant media”, using one of the participants’ descriptions. Others ensured that their children only watched television or other audio-visual entertainment from halal sources available through the internet or satellite, often from their own country of origin.

Overall, adjustments to Australian parenting practices and expectations appeared to have been more intuitively implemented by participants from Group 3, made up of first and second-generation Muslims, and by participants who arrived from countries with secular regimes, such as Singapore or South Africa. Participants in this group reflected on their own childhood experiences, noting that they were significant in the development of their own parenting values and norms and ultimately the development of their parenting style. Participants’ description of their children’s decision to self-exclude from environments or activities they assessed as haram appears to demonstrate the effectiveness of participants’ religious framing of child-rearing strategies.
Decisions on children’s academic and religious education were high in participants’ priorities. Their choices in these areas were influenced by a number of factors. The main factors were ensuring quality education for their children, their exposure to sound values and mores, and a supportive learning environment. Most participants, with the exception of two, mentioned their preference for sending their children to an Islamic school. However, not all of them were able to achieve this, because of the lack of capacity in the Islamic school system or the unavailability of Islamic schools in their area of residence, such as for the four participants residing in the Great Southern region. Other participants were not concerned about their children not attending the Islamic school system, confident that their children had developed a sound religious base before their resettlement in Australia. Importantly, some participants noted that their decision to send their children to non-Islamic schools was based on their, and their children’s wishes, which were borne out of their desire to fit into mainstream Australian society. This desire is identified in Mansouri and Wood’s (2008) research into identity and belonging among Arab and Muslim youth in Australia.

Although not shared universally, some of the participants’ views on the Islamic education system highlight the divide between the two main branches of Islam, Shi’a vs. Sunni. This was evidenced by their comments about one of the Islamic colleges in Perth, which they identified as having a backward Sunni religious curriculum and a lower quality of education. Conversely, one other Islamic teaching institution prompted positive comments from some participants, who praised the quality of its academic and religious education. But it is the aforementioned lack of capacity or availability of Islamic schools in their area of residence that forced many participants to pursue other options for their children’s education, such as enrolment in the non-denominational public school system or private Christian or Catholic schools or, in one case, home schooling their children. This lack of capacity was identified by Eid (2008), and has since increased because of a significant growth in school-age Muslim children across Australia—33.6% (42,437) between 2006 and 2011 (ABS 2011).
Participants’ choices of public school or private school were influenced by their views on individual schools’ educational quality and their assessment of those schools as having an ethos that is closest to that expected within the Islamic educational system. Children who attended the public or private school system received support from their parents, who delivered religious education in the home which, in some cases, included the teaching of Arabic, the language of the Qur’an. Participants also noted that, when necessary, they had informed the school about their children’s specific religious needs, such as dress code or Ramadan or, when their children attended Christian or Catholic schools, answered their children’s questions on some of the different religious concepts or clarified prophets’ names.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of my research journey, highlighting the main findings and making suggestions for further research.
7. CONCLUSION

7.1 REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY WITH MUSLIM FAMILIES

Muslim presence and interaction in Australia is not a new phenomenon. Their presence started in Australian pre-colonial times in the northern part of the continent with the contact between Indonesian “Makassan” fishermen and Aboriginal communities. Permanent Muslim settlement in Australia began in the late 19th century with the arrival of Afghan cameleers in the northern part of Australia, later spreading to other parts of the country. These Afghan Muslim settlers played a critical role in supporting the early English colonisation process and intermarried with local Aboriginal people. However, it is only following the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1966 that the settlement of migrants from CaLD backgrounds gains significant pace. Of note is also the significant growth in the Australian Muslim population in the last twenty years, which, according to ABS Census statistics, more than tripled, from 147,487 in 1991 to 476,300 in 2011. This growth is mostly a result of the resettlement of Muslims under Australia’s Humanitarian Programme in the five years following the 2006 census.

This research takes place against this backdrop of a growing Muslim population in Australia and stems from my professional experiences of working with Muslim families in the context of Family Court matters and child protection practice since 1994. With this research, I address some of the gaps in the Australian literature in this area, including the theme of parenting experiences for first and second-generation Australian Muslims, a gap identified by Australian researchers Mah, O’Neill and Chapman (2012) and confirmed in the review of the literature. This research explored some of the challenges faced by Muslim families who settle in Australia and ways those challenges affect them, using five key questions:

- how Muslim families in Australia manage settlement challenges
- how these challenges affect family dynamics
• the role of acculturation and identity formation in this process
• how families manage parenting issues when things go wrong or become difficult to manage
• where or to whom they turn for help.

The research uses a qualitative methodology approach, with its 31 participants recruited using a snowball sampling technique. Participants originated from 12 different countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Australia, had attained different education levels, and were engaged in a number of different businesses and occupations. Twelve participants arrived as asylum seekers or refugees under Australia’s Humanitarian Programme between 1987 and 2009 (Group 1); twelve arrived under the skilled, family reunion, or business visa categories (Group 2); and eight of them were born in Australia or arrived with their families at a very young age (Group 3).

Participants’ interviews are analysed through the lenses of identity formation and acculturation theories. The close interplay between identity formation and acculturation mediate the development of a healthy sense of belonging to the host community. The important role played by these two factors from early on in the resettlement process are highlighted by Mensah and Williams (2015), Mackenzie and Guntarik (2015), and Berry et al. (2006). Findings from the last authors’ large international study on the acculturation of immigrant youth reveal the importance of identity in the acculturation process. In their study, Berry et al find that the largest number of youth in their sample “sought to acculturate by being involved with their heritage culture and the national culture”. They also stress that governments should consider providing support for ethnic community organisations so that youth’s “ethnic identity is promoted, and their way of life is allowed to be maintained and to thrive”. (Berry et al. 2006, p. 323).
The effects of the migration journey into Australia, mandatory immigration detention policies and the long wait for family reunification are key issues for people who arrive ahead of their families as asylum seekers or refugees under the Humanitarian Programme. Many remain concerned about the welfare of wives and children left behind, while anxiously awaiting the resolution of their family reunification applications, which for some can take many years to be resolved. For some, these concerns are often more relevant than the fact that they may not have been able to make it to their preferred destination country. Despite their difficult and often dangerous refugee journey and restrictive migration policies, two things that mediated improved settlement outcome were the reunion with their families, and their achievement of personal and family safety and freedom of religious practice in Australia.

Some of the negative effects of Australian immigration policies and practices, such as that of detention of families seeking asylum in Australia, are apparent from this research. A positive note on the subject of settlement is offered by the valuable support provided to humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers by local community volunteers and LGAs, as suggested by comments from families who settled in a regional town in Western Australia’s Great Southern region. The supportive and inclusive stance from local community groups in relation to refugee settlement contrasts with Australia’s central government immigration policies and practice intent, particularly concerning the management of asylum seekers, with the reintroduction of temporary protection visas. Local community groups and LGAs also seem to complement government funded settlement services, undertaking social cohesion activities in the regional and metropolitan areas covered by this research. This approach to settlement is likely to gain increasing relevance as governments, federal and state, and funded non-government agencies review the services they provide under a tighter fiscal environment (Settlement Council of Australia 2014).
Muslim families residing in the Great Southern region did not describe being targets of racist or discriminatory behaviour by their local community members. This may be related to a range of factors, such as the ethnic and religious diversity of those communities, the visible, long-term presence of a large Muslim community, and the proactive community development stance and open support of multiculturalism policy by their LGA. Public statements and proactive actions supporting multiculturalism, social cohesion and the welcoming of people from refugee backgrounds into the community by all levels of government and community groups can assist this process by creating an atmosphere that fosters acceptance and inclusion.

The proactive community development stance by this regional LGA, with the support and involvement from the local community identified by this research, contributed to the development of a sense of identity and belonging among its migrant population that, as Onder (1996), Ersanilli and Saharso (2011), and Mackenzie and Guntarik (2015) stress, cannot simply be achieved through the development and implementation of integration policies. Furthermore, these findings echo and realise Ghorashi’s (2010) call for a positive and inclusive rhetoric in the settlement area, with the LGA and local community building spaces where people are willing to come together, and also creating a common, shared space between cultures, in which they can meet and connect with each other. This research finds that Muslim families advocate such a proactive community stance, to spread the message of a peaceful Islam and encourage cross-cultural interaction and interfaith dialogue, and are committed to be part of this universal engagement process. These strategies can be bolstered through the development and implementation of inclusive settlement policies that, as highlighted by Berry and Sabatier (2010) and Bozorgmehr and Douglas (2011), play an important role in facilitating settlement and adaptation among first and second-generation migrants.
This research finds that the settlement experiences for families who arrived under other non-humanitarian visa categories were less challenging and difficult, as most migrants in these categories arrived jointly, bringing with them skills that are sought in Australia, and had the resources and skills that allowed them to find employment and housing. Often, families who arrive under a business or skilled visa category have financial advantages and speak the English language. For some of the Muslim families, another element that appears to have assisted their settlement in Australia is the fact that they originated from secular countries with a Westernised lifestyle, such as South Africa or Singapore, making their adjustment to life in Australia easier and less stressful and supporting the development of a sense of inclusion in mainstream society (Yasmeen 2008).

However, in spite of the advantages for families in these visa categories, there are challenges associated with settlement in a Western liberal society that are shared by many Muslim families. These challenges range from difficulties in sourcing halal foods or finding places of prayer or worship, which were more significant in the early 1980s in Western Australia, to the lack of support and assistance from immediate or extended family members, particularly in relation to child-rearing tasks. This research also suggests that, when financial circumstances require both partners to work, Muslim couples have to negotiate traditional gender roles relating to child rearing or household tasks. Some families also face difficult decisions when either partner has to work in environments where activities forbidden under Islam, such as alcohol consumption or gambling, take place. Decisions in relation to this latter issue take into account the financial needs of the family, with one or both partners taking up available employment opportunities. This research also finds that compromise in relation to attending places forbidden under Islam, such as bars or pubs (even if not partaking in alcoholic beverages), is not limited to employment activities and may extend to families or young people’s efforts to maintain relationships with their non-Muslim peer group and avoid being excluded from mainstream society. These behaviours are consistent with the
process of acculturation, as defined by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936),
during which continuous, long-term contact between people from different
cultural groups may lead members of either or both groups to change some of
their original cultural patterns.

Research into settlement of ethnic minority families, in particular religious
families, consistently points to the varying degree of adjustment required when
settling across cultures. For Muslim families living, or resettling, in Western
liberal societies, that adjustment presents some added challenges. Some of the
significant challenges felt by Muslim families in Australia are the acts of racism
or discrimination that became more prevalent since the September 11, 2001
terrorist attacks in New York. Since that date, the ongoing terrorist activities by
extremist Islamic groups around the world, and the regular and occasionally
inflammatory media reporting, seem to motivate racist and discriminatory
incidents. This media reporting is accompanied by constant public and political
discourse on Islamic terrorism and the development of broad anti-terrorist
policies and practices that, even if unintendedly, are presently more likely to
target people who follow Islam. Findings confirm that Muslim individuals and
families, particularly those who are easily identified by their traditional
clothing, occasionally feel unsafe while in public or have their daily routines
disrupted because of fears for their safety. While many continue using
traditional Islamic attire, others decide to dress in Western style clothing to
avoid being targeted, a decision that some find difficult to make.

The findings highlight that these incidents of racism and discrimination against
people from Muslim backgrounds, fuelled by a recent increase in anti-Muslim
sentiment in Australia (Markus 2014), are making daily life harder for
Australian Muslims. The ways in which Muslim families and individuals
address these challenges suggest that they have developed resilience, a
resilience that comes with a determination to set the record straight on Islam at
every opportunity, leading to individual efforts to educate others in the
community about the true meaning of Islam. This resilience appears to be supported by a strong sense of identity, commitment to Islam and belonging to Australia that helps Muslim families deal with the adversities caused by the ongoing anti-Muslim sentiment. Muslim families who resettled in Australia proudly emphasise their Australian Muslim identity, and stress that they are an integral part of Australia society. These findings are consistent with Grillo’s (2008) views on the centrality of culture, of which a religion is a component, on the broader issue of immigration and settlement. However, this research also confirms that, for Muslim families, religious belief is key to the development of a balanced sense of identity and belonging.

Muslim families’ overarching ability to maintain a connection with religious belief and ethnic and cultural heritage is seen to contribute to the development of a strong and balanced sense of identity and belonging to the host society (Ahmad 1984; Hooker 2004; Scourfield et al. 2013b; Mackenzie & Guntarik 2015). This is achieved through families’ concern and effort to ensure that their offspring follow the path of Islam and that they are aware of their cultural and ethnic identity. This research finds that another three factors which are named as sustaining the development of a strong sense of identity and belonging to Australia are: a) Being born in Australia or arriving in Australia at a young age; b) Length and stability of residence in Australia; and c) Forming a relationship with an Australian citizen, and the birth of first and second-generation family members. Conversely, families who face difficulties early in the settlement process because of the onset of parent/child conflict, experiences of racism or discrimination, or financial difficulties, may have greater difficulty in developing a healthy sense of identity and belonging. This research also finds that a strong sense of identity and belonging in many Muslim families is accompanied by a desire to see Muslims becoming united and proactive on issues affecting the community. This desire for unity in action appears to be frustrated by the complexity of bringing together a community that is highly ethnically and culturally diverse, as well as divided along religious lines.
between Shi’a and Sunni followers, a state of affairs that is well documented by current research (Saeed 2003; Yasmeen 2008).

Muslim families’ help or advice-seeking choices when relationship or parenting problems arise suggest a preference, shared across families from other cultural backgrounds, for resolving those problems within the family unit. Other approaches include seeking guidance or answers to problems through consultation of religious texts, through prayer, or seeking advice or counsel from religious leaders, an approach also shared across families from other religious denominations. This research suggests that, while Muslim parents and couples would still generally follow the long-established help-seeking approaches for parenting or relationships issues, some realise the shortcomings of these approaches and prefer to access independent advice. The engagement of Muslim religious leaders in counselling and mediation processes, as suggested in some of the current research, is seen as an appropriate method for filling the cultural and religious gap in knowledge by non-Muslim professionals. The latter is also seen as an adequate way of providing a cultural and religiously appropriate way for working with Muslim people. However, this approach may also lead to unintended consequences that may cause relationship problems to remain unresolved; this is of particular concern in cases of IPV.

Findings from this research suggest that, in the absence of qualified Muslim mediation or counselling professionals, families who decide to seek outside help for their problems prefer to consult non-Muslim professionals, as this also assures them of confidentiality and neutrality. However, families using these services would feel more confident if the professionals providing them understood the basic tenets of Islam, and in particular Muslim family life and parenting practices. Another possible option for professionals working with Muslim people, which is backed by current research and also supported by findings from this research, is to seek, with client consent, counsel from an
adequately qualified external Muslim consultant who works in partnership with the therapist. These approaches to the provision of counselling or therapy to Muslim families are supported by current research which highlights how strong religious ideology and cultural belief systems support Muslim family relationships and parenting, strengthening them and also contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflict ('Abd al 'Ati 1977; Lambert & Dollahite 2006; Oweis et al. 2012).

Muslim families’ parenting styles, values and practices are influenced by different experiences and factors, such as their cultural and ethnic background and family of origin experiences. This research confirms the universally understood dictum that Islamic parenting is framed by Islamic religious principles and values, which are consistently reinforced as children grow up. This primary strategy, also common to families from other religious groups, is aimed at instilling religious values and norms in children to the point where these become innate. The list of parenting concerns mentioned by Muslim parents is parallel to those generally faced by other Australian parents and elsewhere around the world (Holden 2010; Rubin & Chung 2006). Some of these concerns relate to their children’s use of the internet, social media and electronic entertainment. For religious parents these issues present the added complexity that comes with the forbidden or sinful content that children are able to access without permission or unsupervised. Findings from this research suggest that parents’ decision to allow children supervised access to the internet or social media reflect their efforts to balance their children’s ability to fit in with their peers and feel included in the broader community, while protecting them against exposure to harmful material. Interestingly, the pervasiveness of the internet and social media has a positive side, providing parents with easy access to a wide choice of halal media and entertainment content from their own country of origin and from around the world.
Issues similarly high on most parents’ list of concerns are those related to their children’s exposure to alcohol or drug use. For Muslim parents, these concerns are heightened by the fact that these substances are forbidden (haram) under Islam. First or second-generation Muslim parents or those who originate from secular countries with a Westernised lifestyle, such as South Africa or Singapore, who were interviewed had an assertive and proactive approach to these issues. Their approach is framed in religious principles and characterised by an open, dialogical relationship with their children, where alcohol and drug issues are discussed. This open, dialogical relationship, underlined by an expectation of mutual respect and compliance with parental guidance, is more noticeable in first and second-generation Muslim parents and generally supported by Islamic parental guidance (Rahim 2014; Tarazi 1995). This approach also appears to lead to a reduction in tensions that can potentially arise in relation to different aspects of parenting, including child discipline strategies and regulation of children’s peer relationships. Findings in this particular area seem to point to first or second-generation Australian Muslim parents’ intuitively developing a new parenting style that does not follow that of their own parents.

Parenting strategies from first and second-generation Muslim parents who were interviewed contrast with those of some of the parents who resettled in Australia from countries with a religious government system, or where a more authoritative or traditional parenting style is used. Parents in the latter group acknowledge the difficulty in reaching compromise with their children in relation to some issues, noting that there are limits on how much freedom of movement they can allow. Some of the parents have some difficulty accepting the legal limits placed on the use of corporal punishment as a form of child discipline, and what they perceive as the greater weight placed on children’s rights in Australia. Parents in this group are also concerned about the potential for intergenerational conflict that can arise from their children’s faster acculturation to Australian lifestyle. These findings are supported by existing research that points to the tensions and conflict that arises from parents’ use of

Findings from this research point to an ongoing gap in efforts to provide information on parenting and child protection laws to families who resettle in Australia, particularly those from new and emerging communities. For Muslim communities, efforts in this area would benefit from collaboration between relevant government agencies, such as child protection and family services and local Mosques, in the development and implementation of parenting education and information packages. Collaborative work in this area would contribute to the development of content consistent with Islamic parenting principles, but framed within Western parenting expectations. This approach is akin to the development of tools in a toolkit of resources to assist parents during the acculturation process, as suggested by Cote (2002); parents could use these tools for guidance with their parenting in the new social environment.

Findings from this research in relation to parental decisions on children’s religious and academic education are consistent with current research in this area (Afsaruddin 2005; Eid 2008; Mah, O'Neill & Chapman 2012). Muslim parents’ decisions in this space are influenced by several factors, such as financial capacity, quality of education curriculum, a supportive learning environment and the choice between public and private school systems. It is significant that children’s wishes and views in relation to schooling also have a significant influence on parents’ choices in the education space, when, in some cases, they allow their children to move from the Islamic school system into the public or private system. This particular finding again points to a parental compromise to facilitate their children in maintaining relationships with their non-Muslim peer group and avoiding being excluded from mainstream society (Yasmeen 2008). Findings relating to parents’ reasons for not enrolling their children at Islamic schools are consistent with current research and appear to be
related to the lack of capacity in the Islamic school system or concerns about the lack of quality education in some of those schools (Eid 2008). For parents who follow the Shi’a branch of Islam, there are also concerns about some of the schools’ Islamic religious teachings, which they identify as following the Sunni tradition. Some of the Shi’a parents, who still opt to send their children to those schools, ensure that their children are aware of the differences between the two traditions.

This research invites further questions on a number of specific topics. One of them is on settlement, how LGAs and local communities can assist in the resettlement and how we can capitalise on their involvement to improve settlement outcomes of migrant families and individuals, in particular those from new and emerging communities. On the topics of parenting and identity and belonging, findings support the view that first and second-generation Australian Muslim parents instinctively develop a parenting style that, while still religiously framed, effectively addresses the challenges of living in a Western liberal society. Further exploration of this topic may lead to the development of parenting strategies to assist Muslim families settling in Australia and contribute to the improvement of existing universal parenting education and training programmes.

Finally, on the topic of help or advice seeking by Muslim parents, it is suggested that further exploration into possible options for improving the availability and capacity of existing services to cater for Muslim families and parents should be undertaken. It is suggested that such exploration could also look into the role of Mosques and Islamic religious or community leaders in the provision of community services. Improvements in this particular area are essential given the well-documented growth of the Muslim population in Australia.
This research can be usefully linked to recent cultural theorising by scholars (Hodge & O'Carroll 2006) who, in their earlier work, explored the historical relationship between Islam and Australia. Looking into Islamic Australia under a schismogenesis\(^{31}\) lens, they note that “Islam is a major world religion represented in all nations, which is treated as though it were a race and subjected to racist attacks” (p. 133). Hodge and O’Carroll also pointedly note the important legacy left by the Afghan men and their descendants:

But perhaps the most important legacy these thousands of Afghan men and their descendants leave us today is the reminder of what a plural society it was that made up this mythic bush frontier. Few have imagined the face of the Australian bushman as an Afghan. Few have imagined the skyline as silhouetting a ‘tin mosque’. Instead, Australian Islam is constructed as an urban, latter day problem. (p. 150)

I embarked on this research with the aim of contributing to the general knowledge about the experiences of Muslim families resettling in a Western liberal society, Australia. I was particularly interested in researching factors affecting Muslim families’ settlement in Australia, how they addressed the challenges of settlement, and how they sought help or advice in relation to family or parenting issues.

By virtue of the diversity of the sample, my research captured the experiences of more than just Muslim families who have resettled in Australia; among them were, as well, first-generation Muslims and Muslim converts. My research confirms that, along with the vast majority of Australian families, Australian Muslims share a desire for safety, belonging, and prosperity for their children and their families. The support of Muslim families in maintaining a healthy sense of identity and belonging, which they will be able to pass on to their

\(^{31}\) Hodge and O’Carroll draw on the work of Anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) to present issues of multicultural and ethnic relations. “The word schismogenic (from Greek Schismos, a split) was coined by Bateson to refer to the main ways that splits develop in groups, cultures or social systems. Bateson did not call the divisions he witnessed ‘racism’ because he saw them as part of a more general and complex pattern” (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006, p. 10).
offspring, may be achieved through joint community and government social cohesion initiatives to counter the current anti-Muslim rhetoric and sentiment.
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Information Sheet: *Muslims in Western Australia; Parenting and Family Life*

Dear Participant

I am contacting you in the hope that you may be interested in and willing to participate in a face-to-face interview for our research project.

Before we can continue with our interview, we would like to provide some basic information about the research for which we need your help.

1. The project entitled *Muslims in Western Australia; Parenting and Family Life* is being conducted at the Centre for Muslim States and Societies, the University of Western Australia. I am the Chief Investigator for the Project and Eduardo Farate is the student responsible for its completion.

2. This research is conducted as part of the faculty’s post graduate program and is a requirement for Mr Farate’s degree of PhD by Research at the School of Social and Cultural Studies, University of Western Australia.

3. The main objective of the project is to develop a balanced and accurate picture of Muslims families’ experiences of their settlement in Western Australia and how these experiences have influenced their family and parenting lives.

The topics to be covered are as follows:

- How did settlement into the Australian cultural and society affect your family life?
• In particular, what issues or problems happened for your family; how did you resolve them?
• What actions or strategies worked best for you and your family?
• What services or supports did you go to for help?
• What do you think would have helped your settlement in Australia?

4. If you are willing to participate in the interview to discuss these questions, it would take 1-2 hours. However, you may wish to complete the interview in one or two occasions.

5. The interview will be tape recorded and then written in paper. A copy of this paper will be posted to you and you will be asked to read it and make any other comments within seven days of receiving it.

If I do not hear from you within those seven days, the information will be used as it is. If necessary, a Muslim member of the team who has been trained to conduct such research will interview you.

6. These interviews will be electronically recorded, will be strictly confidential in nature and the identities of those agreeing to participate in the interviews will not be disclosed unless required by law.

If in spite of this assurance you are still concerned about participating in this research – for example, in case you are currently awaiting a decision on your visa application or have any current dealings with the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship – please discuss these concerns with the Chief Investigator or the student.

The participants will be free to refuse the recording of the interview, to withdraw from the interview process without any problems at any stage of the project, including after the interview has been completed. You are not required to give reasons or justification to withdraw. In case you decide to do so, the record of your interview will be destroyed, unless you do not want us to do so.

7. If you wish to participate, we want to let you know that you may possibly feel sad or emotional while remembering some difficult experiences in your life. If you feel that way, we will provide someone who you will be able to talk to in confidence and support you in dealing with your feelings.

8. Given the current emphasis on Islam and Muslims around the world, we feel such research is essential as it may contribute to an understanding among all as to how Muslims living in Australia cope with the settlement process and what can be done to make this process easier.

We will also prepare a report based upon the research that will include a set of recommendations that can be used by the Commonwealth and State Governments to make policies that improve the settlement process and assist families in adjusting to life in Australia. The research will also promote harmony by making Australians aware to the realities faced by Muslim families and expose some of the current misinformation regarding Muslims in general.

The information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to by law. The tape recordings and
written records of the interviews will be stored on a server to be set up by the Arts IT Facility. Access to this server will be password protected with access granted only to me, the Chief Investigator, the student, Mr Farate and the System Administrator.

Interviews and transcripts will be backed up on an external hard drive which will be password protected and secured through encryption software.

9. We do hope that you can agree to participate in the research. You can either give verbal or written consent to your participation. If you need any more clarification, I am happy to meet you and answer your questions.

Yours Sincerely

Samina Yasmeen (Chief Investigator)

Eduardo Farate
0419919460

farate01@student.uwa.edu.au
CONSENT FORM

I (the participant) have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice.

I understand that all information provided will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to by law. I have been advised as to what data is being collected, what the purpose is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

I understand that if I have any complaint regarding the manner, in which this research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively to the Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Registrar’s Office, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009 (telephone number 6488-3703). I will be provided with a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for my personal records.

________________________    __________________
Participant       Date

(Please note that as this document is not a contract between parties, it is not necessary that the researcher sign it. Nor is it necessary to have a witness.)
Appendix 2

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Muslims in Western Australia; parenting and family life

Demographic information:
Country of birth: _____________ Age: _____ Sex: ___
Marital Status: _______________ Number of children: ___
Age of children (range): ________
Date arrived in Australia: ______
Residence status: _______________
English proficiency (interviewer assessment):
Father: _____________ Mother: _____________
Independent individual: ____________________

Qualifications:
Professional:
Father: _____________ Mother: _____________
Independent individual: ____________________
Educational:
Father: _____________ Mother: _____________
Independent individual: ____________________
Other:
Father: _____________ Mother: _____________
Independent individual: ____________________

Employment Status:
Father: _____________ Mother: _____________
Independent individual: ____________________
Research questions – prompts only:

- Settlement in Australia - impact on family life?
  - Narrative

- Issues or challenges that emerged for you or your family?
  - Probe parent/child relationships
  - Child rearing styles; where values and ideas on parenting come from.
  - Educational
  - Social or community

- How did you and your family deal with those issues or challenges?
  - What worked best?
  - What services or supports accessed?
  - Access and equity issues, substantive equality

- What do you think would have helped your settlement in Australia?
  - Encourage comments or suggestions about possible solutions
Appendix 3

‘Sample – email text’

Dear Friends of the Centre

We are seeking interested participants to be interviewed for a research project entitled: *Muslims in Western Australia; Parenting and Family Life*. 

Eduardo Farate is a PhD student at the Centre for Muslim States and Societies and is currently conducting the research to develop a fair and accurate picture of the settlement experience of Muslim families’ in Western Australia. Specifically, he will look at how these experiences have influenced their family and parenting lives. The intended research outcomes will be to improve knowledge about:

- the needs of families from Muslim background settling in Australia;
- the impact of settlement on family life and parenting; and,
- on how we can best provide for those identified needs.

Professor Samina Yasmeen is the Chief Researcher for the project. The research has been approved by UWA’s Human Research Ethics Committee and is a requirement for the degree of PhD by Research at the School of Social and Cultural Studies, University of Western Australia.

**Interviews will be confidential in nature and the identities of those agreeing to participate in the interviews will not be disclosed** unless required by law. The participants will be free to withdraw from the interview process without prejudice at any stage of the project, including after the interview has been completed.

If you are willing to participate in an interview, or obtain further information in relation to this project, please contact Eduardo Farate through the Centre for Muslims States and Societies on 6488 4554, or Eduardo directly on 0419 919 460 or e-mail farate01@student.uwa.edu.au.

Kind regards,

<name>

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