

THE IDENTITY OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA: MARRIED COUPLES' PERSPECTIVES

Student: Farzana Sader

Student Number: 9713409P

Supervisor: Garth Stevens

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Community-based Counselling Psychology

Johannesburg, 2008

Abstract

The present study provides an understanding of how married, tertiary educated and employed Muslim females negotiate their identities across contexts within a multicultural environment, such as post-1994 contemporary Johannesburg. An additional facet of this study was to gain insight into the construction of Muslim female identity by the husbands of the women in the study. The commonly portrayed images of Muslim women are unflattering and ill-conceived and depict the Muslim woman as one who is veiled, oppressed, secluded and submissive. In South Africa however, Muslim women have been able to participate in secular education and employment opportunities and practice their religion within a democratic dispensation that is responsive to issues of gender. In order to obtain an understanding of the nuances that underpin Muslim female self-constructions and constructions by their husbands, the study was approached from a social constructionist epistemology. It is the assumption of the researcher that identities are thus in part created discursively, and for the purpose of this study, the constructions of identity of the participants were analysed using a discourse analysis methodology. Interviews were conducted with four Muslim couples. Social facets such as gender, race, religion and globalisation were used as topics in order to understand how participants constructed Muslim women's identity. The Muslim women who participated in the study appear to inhabit different subject positions in their daily lives. The study highlighted that identity may not be fixed or stable, rather a function of relational or contextual positions. Both the women and men in this study emphasised an Islamic identification while distancing themselves from a cultural identification. The oppression of Muslim women was relegated to the realm of culture. In prioritising an Islamic identity the participants have created a space where they are able to construct an alternative identity for Muslim women that enables them these women the freedom to access secular spaces or what may be viewed as the public sphere of men.

Keywords: Muslim women, Muslim couples, identity construction, social constructionism

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Farzana Sader

_____ day of _____ 2008

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my parents and my brother for their nurturance and support. To the rest of my family and friends, thank you for believing in me.

I would also like to thank Garth Stevens for his supervision during the course of preparing this thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude for the patience he has shown over the years. Your insights over the years have contributed not only to my completion of this study, but also towards my development as a professional.

The initial conceptualisation of this research would not have been possible without the assistance of Carol Long, who encouraged my interest in understanding the complexity of the lives of Muslim women.

The role of the National Research Foundation in providing financial assistance for the completion of this study is also acknowledged.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Rationale	2
1.3 Aim	5
1.4 The Present Study	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Chapter Organisation	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 The concept of identity	8
2.3 Identity as a social construction	9
2.3.1 Identity as shaped by Gender	11
2.3.2 Identity as a Cultural Construction	13
2.3.3 Identity within the context of globalisation	14
2.4 Islam's construction of Muslim women	15
2.5 Constructions of Islam and Muslim women	22
2.5.1 The question of "racial" identity	22
2.5.2 The Islamic "Other"	24
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
3.1 Introduction to the chapter	28
3.2 Overview of the research design	28
3.3 Research questions	28
3.4 Participants in the study	29
3.4.1 Definition criteria for participants in the study	29
3.4.2 Procedure for selecting participants	30
3.5 Data Collection	31

3.5.1	Understanding identity construction qualitatively	31
3.5.2	Research interviews	33
3.5.3	The structure of the interviews	33
3.5.4	The interview participants	34
3.5.5	Conducting the interviews	34
3.6	Ethical considerations	35
3.7	Discourse Analysis	36
3.7.1	Understanding discourse analysis	36
3.7.2	Social constructionist approaches to discourse analysis	37
3.7.3	Critical Hermeneutics and the analysis of discourse	38
3.7.4	Critical Hermeneutics as applied to this study	40
3.7.4.1	Social-historical analysis	40
3.7.4.2	Discursive (discourse) analysis	40
3.7.4.3	Interpretation/Re-interpretation of the text	42
3.8	Conclusion	42
	CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA	44
4.1	Introduction	44
4.2	Socio-historic location of the participants	44
4.3	Muslim women's self-construction of identity	46
4.3.1	Articulation of a Muslim identity	47
4.3.2	Social influence in the construction of identity	48
4.3.3	Challenging essentialist notions of Muslim women's identity	49
4.3.4	Gendered constructions of Muslim women	52
4.3.5	Intimacy and identity negotiation	54
4.3.6	Hijab as a proxy for liberation	56
4.3.7	Involvement in secular institutions and Muslim female identity	58
4.3.8	Threats to maintaining a Muslim female identity	62
4.4	Male constructions of Muslim women's identity	65
4.4.1	Religious construction of identity	65
4.4.2	Gendered constructions of 'other' Muslim women	67

4.4.3	Intimacy and identity construction	71
4.4.4	Resisting the effects of globalisation	73
4.4.5	Prioritising religion over culture	74
4.4.6	Impact of education and employment on Muslim women's identity	76
4.5	Conclusion	79
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION		80
5.1	Introduction to the chapter	80
5.2	Self-reflexivity	80
5.3	Summary of findings	81
5.4	Limitations of the study	83
5.5	Possibilities for future research	84
5.6	Conclusion	84
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE		91
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM		92

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Approximately 21% of the world's population are followers of Islam and if the current trend continues, by the mid twenty-first century Islam may become the world's most popular religion (Sechzer, 2004). As Islam spreads, different countries and cultures may interpret Islamic religion and law differently, especially with regard to their attitudes toward women (Sechzer, 2004). Therefore the picture of the Islamic woman is a complex one and should not be oversimplified or generalised (Sechzer, 2004).

The ideology that prevails around the subject of Muslim women has been shaped by the image of the heavily veiled Afghan women, an image that was used to convey absolute oppression in the aftermath of the events of 9/11. These images served to confirm to the Western world that Muslim women are voiceless, silent and oppressed. Islam and Muslims have come to be represented as the 'fundamentalist' Other. Once events in Iran, with the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, caught European and American attention, the media have covered Islam: they have portrayed it, characterised it, analysed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it known (Said, 1981). Global events concerning Muslims have continued to attract the attention of the press, including the Gulf War (1990), the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1993 – 1998), the Oklahoma Bombing (1996), the Taliban (1997 –), Grozny (1999), Kosovo (1999), Palestine (2001), the fall of the Twin Towers (2001), the search for Osama bin Ladin and the War on Terror (2001 –), the Afghanistan War (2002), the War in Iraq (2003), the London subway (2005) and the protests in Paris (2005). The central theme running throughout narratives produced by the media is that of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and Muslims are categorically regarded as threats to society, rarely, if at all, highlighting real and distinct patterns of racial and ethnic disadvantage (Abbas, 2001).

Amidst this backdrop of global Islamophobia, this study attempts to provide insight into the identity construction of South African Muslim women of Indian descent who are married, educated and working. For these women living in South Africa has meant being subjected to classification as Asian during the apartheid dispensation. It has also meant that the fall of apartheid and over a decade of freedom, has opened up new social spaces which are no longer confined due to 'race'; rather they have a wider array of choices through which to represent their identity, to construct their identity and to negotiate their identity.

The end of apartheid also signalled the end of South Africa's isolation from the international arena. However, for South African Muslim women the fall of apartheid did not bring about absolute solidarity with a hegemonic global culture, but has also reinforced local notions of being Muslim. For Muslim women this has meant embracing the veil as a symbol of their faith, but not as a symbol of subjugation. They have continued to embrace education and to develop their careers. For some observers however, the veil continues to represent an anarchic and fundamentalist Islam, and their view of Muslim women appears to be embedded in and shaped by this view of Islam.

The idea of Islamophobia is not new, but it is at the end of the twentieth century with Islam as the fastest growing religion on the globe that greatest anti-Muslim sentiment is found in the press (Abbas, 2001). The 1991 Census found Muslims to be the largest 'minority religious group' in Britain (Abbas, 2001). Similarly, in Canada, Islam has emerged as the principal non-Christian faith, and Muslims currently rank among the five main religious groups in the country (Hamdani, 1999). Thus, while there is an increasing global dialogue regarding Muslim 'fundamentalism', there is an almost parallel process whereby Islam is growing as a minority religion.

1.2 Rationale

The events of 11 September 2001 have led to increased discussion on the status of women in Islam. Many factors have contributed to this development. Because of the increased ease of communication and transportation, Muslims are able to travel widely, read and have access to television and the internet, and they thus have access to information (Sechzer, 2004). While some Muslims have come to perceive their religion as inadequate in comparison with the West, other Muslims feel that they have lost touch with their own Islamic identity and tradition and want to return to more traditional Islamic ideology (Sechzer, 2004). The suspicion and resentment towards Muslims that had been ongoing since the Iranian revolution have been heightened by the first and second Persian Gulf Wars, the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York City and its 2001 destruction (Ali, 2005).

Because social contexts influence religious faith and practice, it is necessary to undertake studies of religious believers and communities in local settings (Predelli, 2004).

Across much of the globe over the past decade, two of the most powerful organising processes have been those of 'citizenship' and 'globalisation' – they have swept much else before them, reconstituting social and political life (Urry, 2000). With consistent and rapid technological advances, the world has become a smaller arena with immediate

access to international information. Making the global more accessible adds a new dimension to political, cultural and moral dilemmas and opportunities. The once distinct boundaries between global and local phenomena are increasingly becoming blurred. This social shift raises the question of the impact of globalisation on local identities, in particular, the impact of globalisation on Muslim women in South Africa.

While it may be argued that globalisation works in favour of the propagation of a homogenous, yet individualistic 'western' culture, the tools of globalisation have also made available to the local communities' images of other local communities, who may at some level provide a point of similarity. An example would be the broadcasting of the Hajj (one of the five pillars of Islam, involving a Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca) via satellite television to millions of viewers worldwide, which provides a visual image of a perceived solidarity in being Muslim.

2004 marked the advent of ten years of democracy in South Africa. The dawn of the post-apartheid era began with the victory of the African National Congress in the country's first open elections in 1994. This political event shaped a new history and identity, not only for the nation, but for its citizens as well. With the fall of apartheid and the institution of a new government, South Africa and its citizens were flooded with opportunities to re-define themselves.

South African Muslim women and their partners live within a society that is not governed by Islam, thus exposing them to a plethora of ideologies that are divergent from traditional Islamic 'Sharia' (Islamic Law). Afkhami (1995) writes that for most Muslim women modernity means conflict – a spectrum of values and forces that compete for their allegiance and beckon them to contradictory ways of looking at themselves and the world that surrounds them. The development of self or identity impacts on an individual's relationship to her surroundings and informs her view of her role within those surroundings. The question thus arises as to the extent to which these women are preoccupied with role negotiation and reconciling traditional values and norms with exposure to a wider array of experiences of being.

The de-racialisation of South African society in the midst of accelerating economic and cultural globalisation has set in motion profound social, cultural and political changes that have confronted the existing notions of identity among most South Africans (Vahed, 2000). Robins (1996) expresses interest in the dynamism and openness in cultural identities, and consequently with what inhibits and resists such qualities, promoting rigidity and closure in their place. According to Vahed (2000), the dilemma for Muslims in South Africa is

whether to integrate into larger society or embrace an ever more strict observance of Islam.

According to Croucher (1998), as South Africa attempts to negotiate the transformation from an identity based on racial separateness to an identity based on shared loyalty to the new South African state, of critical political and scholarly importance is the question of how the contours of this new state are being defined by individuals. On the subject of identity and the state, Eaton (2002) writes that for a newly-democratised, multicultural state such as South Africa, 'national legitimacy' and a subjective sense of shared group membership among citizens is crucial for the establishment of effective democratic governance and civil stability. During the period 1948 – 1988 little research was conducted in the field of psychology into South African national identity (Seedat, 1998). According to Eaton (2002) since 1990 identity research has been primarily quantitative and has focussed on differences between ethnic and racial groups, on central variables of national identification and pride.

While the subject of this thesis is not national identity, the ideas put forward by Seedat (1998), Eaton (2002) and Croucher (1998) highlight the need to study the issue of identity within the relatively new democracy in South Africa. What this study attempted to address was how a group of Muslim women and their husbands construct the identity of Muslim women amid an international portrayal of Islam as 'fundamentalist' and 'oppressive,' and the reality of South Africa, where the country has just celebrated ten years of democracy.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society. The construction of identity is thus assumed to be both an individual and a social process. At one level the participants in this study may make sense of their identity based on their personal experiences. However, at another level, this meaning or sense-making is shared and informed by interaction, and it is in this interaction that broader social structures are created. By interviewing this group of Muslim women an understanding will be obtained of how they construct their identity. Including the husbands of the Muslim women as participants in the study, provides a counter-point to the self constructions of Muslim women's identity. By comparing these sets of identity constructions an understanding may be obtained of how the identity of Muslim women is constructed within a broader social and cultural milieu.

1.3 Aim

Social research aims to build basic knowledge about society (Neuman, 1997). The proposed aim of this research is to understand how married, educated and employed South African Muslim women construct their identity across social contexts. Globalisation, Islamophobia and the fall of Apartheid are just a few of many social processes that may impact on how Muslim women in South Africa define themselves. As noted by Thornton (cited in Vahed, 2000, p2):

There is no fundamental identity that any South African clings to, in common with all, or even most other South Africans. South Africans have multiple identities in multiple contexts (and) multiple identities in common contexts and common identities in multiple contexts ... A Muslim may span many religious, political, social and cultural contexts and thus link them together in a social universe. These identities then can be said to be multiple and crosscutting in that each overlaps a range of contexts, or a common context or institution may contain many identities within it.

1.4 The Present Study

The participants in this study are married, educated and employed Muslim women. The purpose of this study is to understand how these women define who they are amid a backdrop of local and international change. Interviews were conducted with four Muslim women and their husbands. The interviews were designed to explore a range of issues that could potentially impact on and shape the identity of Muslim women, including gender, religion, family, nationality, work and education. Apart from the interest in how conceptions of self impact on our subsequent roles in society, the basic tenet that is of relevance to this study is whether identity is a fluid subjectivity or a single, unitary state that is applicable across context and time (Schwedler, 2001).

Based on the above considerations, the following research questions have been formulated in order to provide insight into the construction of Muslim women's identity:

- How do married, educated and employed Muslim women define who they are?
- How do the husbands of these women define who their wives are?
- What are the differences or similarities between the husband's and the wife's account of her identity?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Identity is not a fixed set of characteristics; it is instead the product of historical processes and experiences through which individuals and groups come to see themselves, their place in the world, and their relationship with those around them (Schwedler, 2001). The

current emphasis on global culture and an international community raises questions as to the applicability of such a concept within the local community. Are there any sacrifices that are made in order to attain this notion of universality and to what extent is local culture overridden in favour of the current global norm? Alternatively, the infusion of the global into the local may serve to tighten existing communal bonds thus serving to strengthen local ways of being. Within the social sciences, the study of individual identity has had to expand to make allowance for the nature of globalisation and its impact on concepts such as identity. Apart from the focus on identity, the study may provide some insight into local Islamic culture and the extent to which it is impermeable to external forces.

Writings on Muslim women in the early 1980s provided descriptions of Muslim women who predominantly of Middle-Eastern origin and whose lives were confined to the home and restricted by conventions such as the veil. Smith and Haddad (1982) write that similar to other patriarchal traditions, Islam's treatment of women has been viewed as unjust and Muslim women are imagined to be treated as lesser or inferior beings.

However, little study has been undertaken within the South African context, where Muslim women apart from living within a culture that has been framed as oppressive, have lived within a political system that has enforced racist ideology.

South Africa is not an Islamic state, thus Islamic laws are not state laws. For Muslim women in South Africa this means access to a wider array of social relations. There are no state laws that would enforce the use of the veil, or enforce same-sex education. However, during the Apartheid era the Group Areas Act enforced racially segregated living areas, thus providing a space where religion and culture were the same. Being Muslim was not a visible oddity within this space; it was the norm. However, South Africa has moved beyond Apartheid, thus opening up various other spaces and opportunities for Muslim women.

1.6 Chapter Organisation

To orient the reader to the structure and content of the thesis, a synopsis is provided of the remaining chapters of the research report.

Chapter Two has as its focus a review of theoretical positions on the subject of identity and self, including existing research on the subject. The review covers both international and South African views on the topic. The review is structured according to the following applied areas of identity: globalisation, culture, gender, intimacy, 'race', Muslim women and constructions of Islam.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the research methodology utilised to guide the study of Muslim couples' constructions of Muslim women's identity. The approach taken is a qualitative one, with discourse analysis as the chosen method of data analysis. This chapter provides an overview of the actual method utilised in formulating the research, including the research questions, selection and definition criteria for participants, method of data collection and an explanation of the chosen method of data analysis.

Chapter Four is a research report that presents the data as it has been analysed utilising a qualitative analytic method based on the depth hermeneutics approach to interpretation. The generation of a research report is consistent with Potter & Wetherell's (1987) ninth stage of discourse analysis, which requires research findings to be explained and located within a theoretical framework.

As a concluding chapter, *Chapter Five* will provide a summary of the research, the limitations of the study and possibilities for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

For the purpose of this thesis the author has chosen to view identity as a social construction. In accordance with this view the literature review provides an overview of theoretical and empirical writings that highlight the impact of the social realm on the construction of identity. Theoretical frameworks and published research were identified and analysed in order to conceptualise and contextualise the present study. The following review is both thematic and theoretical, addressing different themes surrounding the concept of identity in addition to looking at theoretical developments, and illustrating how these are supported by empirical evidence. The review begins by providing a basic understanding of the concept of identity or self, followed by an outline of some of the theoretical considerations of the social construction of identity. Finally, some of the social constructs that impact on the construction of identity are examined.

2.2 The concept of identity

At the simplest level identity is how individuals and groups define themselves and their relations to others (Schwedler, 2001). Identity may be described as one's sense of who one is. An individual's identity may be defined by using so-called biological variables such as race, ethnicity and sex or symbolically constructed groups such as 'wife' or 'Muslim' (Harrington, 2002). In addition to these categorical definitions of identity, an individual may define oneself in terms of personal attributes, for example, being strong or honest.

An identity may be shared with other people, but it may at the same time distinguish an individual from other people. A social position or a social identity may be governed and organised by societal definitions, expectations and prescriptions, whereas a personal position or personal identity is based on the particular ways in which people organise their own lives, sometimes in opposition to, or protest against, the expectations implied by societal expectations (Hermans, 2001). According to Hollway (1989, p233) subject positions are not only given by pre-existing discourse, but are also taken:

Discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people.

The construction of identity has been explained from various perspectives. Identity construction may occur in isolation from the outside world and the individual may be viewed as someone with a self-contained mind and consciousness, one personality or consistent set of traits, own thoughts and feelings and the centre and source of their

experience (Stevens, 1996). Essentially, this view of the individual proposes a self that is autonomous, a self from which culture, history and society are separate.

In contrast, Jenkins (1996) defines self as each individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted vis a vis others in terms of similarity and difference, without which we would not know who we are and hence would not be able to act. According to Harre (1998) the self is always experienced as singular by every human being, in all cultures. However, the development of this singularity is a relational process and is based on the individual's interaction with people and other aspects of the social environment, such as the media. Every human being needs affective relationships with some elements of the world to make their existence meaningful and they may look to other human beings for their affective relationships or they may look to Gods or certain cultural rules on which they will lavish their affect (Hsu, 1985).

2.3 Identity as a social construction

The experience of selfhood, or consciousness, which occurs in human beings in various cultures, is not totally derivative of or reflective of personality structure nor is it reducible to an analysis of the social structure in which an individual participates (Marsella, Devos & Hsu, 1985). Social constructionism views the boundaries between the person and the social context as merged.

According to Jenkins (1996), individual identity, embodied in selfhood, is not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people. The development of a personal narrative or identity occurs during the course of interaction with other human beings. As noted by Harré (1998), human beings acquire their typically human psychological characteristics, powers and tendencies in 'symbiotic' interactions with other human beings. Autonomy does not preclude relatedness and an individual can be both autonomous and strongly oriented toward close interpersonal relationships (Singelis, 2000). Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the processes of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing processes of social interaction within which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives (Jenkins, 1996).

The works of Cooley (1962) and Mead (1934) provide an understanding of 'self' as an ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others (cited in Jenkins, 1996). The psychological processes of mature human beings are essentially collective, and contingently privatised and individualised, thus there are both universal and local forms of

sense of self (Harré, 1998). Individual identity formation has its roots in our earliest processes of socialisation which suggests that identities which are established this early in life, (selfhood, humanness, gender, and under some circumstances kinship and ethnicity), are primary identities, more robust and resilient to change in later life than other identities (Jenkins, 1996). At the core of social constructionism is the belief that people actively construct their perceptions and use culture as a guide to do so (Beall & Sternberg, 1993).

The relational self is conceptualised as a self-definition that is associated with ties to specific others and the quality of relationships with them (Singelis, 2000). Different relational settings elicit different contextual selves. Socialisation is a relational process and within this interaction identities emerge. For adults, new social identities must co-exist with old social identities and sometimes these are in tension with each other (Stevens, 1996). Movement across different sites, from home to work, for example, embroils the person in different social contexts and thus different identity possibilities – such as daughter, wife, neighbour, and teacher (Stevens, 1996). Identity is a process rather than being singular (people may identify with several categories) or fixed (identifications can change) (Harrington, 2002). Harré (1998) suggests that based on his or her own particular and momentary needs, the individual person can exemplify more than one personality or character type in different settings and in the company of different people. Therefore, identity may be largely based on one's location within complex sets of social relations, with different identities varying in prominence from one situation to another (Schwedler, 2001). According to Harrington (2002), identity is the point of suture between the subjective and social processes of representation.

If female identity formation is the contingent outcome of struggles, both over self-acclaimed representations and over externally ascribed identities, then women should be seen as constantly renegotiating their social position and cultural identity (Pattynama, 2000). Pattynama (2000) uses the term *masquerade* to describe a continually changing series of identifications, which vary according to the context and its gendered, racial and class stereotypes.

Although we have a strong sense of an enclosed, private and self-contained world inside our heads, it would be more accurate to describe this internal place as a line momentarily and arbitrarily drawn around pieces of the public world (Stevens, 1996). The self should be seen as distributed, continually spreading, changing, grouping and regrouping across relational and social fields and is best understood not as a pure and enduring core but as the sum and swarm of participations in social life (Bruner, cited in Stevens, 1996). The self is not an object to be described once and for all, but is taken to be a continuously

changing and fluid history of relationships (Gergen, in Stevens, 1996). Unfolding events and changing circumstances, both locally and internationally, result in continuous reinterpretation and reconstruction of identity. It is a 'moving target' with different definitions predominating across both time and space (Schwedler, 2001).

According to Erikson the psychosocial modality of identity is to be oneself and to be able to share being oneself with others (Erikson, 1959). The achievement of identity, therefore, must come before the achievement of intimacy, and intimacy with another is a sharing of one's identity. Intimacy as Erikson defines it is to lose and find one's self in another (Erikson, 1959). Intimacy with another human being, therefore, has a great impact on a person's identity. According to Gilligan (1982, pg 172) adulthood for women is centred around "interdependence and taking care."

2.3.1 Identity as shaped by Gender

Gender is a social phenomenon that is best understood as constructed, contested and intersecting with other social phenomena (Read & Bartowski, 2000). Different cultures have different ideas about gender. Thus, across cultures one's biological sex does not necessarily imply that one will engage in certain activities or that people will believe that one possesses certain attributes (Beall & Sternberg, 1993). All human societies consist of men and women who must interact with one another, usually on a daily basis and who have developed customs embracing prescriptive beliefs about the manner in which men and women relate to one another (Beall & Sternberg, 1993). Subject positions are "ways of being" afforded by discourses (Willig, 1999). According to Weedon (1987, pg 100) we are offered subject positions which assume what it is to be a woman or man and which seek to constitute our femininity and masculinity accordingly.

According to Best (2001, citing Munroe et al) it is reasonable to assume that in every socio-cultural system, gender concepts and behaviours will be learned early, will be salient, and will be fraught with significance. Indeed, it has been found that modernisation of societies, with changes in role expectations and limitations for both boys and girls, has had minimal impact on the strength of sex typing and learning (Best, 2001). One aspect of culture that does influence the rate of stereotype learning is the nature of the predominant religion in the society (Best, 2001). A study amongst both gender groups of college students (Williams and Best, cited in Best, 2001) indicated that for both groups' ideal self-descriptions were more masculine than feminine. It was found that while men and women have similar sex-role ideologies women tend to have a more modern view than men do in many countries (Best, 2001).

A quasi-experimental study conducted by Echabe & Castro (1999) analysed the influence of contextual factors on gender identities. It appeared that both men and women had a more communal image of themselves in the context of their close relationships, whereas their self-images became more agentic – autonomous in the context of their professional activities (Echabe & Castro, 1999). The authors conceived gender identities as highly dynamic and historically derived from the social division of activities, thus fulfilling important ideological functions (they justify the social division of roles, the privileged position of men and the subordinated status of women) (Echabe & Castro, 1999). If a society considers the transmission of culture in the home and community as crucial, then gender relations are significant to identity construction, since in most cultures women are assumed to play a role in the socialisation of children (Evans & Bowlby, 2000). According to Edley and Wetherell (cited in Echabe & Castro, 1999) the main way women have been subordinated is through the organisation of society around a private world of domestic work (the province of women) and a public world seen as the province of men.

Cultural and social values in different contexts contribute to the development of gender identity. These values may include an emphasis on female submissiveness and passivity and particular role-specific identities which tend to reproduce gender asymmetry and a classical femininity that is continuously looking to the outside world for its own nurturance (Thapan, 2001). These processes of socialisation ensure that the gendered self does not seek to consciously develop an inner world of political awareness that may challenge social constructions of identity (Thapan, 2001).

In her study of the articulation of gender identity among elite and educationally advantaged young women in India, Thapan (2001) found that so-called 'old' modes of contact (including religious practices, cultural tradition, and social custom) and apparently 'new' ones (most significantly, educational processes and the visual and print media) shape, influence, structure and construct gender identity in particular and varied ways. For example, the emphasis of education for women was not necessarily for their individual empowerment but for the purposes of having educated and aware mothers and wives who are harbingers of social and cultural development that will contribute to national progress (Thapan, 2001). Similarly, in her investigation into the formation of gender identities among middle class Muslim women in Republican Turkey, Durakbasa (2001) found that certain political reforms did not aim at women's liberation for they essentially defined women as breeders and educators of the new generations, i.e. 'enlightened mothers of the nation'.

Durakbasa's (2001) study examined the tensions between modernity and tradition that are experienced by Muslim women living in Turkey and found that ideological discourses define the new woman as modern but virtuous (Durakbasa, 2001). The interviews with these Muslim women revealed that in some cases the narration of the participants repressed the stories of the mothers, the mothers considered unimportant and trivial when compared to the modernist fathers and the daughters, the so-called 'new women' in the making (Durakbasa, 2001). These participants could not elaborate on their mothers but stressed the paternal influence in shaping their modernist outlook and personality. Because fathers were more educated than mothers, and were the representatives of modernity in the household, their influence and support in the shaping of new women were very important (Durakbasa, 2001). Most of the women enjoyed a special area of influence and control in their professional life, which did not always accord with the ongoing dependent wife role they played in their marriage (Durakbasa, 2001). A forgotten but disguised part of the modernisation stories involves how the so called 'new woman' managed to be successful in being career women and at the same time good housewives, which can be considered a cliché in dominant discourse of modernisation and in some sociological accounts (Durakbasa, 2001).

In a study of 27 first-generation Pakistani Muslim women in Britain who were looking for or undertaking paid work, Evans and Bowlby (2000) explored the way in which paid work enmeshes with the constitution of these women's gendered, racialised and classed identities. They conclude that the place of paid work in the life of a "British Pakistani Muslim Woman" is a contested area in which there are a number of competing ideas about appropriate work which are strongly related to the class position and life stage of the women (Evans & Bowlby, 2000).

2.3.2 Identity as a Cultural Construction

According to Singelis (2000), culture is a system that perpetuates itself: it is both conditioned and conditioning. Through its institutions, rituals, socialisation practices, and patterning of interactions, culture provides the guidance and rewards that systematically shape individual social cognition (Singelis, 2000). Yet culture, as the man-made part of the environment, is certainly constructed, perpetuated, and modified by the actions and beliefs of individuals (Singelis, 2000).

Whereas in traditional conceptions culture was perceived as out there, something outside the self, anthropologists and cultural psychologists are increasingly concerned with culture as structures and processes in the self (Hermans, 2001). The universalist perspective has an important implication for the relation between self and culture, in that culture is separated

from individual psychological operations and moreover, the self has some natural properties that are already assumed to be given prior to culture (Hermans, 2001). In other words, the universalist perspective, which typically treats self and culture as 'variable', implies a self-exclusive conception of culture and a culture-exclusive conception of the self (Hermans, 2001). Cultures can be seen as collective voices that function as social positions in the self (Hermans, 2001).

Alternatively, Adams and Markus (2001) suggest that cultural identity categories – and the supposedly 'defining features' associated with these categories – are not 'just so'; instead they are the way they are because people make them so. Their reified fixedness is not natural or inevitable but is instead a social construction: the cumulative, material residue of the identity syntheses achieved by wave after wave of subjective selves (Adams & Markus, 2001). Theories of discourse suggest that cultural forms (e.g. gender, religion, ethnicity) are best understood as constructed, contested, and intersecting social phenomena (Read & Bartowski, 2000).

2.3.3 Identity within the context of globalisation

The concept of globalisation may be defined as the key idea of one single world or human society, in which all regional, national and local elements are tied together in one interdependent whole (Holten, 1998). This notion of the breaking down of barriers and condensing time and space has a significant impact upon culture and may also impact on the development of identity. It may be argued that globalisation is not a 20th century development but a phenomenon that ties into a global history of colonialism (Holten, 1998). Colonial constructions of local identities and cultures have often been resisted by those who were being constructed, thus leading to a strengthening of local identity (Holten, 1998). Similarly, there is often resistance to the ideology of globalisation. However, an increasingly interconnected world society requires attention to dialogical relationships between different cultures, between different selves, and between different cultural positions in the self (e.g. multiple or hyphenated identities) (Hermans, 2001).

A case in point would be post-colonial India. Discourses of tradition and modernity have existed simultaneously, and often contradictorily, since the country gained political independence from the British in 1947 (Thapan, 2001). The production of a global culture has consequences for everyday life in contemporary urban India – a new global media provides the symbols, myths, resources, ideas, and images for the construction of a common culture as well as of individual identities (Thapan, 2001). Thus, the upper class, English speaking, educationally advantaged urban elite in India emphasises the 'secular' (modern), non-traditional (contemporary), liberated (westernised) and trendy aspects of

everyday life (Thapan, 2001). This new middle-class Indian emphasises all that is modern in the world today, and this includes a view of the Indian woman that transcends the earlier perceived place of women in the domestic world (Thapan, 2001). The impact of global culture on the Indian woman has meant that these women have re-directed their attention away from the home to the outside world, and insofar as this process is a reflection of Western values, it is viewed as a process of re-colonisation (Thapan, 2001).

In many respects, globalisation is a paradoxical phenomenon; it engenders, on the one hand, uniformity and homogenisation and, on the other, facilitates the reinvention and revival of ethnic identity, thanks to international immigrations, the growing networks among diasporic communities and the rapid strides in information and communications technology (Momin, 2001). The younger generation of Muslims born and brought up in Western societies is exposed to two conflicting cultural environments: a broadly Islamic one at home, and a secularised, individualised and globalised one outside (Momin, 2001). For some Muslims this has resulted in the revival of the *Ummah*¹, the community of Muslim believers, which enables the development of a universal identity in Islam (Brown, 2006). The concept of *Ummah* generates a globalised community which unifies believers by a common fate and experience (Brown, 2006). The revival of the *Ummah* is in part because western civilisation is global, and the reinvention of the *Ummah* is a response to globalisation processes and is enabled by globalisation processes.

2.4 Islam's construction of Muslim women

Consistent with views of patriarchal societies, views of Islam abound with perceived injustices toward women. These are seen as both actual, in terms of the treatment of women, and theoretical insofar as women have been imagined as somehow lesser or inferior beings (Smith & Haddad, 1982). Muslim women live in a variety of societies and communities where legislation, customs and traditions, affected or inspired by interpretations of the Qur'an² and the Shari'a³ combine to define concepts of female roles and status (El-Solh & Mabro, 1994). These concepts may differ within and between specific Muslim societies and countries, varying from one class or generation to the other as well as over time. Muslim women's lives' and the choices they face are influenced as much by patriarchal social arrangements as they are by religious ideology (El-Solh & Mabro, 1994).

¹ The global community of Muslim believers

² The divine scripture of Islam

³ The canonical law of Islam

The rise in Muslim women's awareness of their identity and rights is part of a historical process in which all individuals, men and women, have increasingly appropriated their 'selves' (Afkhami, 1995). For most Muslim women modernity means above all conflict – a spectrum of values and forces that compete for their allegiance and beckon them to contradictory ways of looking at themselves and the world that surrounds them (Afkhami, 1995). Islam is just one part of a composite identity influenced by country of origin, socio-economic status, sectarian and political affiliations, language and dialect, age group, gender as well as history of settlement in the west (El-Solh & Mabro, 1994).

Westerners, puzzled over what they perceive to be the contradiction of young Muslim women pursuing their education and being economically active in the modern sectors in their societies while at the same time signalling their adherence to traditional concepts of gender roles by donning the veil, are often at a loss to explain this phenomenon, as may be secular oriented Muslims (El-Solh & Mabro, 1994). For some, this may be viewed as an identity crisis or even social dislocation.

Caricatures that portray Islamic women as submissive and backward have become pervasive in recent years, but recent research on Muslim women living in the United States has called such unflattering depictions into question (Read & Bartowski, 2000). Such research has revealed that Muslim women creatively negotiate their gender, religious, and ethnic identities in light of dominant U.S. social norms and modernist discourses that often define these women as 'other' (Read & Bartowski, 2000).

The *hijab*⁴ is often viewed as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression and a restriction to their mobility, however, many Muslim women claim that the *hijab* empowers them in many ways: making their identities distinct, allowing them to take control of their bodies' and giving them a sense of belonging to a wider Muslim world (Ruby, 2006). According to Franks (2000) the *hijab*, is of itself neither liberating nor oppressive, and the power relations with which it is associated are situated not only in the meaning with which it is invested but also in the circumstances under which it is worn. The meaning attributed to the Muslim veil are not endemic to the veil itself, rather they are produced through cultural discourse and vast networks of social relationships (Read & Bartowski, 2000). Some women feel that wearing the veil identifies them as Muslim and defines their role in society and their relationships with men, thereby giving them respect and recognition (Walker, in Sechzer, 2004). In effect, the *hijab* as a garment, while marking her out as separate, offers a Muslim

⁴ The practice of covering of entire body, face and hair or covering of her hair by a Muslim woman

woman the means to move between the private and public spheres and to be a spectator or participant in the world of men (Franks, 2000).

Read & Bartowski (2000) conducted in-depth interviews with twenty four Muslim women in order to understand the intersection of veiling, ethnicity, and nationality for Muslim women living in western and largely modernised societies. Most of the women indicated that they wore the veil as a symbol of their commitment to their religion and because it is commanded in the Qur'an that women "not display their beauty and adornments" (S.24:31)⁵. For the women in the study the veil served as an identity and served to link them to the broader community of Islamic believers and Muslim women (the ummah). Several women in the study argued that the veil served as a liberator that enabled women to work alongside men and allowed them to access the public sphere. Veiling afforded them more respect and freedom in moving about the public domain. There was also a sentiment among the women that the veil served to protect a "precious" diamond-like feminine character and in doing so inverted traditional gender hierarchies that privilege masculine traits over feminine ones (Read & Bartowski, 2000).

In her interviews with immigrant Muslim women in Canada, Ruby (2006) found that for these women the *hijab* served to empower them by making their identities distinct, by allowing them to take control of their bodies and by giving them a sense of belonging to a wider Muslim world. The *hijab* is viewed as a device for earning respect and protecting her from potential male viewers (Ruby, 2006). Ibrahim (cited in Ruby, 2006) writes that it is a growing feeling on the part of Muslim women that they no longer wish to identify with the West, and that reaffirmation of their identities as Muslims requires the kind of visible sign that the adoption of traditional clothing implies. Even though many scholars have situated the practice of veiling as an act of controlling women both physically and psychologically, for the women in Ruby's (2006) study, the *hijab* is a tool that conferred power and that allowed them to set boundaries between themselves and the outside world.

In a qualitative study of twenty two second generation immigrant South Asian Muslim women living in the United States, Ali (2005) found that these women were taking up the *hijab* much earlier in life both because it is a religious requirement but also because they find it comforting in mixed sex settings. Among the women who were interviewed it was found that an Islamic identity has become more significant, and a deeper sense of being

⁵ The Holy Qur'an, Surah 24, Verse 31

Muslim has transcended other ethnic ties (Ali, 2005). The most visible manifestation of this move toward being Muslim is the wearing of the *hijab* (Ali, 2005).

Islam requires women to cover their entire body, including the hair, with clothing that is neither transparent nor tightly fitting, but whether they should cover the face as well is disputed (Vahed, 2000). One of the most stark and obvious manifestation of change since the inception of the new South African dispensation, is the increasing number of women who are fully veiled; this increase is quite staggering and is part of the renewed endeavour by the Muslim *ulama* to invoke the 'rules of religion' to prevent transgression of gender norms (Vahed, 2000). The Department of Jurisprudence of the Jamiat⁶ ruled that due to the immorality of the times and weakness of resistance, it is compulsory for a female to cover her face, which is the focus of her beauty (Vahed, 2000). The Jamiat conveys the covering of the face very positively; the veil is seen to accord women a degree of respect, honour and dignity and of being in charge of her body and experiencing a sense of power over herself, which her unclad counterpart is totally deprived of (Vahed, 2000). When local Muslim clergy refer to the veiling of women, it actually denotes total seclusion from public life, except in exceptional circumstances, not just the covering of the face (Vahed, 2000).

Muslim women in Johannesburg have traditionally only covered their heads or shoulders with a headscarf, however, there appears to be a drive towards emphasising the utilisation of the veil, the use of which has increased significantly in the past seven years (Vahed, 2000). According to a local Muslim cleric (cited in Vahed, 2000), the emphasis on veiling was based on the changing lifestyle of women, adding that 'our mothers did not go to gym, university, shopping malls, beachfronts, discos and so on. They remained at home and today's women go all over the place.' Vahed (2000) writes that Muslim women, heads covered and uncovered, are far more visible in public places than their predecessors of a generation ago, and for many women the veil has become a passport to freedom. The wearing of designer clothing and jewellery, the carrying of cell-phones and the driving of luxury cars have accompanied the embracing of the cloak and veil, indicating an embracing of modern Western technology (Vahed, 2000). According to Vahed (2000), Muslim women do not see the contradiction of covering themselves but appearing in places where nudity, nakedness and everything else contrary to Islam are the norm.

⁶ The Jamiat-ul-ulama is a religious council that governs the practice of Islam in South Africa

Dwyer's (2001) study of diasporic identities amongst British South Asian Muslim women challenges the notion of women's identity as being a fixed essence. In her interviews with forty nine South Asian Muslim women aged between sixteen and eighteen their construction of identity emerged as a relational and contextual positioning rather than a fixed essence. Her study highlighted that "South Asian" and "British" were categories that were negotiated and transformed by the young participants in her study and that the identities of young British Muslim women should be viewed as discursive formations constituted within particular social, cultural and economic relations (Dwyer, 2001). In addition, she (Dwyer, 2001) notes that the lives of young British Muslim women are inscribed by gender relations and class structures as well as racialised discourses. Some of the young Muslim women in her study emphasised an Islamic identification that was counter-posed to South Asian tradition. For these women Islam offered not only a personal religious identification but a means to construct an alternative gender identity that would allow them greater freedom to pursue their education and employment. As Dwyer (2001, p482) illustrates of one of her participants, "by adopting an orthodox Islamic identity not only could she cite the Qu'ran in support of her ambitions, but her adoption of *hijab* served to indicate a demure Muslim femininity which would allay parental concerns." Similarly, Arthur (cited in Ruby, 2006) states that symbols of clothing are used as evidence that an individual is on the right and true path.

Tohidi (1996) examined the intersection of gender, state socialism, nationality and religion in the newly independent republic of Azerbaijan, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Muslim women in Soviet Azerbaijan, in response to colonial domination, retained certain Muslim dress-codes and behaviours which functioned as identity markers. These identity markers reinforced their identity as Azeri Muslim women and served as a boundary against Russian influence. Azeri women view themselves as the primary maintainers of religion and morality and are proud to display certain feminine traits traditionally associated with religion, such as virginity, not going out without a male or older female chaperone, not wearing trousers, not drinking or smoking (Tohidi, 1996). However, the adoption of these feminine traits has not impeded their participation in the economic and public sphere of society. It seems that these women are assertive and strong professional women in the workplace, but are docile and submissive in private. Despite this, Azeri women maintain that their subservient or male-dominated status is only "apparent" and that in allowing men to perceive themselves as dominant and strong have managed to retain their own power (Tohidi, 1996).

The Qur'an is quite explicit about the religious responsibility of women in that they are required to participate equally with men (Sechzer, 2004). Among Islamic authors and

religious leaders, it is common to emphasise the equal value of men and women within a complementary gender system, where women have duties related to housekeeping and child raising and men must secure the family income (Predelli, 2004). This gender complementarity is the belief that gender differences are naturally and socially constructed such that men and women's relationships are complementary and work in harmony (Brown, 2006). Brown's (2006) study into Islamic identity among British Muslim women illustrates that gender equity is promoted through the valorisation of women's unique and natural role in society. The role of mother and housewife is elaborated to the fulfilment of a religious role, which is seen by some as on par with the more public role of men (Brown, 2006).

Predelli's study of immigrant Muslim women in Oslo highlights that these women actively use Islam to support their own gendered views and practices both in the private household and in relation to the labour market (Predelli, 2004). Many women in the study pointed to individual women who lived at the time of the Prophet to justify their own participation in society (Predelli, 2004). However, her study also shows that Islam may be used as a resource for setting limits to women's behaviour. Predelli (2004) notes that women's actual interpretation of Islam is informed by their upbringing and education, their class and cultural identity, their knowledge of normative Islamic discourse, their esteem for religious leaders who interpret Islam, and the women and men they interact with in daily life.

In Brown's (2006) study of Islamic identity among British Muslim women she noted that the identities of Muslim women are contextual and relational positionings, and their articulation of an Islamic identity supports them in their strategic negotiations over the realisation of their rights. Islamic identity is negotiated within the local and global context of everyday life, such that at times this Islamic identity and rights articulation are in tension with other positions held by groups and individuals (Brown, 2006). The emergence of new forms of community and identity is perhaps more visible in the determination of Muslim groups to separate culture from religion (Brown, 2006). As a result of this separation traditions are changing and culture is being redefined to include the customs and habits of Muslims from all over the world (Brown, 2006). This allowed the women in Brown's study to distance themselves from perceived oppressive practices because these were a reflection of culture and not of religion. Thus, religious identity was prioritised among the respondents. This adoption of an Islamic identity and behaviours that transcend culture allow these British Muslim women to challenge certain practices that inhibit their freedom.

In her study of religiosity among young women in Jordan, Droeber (2003) conducted interviews with thirty Muslim women. Some of the most powerful influences with regard to the formation of religious or non-religious attitudes are family traditions and socialisation patterns (Droeber, 2003). The participants in the study had either maintained their childhood religious world views or they had reshaped the attitudes with which they grew up (Droeber, 2003). They have also reinterpreted sacred texts and traditions in order to re-define the position of Muslim women in their communities. Many of the participants in the study interpret religion as a way to actually empower them and help them cope with some of the intricacies of life, especially in times of rapid social, political and economic change (Droeber, 2003). For some of the women in this study Islamic identity was newly articulated in the public sphere and did not necessarily coincide with increased piety (Droeber, 2003).

The women in Brown's (2006) used two strategies to motivate for their right to employment which depended upon a publicly articulated Islamic identity. Firstly, reference was made to women in the Qur'an and Muslim history. Secondly, rights to education and employment are viewed as supporting traditionally understood gender roles, that is, education and employment allowed these women to be better mothers and wives (Brown, 2006).

Much attention has been focused in the Western media and literature on the plight of Muslim women who are 'poor and oppressed' in visible or tangible ways (Hassan, 2000). Hardly any notice has been taken, however, of the self-aware Muslim women of today who are struggling to maintain their religious identity and personal autonomy in the face of the intransigence of Muslim culture, on the one hand, and the imperialism of Western, secular culture, on the other (Hassan, 2000). For some Muslim women this identity consciousness appeared to have been developed in response to a perceived external threat to identity. As noted by one of the Azeri participants in Tohidi's (1996, p117) study, "when you are enslaved you become more keen on saving your national identity, your own characteristics, your own language, literature, customs and tradition." Similarly, in a qualitative study of seven Muslim immigrants in the United States post September 11, Hallak & Quina (2004) found that young women viewed themselves as being the keepers of cultural tradition in response to a perceived 'Western' threat. Salih's (2000) study of immigrant Moroccan women in Italy reveals that some young Muslim women are increasingly identifying with a transnational and modern Islam cleared from local variations and traditional performances.

2.5 Constructions of Islam and Muslim women

2.5.1 The question of “racial” identity

Throughout the history of colonisation, trade, travel and globalisation there has been some contact between different groups of people. The consequence has been the production of ‘representations’ of the Other, images and beliefs which categorise people in terms of real or attributed differences when compared with Self (Miles, 1989). There is therefore a dialectic between Self and Other in which the attributed characteristics of the Other refract contrasting characteristics of Self, and vice versa (Miles, 1989).

From the time of the earliest contacts between Europeans and Africans, European discourse noted that Africans were not Christian believers, and noted their skin colour and nakedness in order to signify difference (Miles, 1989). European discourse reflected back what the African was not in order to affirm difference and employed both phenotypical and cultural criteria: the African was defined as simultaneously physically and culturally different (Miles, 1989). Although the predominant view was that the African was a human being, part of God’s creation, and exhibited characteristics subject to environmental influence, the African was nevertheless defined as an inferior human being (Miles, 1989). According to Gordon (1995), inadequacy, failure, perversion, pathology, weakness, irrationality and a host of deficiencies are projected into the so-called inferior race to make their inferiority cause and effect. Gordon (1995, pg. 41) further quotes Fanon (1967): “When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species.”

The process of representing the Other entails a dialectic of representational inclusion and exclusion: by attributing a population with certain characteristics in order to categorise and differentiate it as an Other, those who do so also establish criteria by which they themselves are represented (Miles, 1989). By using the discourse of ‘race’ to exclude and inferiorise, that same discourse, but with inverted meanings, served to include and superiorise: if the population of Africa was represented as a race, then the population of Europe is simultaneously represented as a race, albeit a superior one (Miles, 1989). As Fanon (1967) wrote, not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. The act of representational exclusion is simultaneously an act of inclusion, whether or not Self is explicitly identified in the discourse (Miles, 1989). However, for the ‘person of colour’ concepts such as ‘man’, ‘person’, ‘self’, ‘community’, even ‘Other’, have peculiar, racialised residues of ‘White Man’, ‘White Person’, ‘White Ego’, ‘White Community’, and ‘White Individual’ (Gordon, 1995).

There are various definitions of the concept of racism. According to Rex (cited in Miles, 1989), the concept of racism refers to any argument which suggests that the human species is composed of discrete groups in order to legitimate inequality between those groups of people. Carmichael and Hamilton (cited in Miles, 1989) define racism as the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group. Overt racism is defined as explicit actions by individuals and institutional racism refers to those actions and inactions which maintain 'black' people in a disadvantaged situation and which rely on the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices (Miles, 1989). In relation to this "every black person faces *history* – *his* or *her* story – every day as a situation, as a choice, of how to stand in relation to oppression, of whether to live as a being subsumed by oppression, or to live as active resistance towards liberation, or to live as mere indifference" (Gordon, 1995, p29).

According to Gordon (1995), one of the most insidious features of racism is its mundanity. Fanon (1967) writes that "psychologists spoke of a prejudice having become unconscious. The truth is that the rigour of the system made the daily affirmation of a superiority superfluous" (Gordon, 1995, p38). With regard to the question of identity Fanon (cited in Gordon, 1995, pg 41) writes that 'because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: In reality, who am I?'

According to Fanon (cited in Gordon, 1995, p46), "society, unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influences. Man is what brings society into being. Human products become human causes" (Gordon, 1995). Granting that certain conceptions of human reality, like race and racism, are unmasked as bogus claims – that they are, in contemporary parlance, social constructions – it is also important to understand that such conclusions are problematic (Gordon, 1995). When it is asserted that race is a social construct, the question is also raised, What does that mean? Who constructs it? (Gordon, 1995) The term 'social construct' only identifies society as a constitutor of race, but that tells us nothing if we do not understand how, in such an instance, a society can create anything (Gordon, 1995). Society is a projection of the anonymous individual who serves as the microcosmic version of the macrocosmic agency (Gordon, 1995).

From a Fanonian perspective social reality is an achievement, not a given reality; it is a function of action, itself a function of subjective and inter-subjective encounters (Gordon, 1995). The agent of social construction and the construction of social reality is the human

being, and Fanon (1967) rejects the idea of the mechanistic spirit that discounts the actional, subjective, situated dimension of a human being: "I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism" (Gordon, 1995, p51).

The lives of South African Muslim women are informed by gender relations, class structures and racial discourses. According to Vahed (2000), under apartheid Muslims had 'hybrid' identities that were situationally specific; while different identifications such as race, language, class, religion, etc. were acknowledged in different contexts, by far the most important identity was that of race. For South African Muslim women this has meant being classified as Black. Not only may their access to public spaces have been limited by culture and religion, but also by the structures of apartheid. South African Muslim women of Indian descent were an integral component of the Indian communities that were forcibly formed under apartheid. However, as our society has transformed post-apartheid, it seems that the identification of these women has shifted from Indian to Muslim.

2.5.2 The Islamic "Other"

Islamophobia is the term used to describe the fear of Islam and/or Muslims. Although the term is of relatively recent coinage, the idea is a well-established tradition in European history (Abbas, 2001). The central feature throughout the history of Western European contact with Muslims is the representation of *other* in a negative manner to aggrandise established powers and legitimise existing systems of domination and subordination (Abbas, 2001). While current perceptions and conceptions of Islam have been informed by existing historical discourses which feed Islamophobic stereotypes, the fear of Muslims has its own contemporary idiosyncratic features which connect it to the more recent histories of colonialism, immigration, and racism (Abbas, 2001). The Runnymede Trust suggested that Islamophobia is created analogously to xenophobia, which refers to the disdain or dislike of all things foreign, and it identified seven main features of Islamophobia: Muslim cultures are seen as monolithic; Islamic cultures are substantially different from other cultures; Islam is perceived as implacably threatening; Islam's adherents use their faith for political or military advantage; Muslim criticism of Western cultures and societies is rejected out of hand; the fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility to immigration; and Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic (Abbas, 2001).

The human need for the construction of *other* as a way of self-identification and self-assurance is a universal one (Abbas, 2001). This process can lead to racism, prejudicial hatred, and violence in the most extreme cases (Abbas, 2001). Repressed desires and

frustrations, whether conscious or unconscious, can be projected onto the other as a scapegoat (Abbas, 2001).

One effect of the electronic post-modern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed (Said, 1978). Discussion on the influence of the media in society has argued it to be primarily responsible for the creation of 'folk devils', around which moral panics are generated (Abbas, 2001). It is groups in marginal economic and social positions that become targets for stereotyping, as their actions are placed outside explicitly define boundaries (Abbas, 2001). It is argued further that news media in general and the press in particular are crucially involved in the reproduction of elite racism (Abbas, 2001). Racism is a socially learned concept and it is institutionally manifested in education, employment, media, politics, and in businesses and certain professions (Abbas, 2001).

This has given consumers of news the sense that they have understood Islam without at the same time intimating to them that a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material (Said, 1981). In many instances 'Islam' has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, and a deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility (Said, 1981). The Islamic Other was portrayed as barbaric, degenerate and tyrannical, and these alleged characteristics were considered to be rooted in the character of Islam as a supposedly false and heretic ideology (Miles, 1989). The object of much of the attack was the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, who was represented as an impostor by claims that his life exemplified violence and sexuality (Daniel, cited in Miles, 1989). Islam was portrayed as founded on, and as spreading itself by means of aggression and war; it was argued that Islam reproduced the idea of the 'holy war' against all non-Muslims, in the course of which the latter would be either brutally murdered or enslaved (Miles, 1989).

Of no other religion or cultural grouping can it be said so assertively as it is now said of Islam that it represents a threat to Western civilisation (Said, 1981). For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the centre, a kind of tasteful exoticism – in all camps, however, there is agreement that even though little enough is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved of there (Said, 1981). The Islamic Other has been represented in thought structurally, in terms of a binary opposition, the axis of which was religious, and in terms of content, as backward, inherently cruel and violent and irrationally sexual (Miles, 1989). Another aspect of the public image of Islam in the new geopolitical-intellectual setting is that it is invariably found in a confrontational relationship with whatever is normal, Western, everyday, 'ours' (Said,

1981). One aspect of the electronic post-modern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed (Said, 1978).

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages and, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (Said, 1978). Before the interests of the feudal monarchies and merchant capital of Western Europe combined in order to colonise the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards, the main focus of external interest was the Middle East, North Africa, and India, collectively known as the Orient (Miles, 1989). Europe's idea of the 'foreigner' was based for many formative centuries exclusively on the Arab world (Miles, 1989). Thus, not only did Europeans create a discourse of an imagined Other at the edge of European civilisation, but they created a discourse of a real Other represented as a result of conflicting material and political interests with a population which came to mark the boundary of Europe, not only spatially but also in consciousness (Miles, 1989). Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinctions made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident' (Said, 1978). European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self (Said, 1978). The Europeans who travelled in pursuit of trade, military advantage, religious mission, and curiosity carried with them expectations about what and whom they might meet which was derived from extant verbal and written accounts of Other (Miles, 1989). As unquestioned representations of the Other, the travellers' sense of the normal served to identify the abnormal characteristics of the people with whom contact was established and of their mode of life, thus defining and legitimising what was considered to be the positive qualities of both author and reader (Miles, 1989).

Human history is made by human beings and since the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning (Said, 1994). The development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego (Said, 1994). The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us' (Said, 1994). Each age and society re-creates its 'others' – far from a static thing then, identity of self or of 'other' is a much worked over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies (Said, 1994). The construction of identity is bound

up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society (Said, 1994). Human identity is not natural and stable, but constructed (Said, 1994).

According to Vahed (2000), the rapid changes from the mid-1980s, culminating in the assumption of power by the African National Congress in 1994, have challenged Muslims in a number of areas. First, the new secular democracy no longer patrols behaviour and issues like abortion, education and crime are now the responsibility of the individual rather than the state (Vahed, 2000). Second, the renewal of South Africa has been linked to an African Renaissance, and Muslims are concerned about the implications for their identity and culture, and are further worried that there is no place for them in the new order (Vahed, 2000). Third, the phenomenon of globalisation has affected people both economically as well as culturally, and the communications revolution is a further challenge to those who wish to preserve and pass on certain values to younger members (Vahed, 2000).

As the generations of Muslims in the West evolve, younger individuals increasingly disconnect from their parental perceptions of Islam (Abbas, 2001). The younger generation is more likely to allude to a revivalist Islam; a global Islam that is determined by more Qura'nic principles rather than socially interpreted understandings of them (Abbas, 2001). On the other hand, in order to prevent the dilution of their own identity, Muslims in Britain maintain firmly and conservatively their faith and culture (Abbas, 2001). In every society, movements eager to preserve or rebuild group solidarity put emphasis on visible markers of group identity which limit contact across boundaries and encourage those within (Kuran, 1997).

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the chapter

Chapter three provides the methodological framework for this study. A brief background and rationale for employing a qualitative methodology for the study is presented. The primary focus of this chapter is to outline the study's data collection and data analysis methodologies.

3.2 Overview of the research design

The development of the research methodology utilised for this study was influenced by social constructionism and critical hermeneutics. According to Gergen (1992, p266), social constructionism is principally concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live. One of the basic assumptions of social constructionism is that world views are constructed and changed during the course of interactions with other people, i.e. in experiences or conversations with others.

Therefore, in order to understand identity construction of Muslim women, one must listen to Muslim women's own voices in order to understand how identity construction occurs (Durakbasa, 2001). Qualitative methodologies allow participants in a study to provide an account of their subjective experience in their own words (Kelly, 1999; Sarantakos, 1998).

The research design utilised in this study was a combination of interviews with Muslim women themselves and interviews with their husbands. In-depth interviews were used to obtain constructions of Muslim women's identity. The interviews were semi-structured, and the discussion was guided by a set of open-ended questions.

3.3 Research questions

The focus of this research is a married, educated and employed Muslim woman and her identity negotiation within and across contexts. The aim was to obtain constructions of her identity from both husband and wife and to compare these accounts. Women's own self-definitions, perceptions, their own theories of self and moral social conduct can best be understood by studying their own accounts and analysing their own construction of their lives and life histories (Durakbasa, 2001). Durakbasa (2001) further notes that the levels of modernisation of women's behaviour and social conduct are defined by men. By obtaining constructions of Muslim women's identity from their husbands this study attempts to understand not only how these husbands position their wives, but also how they position

themselves by their constructions. The accounts of the husbands may also provide an understanding of the broader social and cultural environment within which this group of Muslim women is constructing and negotiating their identity.

In order to provide insight into how Muslim women construct and negotiate their identity the following research questions were formulated:

- How do married, educated and employed Muslim women define who they are?
- How do the husbands of these women define who their wives are?
- What are the differences or similarities between the husband's and the wife's account of her identity?

3.4 Participants in the study

3.4.1 Definition criteria for participants in the study

The participants in this research study were drawn based on the following defining criteria: Muslim women, married, between the ages of 20 – 35, educated (a university degree or a technical diploma) and employed. In order to provide a counterpoint to the wife's account of her identity, the husbands of the participants were interviewed as well. These couples are representative of an upwardly mobile middle class community. While it was not a definition criteria at the outset of the study, it emerged that all of women participants in the study were veiled (i.e. they practiced the Islamic *sunnah*⁷ of covering their hair).

In defining the criteria for participants in the study, the rationale was to understand how social institutions impacted on constructions of identity. In studying women who were Muslim, married, educated and employed, the idea was to explore how each of these positions, 'positions' a woman in a specific way in relation to her world. From a social constructionist perspective, as noted by Stevens (1996), the self is continually shaped and reshaped through interactions with others and through involvement in social and cultural activities. As a result, culture, history and society have a definite impact on our psychology as individuals (Stevens, 1996).

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the identity constructions of Muslim women various social manifestations were used to guide the discussion. These were the social institutions of religion, gender, globalisation, culture, marriage, education and employment. The use of these social phenomena to understand the identity construction

⁷ Sunnah refers to an Islamic practice that is based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon Him)

of Muslim women served two purposes. Firstly, they served as topics and allowed for the examination of the ways in which the participants talked about or constructed identity. Secondly, they were used as a resource to gain an understanding of the manner in which Muslim women reconciled the various subject positions that are presented within these discourses with their experience as Muslim women living in South Africa. According to Seale (1998) it is perfectly acceptable to treat interviews as potentially both topic and resource.

Being Muslim brings with it a set of religious and cultural expectations of womanhood that may differ from those presented at university or at work. In addition, the process of globalisation coupled with South Africa's emergence from the apartheid period has provided local Muslim women with new arenas for identification. The age group was ascertained based on the concept that during the period of early adulthood individuals are more likely to be engaged in grappling with the numerous subject positions that are available to them, for example, Muslim, professional, wife or mother.

3.4.2 Procedure for selecting participants

The selection of participants in this study was purposive because of the personal nature of the topic to be studied. The method used for obtaining a sample was a non-probability one, and utilised a snowball technique. Snowball sampling is a method for identifying and sampling the cases in a network (Neuman, 1997). While this method of sampling was most applicable for the study with regard to targeting an appropriate group of Muslim couples who fit the definition criteria and who would provide insight into the research questions, there was one shortcoming in accessing participants in this manner. The participants in this study represented a particular network of people and couples outside this network, who may have presented differently, were not accessed.

In considering a pool of participants for the study three alternatives were explored:

- Approaching an Islamic social responsibility institution, such as the Islamic Careline for referrals to couples who had made use of their services;
- Approaching Muslim women within the University of the Witwatersrand employee community; and
- Approaching couples within the students's social circle who would then provide referrals to couples within their social circles.

However, the ethical pitfalls inherent within each of these considerations excluded them from being viable options. Utilising referrals from the Islamic Careline was rejected due to the possibility that constructions of identity may be coloured by the prevailing problem in

each couple's life and that the nature of the topic may highlight further inadequacies in the couple's relationship. In addition, on approaching the Careline, it emerged that the definition criteria for participants fit very few of their clients. Drawing a sample from the University would have been convenient, but would not have provided an adequate representation of women who work outside the University. Initially, the sample was to be drawn from the researcher's social circle, by identifying four women who fit the criteria and who would then identify women in their social circle who fit the criteria. However, this presented its own difficulty in that there was a risk of participants socialising with the student and, given the sensitive nature of the topic, this was not an ideal scenario.

During initial contact with the Islamic Careline, a representative from the social services department of the Careline agreed to meet with the student to discuss the possibilities of the research. Once the nature of the study was explained to her, she indicated that the nature of her work meant that she was part of a network of a number of Muslim women who fit the selection criteria for the study. She then provided the student with the contact details of female colleagues and associates. She agreed that they be informed that she had provided their details.

The proposed participants were contacted by telephone and the nature and purpose of the research was explained to the women. Four agreed immediately, while one requested that she consult with her husband before committing to participating. Her husband requested that the student contact him directly. Once the nature, purpose and methodology were explained to him, he agreed to participate in the study.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Understanding identity construction qualitatively

This study is an attempt to understand the social reality of married, educated and working Muslim women in South Africa. Specifically, the study explores constructions of Muslim women's identity from their own and their husbands' perspectives. As such, this study falls within the realm of social research, which aims to explore and explain social reality and to understand human behaviour and action (Sarantakos, 1998). Qualitative methodologies emerged as part of an interpretive turn in social science, towards 'contextual' research which is less immediately concerned with discovering universal, law-like patterns of human behaviour, and is more concerned with making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of human experience (Kelly, 1999). This approach has as a starting point, the belief that we cannot apprehend human experience without understanding the social, linguistic and historical features, which give it shape (Kelly, 1999).

Interpretive and constructionist theorists view reality as a subjective social construction that is internally experienced and is based on the definition people attach to it: reality and the social world are created by the actors through assigning meaning systems to events (Sarantakos, 1998). As noted by Guba and Lincoln (1998), reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then reified into a series of structures that are taken as natural and immutable. Critical theorists view reality as being constructed by those in power to serve their own needs (Sarantakos, 1998). As a result, reality often gives rise to conflict, tension and contradiction, which means that the world is constantly changing (Sarantakos, 1998). However, while socio-economic conditions shape people's lives, critical theorists propose that an individual has the power to change his or her own destiny (Sarantakos, 1998).

In order to gain insight into the constructions of identity of Muslim women, this study is an exploratory one. Durrheim (1999) notes that exploratory studies employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research in order to look for new insights into phenomena. Qualitative research employs different methods of data collection and analysis aimed toward exploration of social relations, eliciting descriptions of reality as experienced by the respondents (Sarantakos, 1998), and describing routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In addition to exploring constructions of Muslim women's identity the qualitative methodology proposed for this study will allow for the formulation of rich descriptions (Durrheim, 1999) and for explanation of the human phenomenon of being a Muslim woman.

Qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language. Data is analysed by identifying and categorising themes (Durrheim, 1999). By identifying and understanding categories of information (themes), and through interpretation, the meaning of the text is discovered (Tesch, cited in Mouton, 2001) and this allows the researcher to study selected issues in depth, openness and detail (Durrheim, 1999).

According to Tesch (cited in Mouton, 2001), one of the areas of interest in qualitative research is the characteristic of language as communication (with regard to content and process) and as a mirror of culture (in terms of cognitive structures and interactive processes). For this study, the focus is language as it is located within a social constructionist framework.

3.5.2 Research interviews

Research interviews are a means to obtain information and an understanding of issues relevant to the general aims and specific questions of a research report (Gillham, 2000). The conception of language as a mirror of reality has been replaced by a conception of 'the social construction of reality', where the focus is on the interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the social world (Kvale, 1996). The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Durakbasa (2001, p34) writes:

Interviews, in general, document women's core roles in the modernisation of life-styles; their capabilities of tension-management among different members of the household and in public social life; their strategies of betterment of life-options, benefiting from various forms of social reciprocity with relatives and others, utilising various skills in social influence and prestige and status-making activities; as well as women's efforts in the making of themselves, their husbands and their children as 'modern selves' and social persons.

3.5.3 The structure of the interviews

The format of the interview was semi-structured, but a basic set of questions was utilised as a guideline. Technically, the qualitative research interview is semi-structured: it is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions (Kvale, 1996). It was noted that each respondent may have had a different view on the subject and it was not the researcher's intention to have a fixed agenda that would not allow for individual exploratory paths. The purpose of the interview is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the subjects and their relation to it (Kvale, 1996), as related from their own perspective and compared to their husband's perspective. Constructionist approaches see the interview as an arena within which particular linguistic patterns (typical phrases, metaphors, arguments, stories) can come to the fore (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Whatever meaning is created in the interview is seen as co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). These meanings are not only constructed by the two people involved in the interview, but are products of a larger social system for which these individuals act as relays (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Despite the semi-structured nature of the interview, the interviewer focussed on themes of religion, gender, education, employment, nationality, globalisation and marriage in order to ascertain meaning, and to elicit specific situational descriptions. Intensive interviews are a device for generating insights, anomalies and paradoxes (Hochschild, cited in Neuman, 1997) and this was the intention of the researcher. However, as stated by Seale (1998) there is a danger of imagining that an unstructured interview is an automatic

guarantee of the analytic status of the data that emerges. According to Potter and Mulkay (cited in Seale, 1998) interview data should be used to reveal the interpretive practices through which participants come to construct versions of their social world and not as a description, explanation or prediction of social action.

3.5.4 The interview participants

The participant pool consisted of four couples. In current interview studies, the number of interviews tends to be between five and twenty five (Kvale, 1996). However, there may be criticism that with too few subjects the findings may not be generalised. Kvale (1996) poses two reasons for obtaining significant knowledge from a few subjects. Firstly, it allows for obtaining a significant amount of information on a single individual. Secondly, the in-depth focus allows for investigation into the relationship of a specific behaviour to its context, and to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation (Kvale, 1996). According to Silverman (1998), limited in-depth interactions still allow one to examine how particular sayings and doings are embedded in particular patterns of social organisation. Similarly, Potter and Wetherell (1987) noted that a large number of linguistic patterns are likely to emerge from a few people. Therefore, a small sample or a few interviews may be sufficient to investigate the construction of Muslim women's identity.

3.5.5 Conducting the interviews

For the purpose of this study, the participants were interviewed at home. During contact to finalise meeting times the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to choose where they would like to be interviewed. All participants chose to be interviewed in the evening at home. With regard to the home as a site for constituting self, Martin and Mohanty (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) observed that to the extent that identity is collapsed with home and community and based on homogeneity and comfort, on skin, blood and heart, the giving up of home will necessarily mean the giving up of self and vice versa.

As negotiated with participants, a one-hour interview was conducted with the wife in order to obtain her own construction of her 'self'. In order to prevent the possibility of the couple discussing the interview and the wife's responses, the husband was interviewed immediately after the wife. The rationale behind this was to obtain constructions of the wife's identity from both husband and wife and to compare their responses. This worked successfully and all the male partners chose to leave the house while the wife was being interviewed. One of the issues that the researcher had to be cognisant of was the possibility of researcher effects, where characteristics of the researcher (for example,

demeanour, dress, gender, age) would influence the respondent's willingness to participate and answer accurately (Breakwell, 1995).

The recording, transcription and utilisation of data were addressed with participants and confidentiality was established. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by both a professional transcriber and then re-transcribed by the student. Different transcripts are constructions of different worlds; each designed to fit our particular theoretical assumptions and to allow us to explore their implications (Mishler, cited in Kvale, 1996). The nature of this study required as detailed a transcription as possible. The interviews were transcribed word-for-word. Included in the transcriptions were repetitions, pauses, emphases in intonation and emotional expressions.

3.6 Ethical considerations

An interview enquiry is a moral enterprise: the personal interaction in the interview affects the interviewee, and the knowledge produced by the interview affects our understanding of the human situation (Kvale, 1996). According to Yow (1994), the purpose of the research and expectations of the participants must be explained at the outset of the research. Informed consent includes discussing any possible risks or benefits of participating in the study and obtaining voluntary participation (Kvale, 1996). The participants should also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. According to Sarantakos (1998) the guidelines for the researcher-respondent relationship should include proper identification, clear outset, welfare of the respondent, free and informed consent, and the right to privacy and confidentiality.

There are ethical considerations regarding the researcher's role such as scientific responsibility, relation to the subjects and researcher independence (Kvale, 1996). Qualitative methods rely upon the subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by individuals studied, these expressions being windows into the inner life of the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). However, this interpretation of meaning is not objective, rather socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed, and filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The intention of the research, its procedures and eventual benefits was communicated to participants before their consent was requested. Informed consent and confidentiality were negotiated with participants. While the data obtained from the interviews was utilised to answer the student's questions, the contact provided a chance for the couple to explore their sense of self and how their lives' perpetuate or contribute to this sense of

self. Agreeing to participate indicated a measure of interest, however, should the couple have experienced anxiety that prevented their continued participation they were under no obligation to continue and may have withdrawn from the study. Should the need have arisen for debriefing or post-participation counselling participants would have been referred to appropriate professionals. Names were removed from the final report and participants will not be named during the course of any academic or private discussion related to this study. It must be noted however, that there are limitations with regard to anonymity and confidentiality, in that the interviewer had personal contact with participants during the course of the interviews. In writing the research report quotations were used directly from transcriptions of the interviews. However, in order to ensure that anonymity was protected all identifiers were removed from the data. In order to further ensure anonymity the data transcripts have not been included with the research report. However, they are available from the interviewer, should they be required.

3.7 Discourse Analysis

3.7.1 Understanding discourse analysis

Discourse may be defined as a system of statements that construct an object (Parker, 1992; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Furthermore, discourse is realised in texts. As a system of statements which construct an object, discourse constructs realities (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). As narratives that organise meaning so as to produce what then show up as facts, discourses construct particular truths (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). As noted by Davies (cited in Parker, 1998, p136) "what I am capable of imagining myself to be, or what I am capable of saying, is bounded and constrained by the discourses I have access to, and the discourses those others whom I interact with, have access to."

Fairclough (cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999) writes that discourse constitutes the social on three dimensions: knowledge, social relations and social identity. Discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations – it is language reflecting social order but also shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society (Jaworski & Coupland, 1992). Therefore, in the course of conversing, people create, maintain, transform and abrogate social relations (Harre, 1998).

At the core of discourse analysis is a reflection on the text in order to identify the discourses that a speaker draws upon in order to make sense of her reality. According to Brown and Yule (cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999) the analysis of discourse is the analysis of language in use. Thus, consideration must be given to the purposes or functions that

language serves in human affairs. Therefore, discourse analysis can be defined as the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts. Language is therefore not only a reflection of reality, but also a constitutive element of reality.

3.7.2 Social constructionist approaches to discourse analysis

Social constructionism as a research approach seeks to analyse how signs and images have the power to create particular representations of people that underlie our experiences of these people (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Social constructionist methods are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. They illustrate how the subjective understanding and experiences of individuals are derived from and feed into larger discourses. The thoughts, feelings and experiences of individuals are produced by social, rather than individual, systems of meaning.

In the constructionist approach, language is seen as constructing reality. However, constructionist research is not in the first place about language per se, but about interpreting the social world as a kind of language, that is, as a system of meanings and practices that construct reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Social constructionists want to flag the idea that representations of reality (e.g. news stories, maps), practices (marriage proposals, school attendance) and physical arrangements (hospital buildings, family sleeping arrangements) are structured like a language, or a system of signs (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). As such, they construct particular versions of the world by providing a framework or system through which we can understand objects and practices, as well as understand who we are and what we should do in relation to these systems (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The manner in which people engage with the world, for example what you can and cannot do, is thus structured by the way in which the world is constructed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). When we act, what we achieve is to reproduce the ruling discourses of our time and re-enact established relational patterns (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Burr (1995) identifies a position as social constructionist if it has as its basic foundation one or more of the following key assumptions:

- A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge. The view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observations of the world must be challenged. Assumptions about how the world appears to be should be met with suspicion. It would, therefore, be amiss to assume that the position of married Muslim woman automatically denotes subservience and domesticity. Understandings of the world, and the concepts and categories that are used in aid of this understanding are

culturally and socially specific. So, while it would be amiss to instinctually equate subservience and domesticity with Muslim women, it would further be problematic to ignore the importance of history and culture in shaping who Muslim women are or present themselves to be.

- Knowledge is sustained by social processes. Knowledge of the world and common ways of understanding the world are constructed through interactions between people. Therefore, what is regarded as 'truth' (which varies historically and cross-culturally), i.e. current accepted ways of understanding the world, is a product of the social processes and interaction in which people are constantly engaged with each other. It could be that the Muslim husband has opinions regarding the positioning of his wife based on the relationship tactics of his family and friends.
- Knowledge and social action go together. There may be numerous possible 'social constructions' of the world, but each different construction also brings with it, or invites, a different kind of action from human beings. Descriptions or constructions of the world impact on how individuals act upon and within it.

According to Burr (1995), our self-narrative and indeed any account we may offer of ourselves or our actions, must inevitably be a negotiated one, a joint product which emerges from social interaction. The term 'positioning' may be used to refer to this negotiated narrative we construct, as well as to the process whereby social and cultural discourses produce our identities and sense of self (Burr, 1995). According to Sarbin (cited in Harré, 1998) narratives give form to the development of one's identity.

Discourses are granted a fair amount of power within the social constructionist framework. One's actions in the world as well as one's claim to 'voice' depend upon how one is positioned within prevailing discourses (Burr, 1995). The positions available within discourses bring with them what Davies and Harré (cited in Burr, 1995) refer to as a 'structure of rights,' that is, they provide the possibilities for and the limitations on what we may or may not do and claim for ourselves within a particular discourse.

The first stage in doing discourse analysis is striking a critical distance from the text in order to identify discourses and the second step is to see what these discourses do (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Constructionist analysis aims to link accounts to actions and texts are examined for their effects, i.e. what do they do (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999)?

3.7.3 Critical Hermeneutics and the analysis of discourse

The combined efforts of interpretation (i.e. understanding from within a context) and social constructionism (i.e. understanding from a distance) takes shape in the form of a

critical interpretive space (Kelly, 1990). According to Ricoeur (cited in Kelly, 1999), there is more to the understanding of an experience than can be ascertained from within the context of the experience. Distanciation is the process of understanding a context from outside of that context and it adds to meaning not by imposition, but by pointing to the subjective and contextual limits of understanding (Kelly, 1999). Ricoeur suggests that understanding of a situation needs to be developed both from the perspective of being in the context (empathy) and from the perspective of distanciation, that is, using interpretation (cited in Kelly, 1999).

The idea underlying depth hermeneutics is that 'explanation' and 'interpretation' should not be regarded as mutually exclusive or radically antithetical terms (Thompson, 1989). Thompson's (1989) methodological framework of 'depth hermeneutics' highlights the fact that the object of analysis is a meaningful symbolic construction which calls for understanding and interpretation. These symbolic forms are internally structured and are embedded in social and historical contexts (Thompson, 1989). The human subject is always embedded in historical traditions (Thompson, 1989). Human beings are part of history, and not merely observers or spectators of it, and the historical traditions and complex clusters of meaning and value, which are handed down from generation to generation, are partly constitutive of what human beings are (Thompson, 1989). Human experience is always historical, in the sense that new experience is always assimilated to the residues of what is past, and in the sense that in seeking to understand what is new we always and necessarily build upon what is already present, that is, the historicity of experience (Thompson, 1989).

The social-historical world is made up, in part, of subjects who, in the course of their everyday lives, are constantly involved in understanding themselves and others, and in interpreting the actions, utterances and events which take place around them (Thompson, 1989). These subjects are also capable of acting on the basis of this understanding and reflection. So when social analysts seek to interpret a symbolic form, for example, they are seeking to interpret an object which may itself be an interpretation and which may already have been interpreted by the subjects who make up the object domain of which the symbolic form is part (Thompson, 1989). The analysts are offering an interpretation of an interpretation, they are re-interpreting a pre-interpreted domain; it is important to consider how this re-interpretation is related to, and how it may be informed by the pre-interpretations which exist (or existed) among the subjects who make up the social-historical world (Thompson, 1989).

3.7.4 Critical Hermeneutics as applied to this study

Thompson's (1990) *depth hermeneutics* approach for interpreting symbolic forms was utilised as the primary methodological framework for the analysis of data. This framework highlights the fact that the object of analysis is a meaningful symbolic construction which calls for interpretation (Thompson, 1990). These symbolic forms are internally structured and are embedded in a socio-historic context. This depth hermeneutics framework for analysis comprises 3 phases or procedures:

1. Social-historical analysis
2. Formal or discursive analysis
3. Interpretation/re-interpretation

3.7.4.1 Social-historical analysis

Symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received within specific social and historic conditions. The task of the first phase of the depth-hermeneutical approach is to reconstruct the social-historical conditions and contexts of this production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms, to examine the rules and conventions, the social relations and institutions, and the distribution of power, resources and opportunities by virtue of which these contexts form differentiated and socially structured fields (Thompson, 1990).

3.7.4.2 Discursive (discourse) analysis

Symbolic forms, such as language, are complex symbolic constructions through which social phenomena are expressed. This analytic phase seeks to break down, deconstruct and unveil the patterns and devices which constitute, and operate within a symbolic or discursive form (Thompson, 1990). For the purpose of this study discourse analysis was used to undertake interpretation of the qualitative data obtained during the interviews.

Potter & Wetherell (1987) have outlined ten steps or phases that may be utilised to guide discourse analysis:

1. Formulate research questions that give priority to discourse and ask about its construction in relation to its function.
2. A large number of linguistic patterns are likely to emerge from a few people. Therefore small samples or a few interviews are generally quite adequate for investigating an interesting and practically important range of phenomena.
3. Collect records and documents.
4. Conduct interviews.
5. Transcribe the data. The process of transcription forces close attention to and repeated readings of, a body of discourse.

6. Code the information into manageable and useful categories.
7. Analyse the data in two phases:
 - a) Search for patterns in the data. This pattern will be in the form of both variability (differences in either the content or form of accounts) and consistency (identification of features shared by accounts).
 - b) Form hypotheses about the functions and consequences of the data and search for linguistic evidence.
8. Validate the discourse analytic findings using:
 - a) Coherence
 - b) Participants' orientation
 - c) New problems
 - d) Fruitfulness
9. Prepare a report.
10. Apply the findings.

The data interpretation was based on the discourse analytic perspectives and theories of Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edley (2001). In discourse analysis the focus of analysis is culture and its representation in people's language use. Language is not only a reflection of reality, but is also a constitutive element of reality. Language is used to intermediate meaning, and Parker (1992) refers to this as creating coherent systems of meanings or discourses. Referring to a similar concept, Wetherell and Potter (1992, p90) used the term "interpretative repertoires" defined as "broadly discernable clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech that are used for characterising and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena." Taking the concept of interpretative repertoires a step further, Edley (2001) outlines three key concepts of discursive psychology which were used as the basis for making sense of the data: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions.

Interpretative repertoires are relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world; they are the building blocks of conversation (Edley, 2001). Talk often comprises thoughts and ideas that history has made available to the people in a particular society – these interpretative repertoires are a community's shared understanding of the world (Edley, 2001). Practically, interpretative repertoires are identified when certain patterns emerge in the talk or texts of a community, when it seems like the same ideas are consistently being expressed (Edley, 2001).

Edley (2001) uses the term ideology to describe the beliefs, values and practices of a particular society or culture. Lived ideologies refer to society's way of life, the common

sense that structures everyday life, in other words the culture that prevails in society. Lived ideologies are characterised by inconsistency, fragmentation and contradiction (Edley, 2001).

Subject positions refer to an individual's location within a conversation. Ideology creates or constructs subjects by drawing people into particular positions or identities and the way that people experience and feel about themselves and the world around them is, in part a by-product of particular ideological or discursive regimes (Edley, 2001). Thus, the talk provides us with an understanding of the position that the speaker occupies within a broader ideological context.

3.7.4.3 Interpretation/Re-interpretation of the text

According to Thompson (1990) interpretation involves the creative construction of possible meaning. However rigorous and systematic the methods of formal or discursive analysis may be, they cannot abolish the need for a creative construction of meaning, that is, for an interpretative explication of what is represented or what is said (Thompson, 1990). The process of interpretation is simultaneously a process of reinterpretation because the symbolic forms which are the object of interpretation are part of a pre-interpreted domain: they are already interpreted by the subjects who make up the social-historical world (Thompson, 1990).

3.8 Conclusion

The social constructionist approach views people as actively constructing their world and using culture as a guide to do so (Gergen, 1985). A discursive approach focuses on how people use language to construct their world. The goal of discourse research is to gain a better understanding of social life and social interaction from the study of social texts (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The focus in the discursive psychological perspective is on what the talk is doing and achieving, on the function of the talk. According to Baker (1987, pg 132) people achieve identities, realities, social order and social relationships through talk.

In order to obtain an understanding of the nuances that underpin Muslim female self-constructions and constructions by their husbands, the study was approached from a social constructionist epistemology. It is the assumption of the researcher that identities are thus in part created discursively, and for the purpose of this study, the constructions of identity of the participants were analysed using a discourse analysis methodology. Interviews were conducted with four Muslim couples. Social facets such as gender, race,

religion and globalisation were used as topics in order to understand how participants constructed Muslim women's identity. The analysis of this data is reported in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Analysis of data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a qualitative analysis of the data. More specifically, this chapter provides an analysis of the discourse of Muslim women and men on the subject of Muslim female identity. The analysis provides an understanding of how the participants' narratives both reproduce and contest dominant notions of women and Islam. This chapter is structured to first provide a brief introduction to the socio-historic location of the women in the study. This is followed by an analysis of the narrative of the women who participated in the study, followed by an analysis of the narrative of the male participants in the study.

4.2 Socio-historic location of the participants

The Muslim women who participated in this study have all lived through the oppression of the South African apartheid regime, during which identity constructions may have been influenced by the imposed racial segregation of the population based on their imposed racial classification. Our current democratic constitution provides for freedom of religion and figures from the 2001 census indicate that 1.5% of South Africans adhere to the Islamic faith. The practice of Islam in South Africa has not been restricted, and Muslim women are even allowed to have their photographs for their identity documents, passports and driver's licence taken with their *hijab* (head-covering) on.

While within the local context South African Muslim women are allowed a measure of religious freedom, at an international level, Muslims and Islam are condemned for their "religious fundamentalism." The commonly portrayed images of Muslim women are unflattering and ill-conceived and depict the Muslim woman as one who is veiled, oppressed, secluded and submissive – whose identity is shrouded by religion and who has not had the opportunity to develop her individuality. Global understandings of Muslim women are often clouded by the bleak portrayal of the lives' of Afghan women in the wake of the fall of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. The war in Afghanistan was allegedly motivated by the need to emancipate Afghan women from the oppressive rule of the Taliban. The ongoing "war against terrorism" has resulted in widespread anti-Islamic propaganda. Islam, and by association Muslims, have come to be coupled with evil, antiquated, and barbaric rituals and representative of an ideology that is incomprehensible to the "rational" world.

This onslaught on the Muslim world has, at a local level, served to reinforce South African Muslim notions of their Islamic identity. Our socio-political history has afforded South African Muslims a cultural climate that is often sensitive and accommodating of difference. Muslim women have been able to participate in secular education and employment opportunities and practice their religion within a democratic dispensation that is responsive to issues of gender. In addition to global constructions of Muslim women and their status within Islam, there are local constructions of ‘women of colour’ and their role within a country that just over a decade ago was governed by an apartheid regime.

All of the Muslim couples who were interviewed live in Mayfair, a suburb of Region 8, Johannesburg. Region 8, the “historic heart” of Johannesburg, is centrally situated in the North West, and includes the central business district of the city. Mayfair was designated a white area under apartheid, and Indians from Mayfair, Fietas and Sophiatown were all relocated to Fordsburg. Fordsburg lies nestled between Mayfair, Newtown and Marshalltown (downtown Johannesburg). Mayfair and Fordsburg have no visible division and flow into each other along three major roads, Bree Street, 6th Avenue and Central Avenue.

Before the Group Areas Act and segregation laws were put into place under the apartheid regime, Fordsburg was a white area. Under apartheid, Fordsburg was turned into an Indian only area.

Fordsburg remains a major centre of Indian culture and may be called Johannesburg’s little India. The Oriental Plaza, located in Fordsburg, was created by the apartheid government as a large shopping centre for Indian-owned shops. The Oriental Plaza was opened in 1978, when all Indian traders were forced to relocate their business from Fourteenth Street in Fietas. Fourteenth Street was the first home of Indian trading in the city.

Fordsburg still retains some remnants of South Africa’s apartheid past. However, there has been an influx of Eastern, Middle Eastern and North African individuals moving into the area. Fordsburg Square, which lies along Central Avenue and Mint Road, is the heart of the community. The square is surrounded by halaal⁸ restaurants, from Indian restaurants, to Turkish tea houses, to Kentucky Fried Chicken. The square houses vendors who sell their wares from little stalls and on tables, from Syrian food, to Pakistani shawls, to Egyptian

⁸ Halaal is an Arabic word that means permissible. At the very least halaal restaurants would not serve alcohol or any food containing pork. All meat served at a halaal restaurant would be slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law.

tobacco pipes. Present day Fordsburg is a mix of Indian, Pakistani, Somali, Lebanese and Syrian culture. However, Fordsburg is still predominantly Indian and Muslim, and is one of the few places in Johannesburg that is completely halaal. Not even alcohol is sold in the area. It may also be one of the few places where the local pool hall serves no alcohol and has a prayer room adjoining it. Most local restaurants have prayer facilities and also cater for Muslim women who practice *hijab*.

The mix of culture that is found in Fordsburg is replicated in Mayfair. Even though Mayfair was designated a white area under apartheid, Indians began moving back into Mayfair before the end of apartheid. From a cultural and religious standpoint, the envelopment of Mayfair into Fordsburg occurred almost organically. The two communities are a reflection of each other. Mayfair is as much an Indian and Muslim stronghold as Fordsburg is.

The structure of the community revolves around Islamic and Indian culture. The call to prayer is heard five times a day from one of eight mosques in the Mayfair and Fordsburg communities. There are two Islamic schools in Fordsburg and Mayfair. There are also two Islamic banks in Fordsburg.

From a socio-economic perspective, Mayfair and Fordsburg are a mixture of low and middle-class individuals. Both Mayfair and Fordsburg have low cost council housing next to houses with burglar bars and occupants who drive the latest VW Gold GTi. There are a number of homeless individuals who make their home under community bridges, in store fronts and on the front porch of the local post office. Both Mayfair and Fordsburg are home to many immigrants both legal and illegal and it is not unusual to have police raids on houses or to see the Metro Police asking individuals for their “papers”.

Most of the residents are entrepreneurs. There are also a number of young professionals who either live in the area or come to “hang-out.” Most of the older residents are local businesspeople.

Overall, both Mayfair and Fordsburg are the centres of central Johannesburg’s Indian Muslim culture. It is within this social and cultural context that the Muslim couple’s who participated in this study live.

4.3 Muslim women’s self-construction of identity

At the outset it should be noted that there is no blanket identity that may be ascribed to all Muslim women. Each woman who participated in this study had her own unique

experience of being a Muslim woman. However, the analysis below provides some insight into how identity is constructed by a particular group of South African Muslim women.

4.3.1 Articulation of a Muslim identity

In constructing their identity each woman provided an articulation of self that was unique but that also included multiple identifications. These multiple identifications included a familial or intimate self, a spiritual self and an individualised self. The one common thread amidst these articulations was the attention that was given to the spiritual self, which for these women meant being Muslim. This articulation served to highlight that Islam played a central role in each woman's life, and provided a set of beliefs that governed and organised all aspects of her day-to-day life. Woman D engages in positive self-presentation when she says, "I would like to think that I am a good, conscientious, practicing Muslim." Her use of the three part list of "good, conscientious and practicing" underscores her investment in being viewed as a good Muslim. Woman B's phrase if "I am who I am" highlights her need to maintain an ordinariness and normality in her role as a Muslim woman. This may point to a broader societal discourse that has singled out Muslim women as different. What is also evident in their articulation of self is that there are other identities that are also at play, such as "Muslim professional" and as noted by Woman B, negotiating these subject positions may be a difficult balance to strike.

Woman A: I would say I am first a Muslim, secondly a woman and a wife. Being a Muslim it is the most important aspect of my life, of myself, if I had to define myself. I define myself very much in terms of my religion, the principles, and the ethics that go with it. That's my sounding board, for all my major decisions that I make in my life. Erm, the way I conduct myself in my day-to-day dealings and roles and all of that. I have aspirations in terms of just being a Muslim. You know, what I want to do spiritually in terms of my Iman (faith), where I want to be heading, goals in terms of that. And then obviously that is not separate from being a Muslim woman.

Woman B: Mother first ... then wife ... then doctor. I am who I am and er, I just accepted the fact that I was put on this earth for this role and er, I'm carrying it out. It's a difficult balance to strike as a Muslim professional. I think in the last couple of years, religion has really placed an impact. It, it, it's changed me er, drastically in my way of thinking and my approach to things.

Woman D: Okay, I'd like to firstly say, I am a Muslim, okay, that's most important for me, right. Secondly, I'd like to think I'm a Muslim female, okay, and with being a Muslim female I think comes a lot of roles and responsibilities, okay, in terms of being a daughter, in terms of being maybe even a sister and then obviously being

a wife, and then maybe going on to be a mother. So, I would think, who am I, I would like to think I am a good conscientious, practicing Muslim, but with that obviously would go all the morals and beliefs that goes with being that sort of a person.

Woman C: Erm, well first of all I think of myself as a Muslim woman. Erm, if I think of myself I will not think of myself as an attorney or something like that. I think just as a Muslim woman. I'm very religious.

4.3.2 Social influence in the construction of identity

At the core of the development of an Islamic identity is that it is socially constructed, in the process of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing processes of social interaction within which individuals define and redefine themselves (Jenkins, 1996). What is reflected quite strongly in the articulation of identity among these women is that their identity construction occurred due to their analysis of similarity and difference between themselves and others in their social worlds. What also emerges clearly is that there is no single manner in which these women developed their spiritual identity. However, it is clear that the development of a religious identity was based on observation and interaction with other Muslims, either family or in the community.

Both Woman D and Woman C noted that the development of their religious identity was based on the influence of their father. In both women's accounts of their upbringing no mention is made of their mothers, who are often assumed to be the keeper of tradition in the home. Both women have also chosen to describe their fathers as "Islamicly oriented" and not religious. This may indicate a need to subvert any negative connotations that may be attributed to their fathers.

Woman D: My father was always, you know, Islamicly oriented. He never enforced any strict erm, you know, that we have to do this or we have to do that. My parents never forced me to be religious. But when I looked at them and I looked at what I was, I wanted to be that.

Woman C: Because of my upbringing. My father was Islamicly oriented. He never enforced any strict erm, but just ... you know, the way he brought us up and the way he always educated us on Islam.

Woman B on the other hand actively went searching for her religious identity. She had had numerous experiences that led to her searching for religious meaning in her life. This search for religious meaning began with her concern when she fell pregnant as to how she would raise her children and the kind of mother she would be. Two other social

experiences also impacted on her move towards her religion, her performance of Hajj and moving to a new suburb:

I really based a lot of importance on how I was going to raise my children. I think moving into this area as well, I interacted with a lot of other people and I made a lot of new friends. And I realised that I didn't know as much as they did and the one thing that bother me the most was that, erm, I never had a very good religious background. I felt that this was the time that I needed to learn. And then after that I had the opportunity to go for Hajj. And that was the best experience of my life and I think it really changed the kind of person that I was and the kind of person I wanted to be.

For Woman A, the construction of her identity as a Muslim woman was realised through an internal battle. In her family there were clearly defined roles for men and women and once she reached puberty she was not afforded the same freedom and liberties that her elder brother was:

Then puberty struck, wham, and then lo and behold your parents start changing the whole concept of who you should be, you know, and that had a big impact because what happened then was that, at that freedom and that, you know, he is a boy he can do whatever he wants. He can go out with his friends, he can go where he wants, but you're a girl, you got to dress like this, you got to sit like this, walk like this, and behave like this.

4.3.3 Challenging essentialist notions of Muslim women's identity

In constructing notions of a Muslim female identity, all of the women used themselves as a reference point. The participants provided an articulation of strength and conviction in their religious belief and in the rights that are afforded to them. A rights discourse is often presented as discordant with the identity of a Muslim woman and this seems to be challenged by the identity constructions of the participants. The oppression of Muslim women appears to them to be an ill-conceived judgement from the outside world and not their dominant or experienced reality.

Woman C saw herself as a modern Muslim woman, and she was careful to clarify that modern did not refer to her dress but to her being educated and vocal. This construction of the modern Muslim woman points to a departure from dominant notions of the oppression of Muslim woman and their lack of opportunity to participate in society. Woman C uses a three part list to indicate what a modern Muslim woman is, "outspoken, educated, not ashamed." Each item on the list serves to challenge broader notions of Muslim women being docile, uneducated and oppressed. However, it seems that she is

also aware of societal constructions of how a Muslim woman should present herself when she notes that “we don’t dress in the Sharia sense or whatever.”

Woman C: If you just say that word, just say Muslim, I just think about myself and my sisters. I think we are what the modern Muslim, I wouldn’t say modern in the sense of the way you dress or whatever, but I would say in the way that you think. We all are outspoken. We’re all educated. We all not ashamed to be who we are. Just by being who we are and by not putting up false pretences, you let the world know what a proper Muslim woman should do. Okay, okay we don’t dress in the Sharia sense or whatever but I think we sort of bring across a good image of what a Muslim woman should be like. We won’t be oppressed.

Woman A’s portrayal of a Muslim woman is based on being strong and adhering to a code of conduct that serves to solidify identity. She is also aware of threats to identity when she notes that one of the things a Muslim female would have to do would be to balance being in a non-Muslim world and a non-Muslim environment.

Woman A: A Muslim female would be strong-minded, sound values and morals, trying to balance being in a non-Muslim world and a non-Muslim environment, trying to balance that with being Muslim, erm, ja trying to stand up for your ideals, and trying to be strong and, er I think to me it means having a lot of strength and a lot of courage, ja being strong, being courageous, having conviction about being a Muslim, erm I think that that has become very important to me, because like I said, you struggle initially, trying to find out your identity, who are you in life, why exactly are you here ... you know, where do you come from, what are your values, what are your beliefs, and I think Muslim females are very, very strong in terms of their identity, I think.

Tying in to articulations of individuality and strength appeared to be a valuing of attributes that appear to be a departure from traditional traits associated with women. The manner in which these were articulated highlights that these women viewed themselves as being non-conformist.

Woman B: I admire other, other woman who, who are feminine but I’m me and I, I can’t change that, I can’t try to be something that I’m not.

Woman A: I went through a phase where I didn’t want to be a woman. (I was) a tomboy-way in a lot of respects growing up and that, and then puberty struck, wham, and then lo and behold your parents start changing the whole concept of how you should be.

Woman C did not directly distance herself from feminine characteristics. However, what she did do was place value on mimicking her father’s reading habits, which subtly puts forward an image of herself as being accomplished and intelligent enough to identify with

his interests. Her investment in being viewed in this way is highlighted in her use of absolutes, such as "I always go and get all of his ... novels", in her talk.

Woman C: You know, I read the same books as he (father) does. I always go and get all of his, you know, as soon as he's finished with certain novels I'll go and get them from him. And I, I take his advice on a lot of issues.

Woman B observed that in being constructed as a Muslim female she was separated from other women, and that this was appropriate because a Muslim woman had a different role to play than any other woman. Her construction of Muslim women portrayed them as more valuable and thus to be revered.

Woman B: There are certain things that are different for a Muslim female. It gives you purpose. You are not just there for being there. I think generally, er you know, as a Muslim woman, if you question your creation, or why you were created, then generally we were all created for a similar role. Because if you, I'm not very good in the teachings of Islam and that sort of thing, but from the little that I do know is that you should be treated with, you should be as a Muslim female, be put on a pedestal. I mean imagine that Allah has given you this, this, erm, this advantage of sitting at home and letting your husband do everything for you ... that's not a deprivation, you know, that is a gift. But unfortunately we don't look at it that way. And we, we're deprived of that right.

Despite there being points in the participants reflections that constructed Muslim women as independent, some of the women struggled to own their independence. While there were various points in their narrative that pointed to independence, when it was reflected to them that they seemed quite independent they could not identify with that reflection. This disjuncture between their narrative and their difficulty with identifying with independence may point to an aspect where they are still trying to negotiate their identity. It seems that they may be trying to reconcile various aspects of their life that point to a personal position of independence and the social expectation of a Muslim woman being dependent.

Interviewer: Okay, so it is difficult. I mean I kind of get the sense that you are quite independent.

Woman A: Erm, I want to be independent.

Woman B: I don't know, I, I, I'm not so independent. I'm financially independent. Emotionally, I am very dependent on my husband. I cannot make a decision without, on anything without him. I'm, I'm not that independent but ... I, I can't answer that question, I, I never thought of it even. But I think times also change. Women have to, have to, there's no, you know, it's not a luxury to work

anymore, it's actually a necessity. And I think as a woman today you need your independence.

4.3.4 Gendered constructions of Muslim women

Even though the Muslim women in this study present as independent and have found a way to access broader spaces outside the home it seems that there are certain gender stereotypes that they hold on to. At first glance these stereotypes are contradictory to the roles that they have chosen to occupy in their lives. However, their current roles are still being negotiated and part of the negotiation seems to be retaining certain gender stereotypes. Overall, this strategy appears to be the basis of an argument that men and women are not equal, but that they are of equal value in terms of contributing to family and society. They may have different roles and responsibilities to men, but these are of equal value.

Woman A struggled to reconcile the roles that were being prescribed for her as a Muslim woman with her ambition:

Initially before, erm, er, going to study and before going for Hajj, before getting married and that, I could have fought a lot with being a Muslim woman, in terms of this whole stereotype about being you know, you're the underdog, you got to listen to your husband, you got to do what he says, and er, you know, be there for him. Muslim women aren't supposed to work and you mustn't sort of expose yourself to, to men and all of that.

In comparison, Woman D felt comfortable with the status that she was afforded as a woman. In her family women were granted extra courtesy and respect. While this may be at odds with the perspective that men and women are equal, again her narrative seems to construct Muslim women as special and thus worthy of special treatment and trust:

I know a lot of people who would you know, be disappointed in the fact that 'I am a woman', okay. But for me that's never been, that's never been an issue for me, okay. For me being a woman wasn't, actually for me it was better than being a man because somehow with my parents the girls were special and we always got that something extra.

Woman D further commented that Islam required the same manner of devotion from men and women, but while she put forth this view in one turn she stepped back from it in the next. Her narrative puts forward the view that while men and women may not be equal they are of equal value:

In terms of your obligatory requirements of religion such as Hajj, salaah, and fasting erm ... you know when it comes to that, women and men are going to be judged in the same way. There are no sort of divisions you know, where, you know, the man needs to do something different. Okay not to say that you were a man. I mean somebody was saying to me but men get to go to mosque to read salaah okay and women have to do it at home, but we are awarded the same reward as them for reading it here. Yes, things are different for men and woman, in terms of man being sort of, you know, how can you say, men are supposed to be the breadwinners okay or the supporters of women and the home, like it says in the Qur'an, so in terms of that yes, I think there would be you know different standards, but then it would go back to what I said earlier about women being the mothers and the daughters. You know it would be different standards in terms of that, or you know where men have a degree over women, a degree in terms of being able to protect.

For Woman B, despite being financially independent and embracing her ambition to contribute meaningfully to society she holds on to the belief that while men and women are born equally, they have different roles. This highlights that the roles that women take are constructed by society. Interestingly, childcare is viewed as being a dual responsibility, but household chores rest with the woman.

I believe that men and women are born equally, but women have different roles than men do. I believe that it's a woman's job to bring up the children, together with her husband. But it's a woman's job to do the cooking and cleaning. If you had to ask me the ideal situation, I mean, a woman's, a woman's place should be at home. If you really want to bring up your children in a good environment and that sort of thing. I say that in one breath but I contradict myself with the next. Here I am a working mother but here I am saying that a woman's role should be at home.

It seems that an important part of the narrative of a Muslim woman is that of being a mother. This role is constructed as an honour and was used to resolve any difficulties that may be experienced in terms of developing an identity as a Muslim woman:

Woman C: Men may not say that but men look up to women ... your ... your mother is the main person in your world. She shapes who you are.

Woman D: With, you know, the sort of rights that are afforded to you according to Islam, I feel privileged to be a Muslim. In terms of the positive aspects of being a mother, of being a good daughter, of being a good Muslim okay, erm, of being a religious or a practising Muslim, for me that has a lot of positives.

Woman A: But then I think gradually you start accepting, you start embracing it, that you're a woman, that you also have special gifts and special qualities, and

also that a mother is a very noble role, honestly I think now I've accepted it and embraced it.

4.3.5 Intimacy and identity negotiation

With regard to identity negotiation, and specifically, gender identity negotiation, it seems that the institution of marriage was one of the sites where identity was challenged.

There are a few aspects of Woman A's reflection on her marriage that are worth consideration. Firstly, she highlighted the impact on her self:

I think it's calmed me down a lot, given me a lot of balance, a lot of stability.

Secondly, she commented on the inequality in their marriage due to her being more educated than her husband is. It appears that this inequality has meant that she has had to downplay who she is:

And er, sometimes negatively in a way, I think maybe, you know, my husband had this issue and we both had this issue before we got married, is that erm, I studied and I got a degree, a formal degree and whatever. And my husband never went past matric and er, there was this thing about oh, you know, you're marrying an educated woman, but you're not educated. My husband his self esteem wasn't as strong as mine, and I in some ways toned it down a bit, you know, my confidence and the way I am a bit, so that it wouldn't up, up-play him, so that I wouldn't overpower him or overshadow him in a way.

Thirdly, she drew attention to her perceived lack of fulfilment of her role as a wife and idealised her husband's supportive role in the marriage:

It's not a hundred percent where, where I give a hundred percent. My husband's helped a lot. Erm, you know, he's been a star. I know it sort of sounds idealistic and whatever, but he's really, he's really, he's been there. Er, you know, when I tell my mom sometimes but you know he doesn't wake me up to make breakfast for him, and you know sometimes he'll make breakfast for me when I have to go out early and all of that, she looks at me, but you're very lucky. He'll do the dishes and clean up and that. So I know that he would want, he would be happy to have me just be at home and not work. Erm but at the same time he's fine with me working. But I, I feel, I think he wants more attention. I suppose my husband has come to just accept it. And I think in a way maybe he just tolerates it until I decide to stay home. I have been trying to find out if it is just my assumption, or my perception that that's what he wants, if it's really what he wants. I think he wants more attention.

For Woman B, it is not the institution of marriage that impacted positively on who she is but the kind of person that she is married to, "I don't think it's marriage per se. It's the kind of person I'm married to, you know." Her husband is constructed as her teacher and her guide through life. The qualities that she attributes to herself speak of someone who is inadequate, whereas her husband assumes an idealised role in her life:

I told you before that I am very emotionally dependent on him. That may not be a good thing but that's the way it is and I am. You know it's like he's my, erm, he's my judge. Erm because he's always, I'm a very impulsive person. I never think about what I'm doing, you know. Erm, he, you know, he's, he's, you know if he had to sit here it would be something else, you know, really, he's, he's a remarkable person, he's actually very bright. Erm, he, he can see a situation for what it is. I'm a bad judge of character, I'm a bad judge of situations and he's not. He's always right.

Woman C also constructs her husband as her teacher. Marriage has served to bring stability into her life. She also noted that the construction of who she is, is enabled by the type of person that her husband is:

I have learnt a lot from him and from the way he sets out what he wants to achieve and the way he does it. I think if I wasn't married, I wouldn't have been as stable as I am now, you know. It sort of regulates you. This is what you do at work and this is what you do at home and ... it, it gives you a sense of stability and peace. You not like uncertain about what is going to happen next. You know this is going to happen at work and when I go home I know this is going to happen. He's always there for me. He supports me no matter what. I know he respects me for what I am. Erm, he is very patient, I told you I'm very hot-headed, so he's very patient and ... and ... I know that he is always going to be there for me and that's like a pillar of strength there, he just, no matter what happens, I know he is going to be there. (Her husband helps her to be) A strong working woman, yes. It does, because, because if I didn't have his support ... then there will ... there'd def, there would be just one more challenge when I come home. Whereas when I come home now, there is support and it's, it lends to building-up who I am.

Woman D noted that her husband was a source of support for her in her marriage and that this enabled her to maintain a career:

You know a lot of people I think, would say it is difficult being young and married and employed okay, but for me I think he sort of supported my career, he's erm, perfectly comfortable with me working, okay, and from step one it was always like that, you know in like normal marriages it would be the sort of thing where you would be sitting behind his career, kind of thing and with us in some way, I think it's actually sort of reversed. Not, not exactly okay but like where he would be there

backing me all the time. I think maybe he makes more of the compromises in the relationship.

In describing the effect that marriage has had on their lives these women constructed themselves as lacking, either in an aspect of their character, or of finding stability in their life. As the bringer of stability and wisdom into the marriage the husbands are given a considerable amount of power over their wives. Woman B described her relationship most powerfully when she said “you know it’s like he’s my judge.”

4.3.6 Hijab as a proxy for liberation

On a number of levels the women in this study present themselves as liberated individuals who have challenged some of the traditions that have been portrayed as keeping Muslim women oppressed. However, the one religious practice that they all practise is the one that is most often cited as evidence of the oppression of Muslim women. This is the practice of *hijab*. There are two ways in which *hijab* functions. Firstly, it is the practice of covering the body including the face and head. Secondly, it may serve to keep women confined to their homes. It seems for these women they have appropriated one function of *hijab* in order to challenge another. It is in the practice of *hijab* that these women are finding ways to re-negotiate their Islamic identity.

Woman B’s view of *hijab* was that this restriction existed, but pointed out that it existed for the right reasons. While she acknowledges on the one hand that restrictions exist, on the other hand she comments that she did not personally perceive Islam to be restrictive, but that the “outside world, they turn it into a restriction.” She holds a pragmatic view that “Islam is Islam. Islam has a code of conduct and you cannot argue with that code. You cannot change it.” In making sense of the concept of *hijab* and restriction she uses her recent participation in a relief mission to Afghanistan to illustrate the value of *hijab* in protecting women from the lustful intentions of men. However, during the course of her narrative she positions women in Afghanistan as both having to live in an Islamic country and living in a different culture. This tactic serves to distance her life experience from theirs. However, while acknowledging that restrictions exist in Islam she also refers to the women being confined as a cultural phenomenon. These turns in her argument appear to reflect her own internal sense-making of the function of *hijab* in the lives of Muslim women:

We went on a medical relief mission, my husband and I, to Afghanistan, and then you coming in and comparing two different cultures. What you hear on the news is not true, okay. Women are covered and true that they stay at home. But that’s the role that Islam has put out and has set out and if you are living in a Muslim

country then you're going to abide by those rules. And I honestly think it's more of a cultural thing than it actually is an Islamic thing. Because the whole world now abused this perception that women are actually suppressed and oppressed and whatever. We realised why women were kept at home. Because they were bloody being raped all the time. At the end of the day you and I can sit and debate the issue, but Islam says, Islam says you must be covered. We all don't conform to it. Er, but that's the rules.

In order to make sense of her status within Islam Woman B used the metaphor of all things precious being concealed. By using this argument she raised her status within the religion and by noting that "we are deprived of this right" draws attention to the fact that women are not as valued as they should be.

Woman B: It should be an honour to be a Muslim female. Things of importance are always covered, are always not found on the surface, are always found beneath. Think of it, diamonds, pearls, all precious stones. In the same way a Muslim female should be, I'm not saying that they are because we never get that respect, erm, should be er, precious, something precious and should be covered and should have the importance of diamonds and pearls, or whatever. Because if you, I'm not very good in the teachings of Islam and that sort of thing, but from the little that I do know is that you should be treated with, you should be as a Muslim female, be put on a pedestal. I mean imagine that Allah has given you this, this, erm, this advantage of sitting at home and letting your husband do everything for you ... that's not a deprivation, you know, that is a gift. But unfortunately we don't look at it that way. And we, we're deprived of that right.

Woman D observes that the media often construct Muslim women as oppressed. However, in her experience, her practise of *hijab* has not limited her access to secular activities:

Besides the fact that I would dress a little bit 'holier' or something you know, it's never been because you're a Muslim female you're oppressed. We did a lot of mixed activities and I think that has impacted on like, the type of person that I am. Going to campus and wearing a scarf and all that and people would look at you and say, how do you wear a scarf and come to campus, you know, stuff like that. And that wasn't an issue for me, because I mean I was doing it from the time I was in school, it never restricted me from doing anything. I mean if I wanted to do whatever it was, I could do it wearing a scarf, it would not make a difference to me.

For Woman C, her practise of *hijab* was undertaken at her time in her life when she felt it was the right time for her to do so. Her Islamic identity is tied to her practise of *hijab* and she is very careful to note that this act does not symbolise her oppression. An integral part

of her covering is her feeling that by doing so and by continuing to access spaces outside her home she is challenging perceptions of Muslim women:

I only started wearing a scarf after, long after I got married when I realised that now this is the right time for me to do it. I stand up for what I believe in. If I have to, I will confront somebody who tries and oppresses or, you know, or tries and belittle me in front of others. Erm, the way I dress, I cover my head, which is of my own free will. And I do that, you know even, even when I go to court I'll do it, wherever I am, because that is who I am. And I feel that some, certain, I have come across many, many Muslim women ... who are ashamed to come across as being Muslims. They feel that they have to adopt the whole Western ... way of living, just to be accepted by the West. And I don't feel that I need to be accepted ... by the West. Because I'm, I'm at ease with who I am. I don't, I don't want, like, need people of my own religion to feel that I'm religious or I'm a good Muslim or whatever, because I feel that's between me and my Maker. But I would like to give a good impression of Muslim women ... to people who don't know what Muslim women are. And in that way, you know, change their perception of the way, or what a Muslim women is.

Woman A also observed that her practise of *hijab* often serves to baffle people that she meets in the course of her work. This bafflement and confusion serves to motivate her to further challenge some of the stereotypes that exist around Muslim women:

It's males, black males, white males, you know, black and white females as well, and they look at you, you in your scarf, you know, fully clothed and that, and er, it, er, automatically it's sort of breaking down stereotypes, because they see you know, oh you know you're assertive, you're in command of the situation, you're actually articulate, you actually have a voice, you can speak for yourself. And, er, when they get over that initial shock, you just see the respect that comes out. But that's not to say that it's easy, that's not to say that we don't get challenged. You're breaking down that first you know, stereotype that Muslim women sit at home, look after children, and they you know, they, er, er they hand over power to their husbands, and they, all of that you know, is challenged, what a Muslim woman really is and for them to see that, you know, this is the truth, this is what a Muslim woman really is.

4.3.7 Involvement in secular institutions and Muslim female identity

For some of the women being Muslim and being employed meant that an appropriate field had to be chosen in order for it to be acceptable. For Woman A and Woman D working for a Muslim charitable organisation meant that their family was more likely to accept their choice. The type of work that they are engaged in means that they are

providing a service to the community and is thus of value. For Woman A it seems that there is an ongoing struggle with coming to terms with her decision to work:

He'll (her father) make a passing remark or implies that a Muslim woman mustn't work, her place is at home, she must take care of the children and her husband and that's her work. And it is a very, very noble work and it's a very good work. And I believe that as well, and then I ask him, I say you know but daddy I'm working. Oh no, but you work for a Muslim organisation, and er, er, you work with women and you're doing your service to the community. So it makes it acceptable work and er, ja acceptable also to me.

For Woman D a woman going to work was not something that happened in her family, but the type of work that she engaged in made it acceptable for her to work:

Okay, my mother was totally against that, any of her daughters working ... I guess maybe coming from the type of family that she came from, you know the man must work, you're a mother. Also, I mean coming from the type of family I come from, my father only works. And somehow when I got involved with the work that I do, it was only, you know, working there. And she was okay with that, she was actually happy about me working there. Mostly because I think she, I know she wanted me to give back to the community. And she's trying to push all of my sisters in the same direction, but it's obviously not the way they feel.

Even though Woman B feels that a woman's place is at home, she constructs her work as providing a service to the community and also a platform for instructing her patients on Islam.

You know, the more you mix with other people the more you learn, and I really learnt that there was actually a different role for a Muslim practitioner. And, and that it was actually a responsibility. All this time I've been searching for an answer for why I'm – and I say this without pride, you know – for why Allah made me a doctor. What, what was my role? And I began to realise that there's actually more to it than just, I mean, I was, I'm there as an educator and I'm there as a Dawah⁹ giver.

Similarly, Woman A considers her role as an employed Muslim woman as allowing her to bring Islam into her work and share this with other people, both Muslim and non-Muslim.

I think a lot of people do their work just for the sake of doing the work, because they need to do the work to earn a living, er, and it doesn't really fulfil their ambitions or whatever, but I think because it is such a fundamental part of my life, you know that deeper meaning, when you go out there and you add that Islamic perspective to HIV ... or what does Islam say about abortion, and you give a

lecture not only to Muslims, but to non-Muslims, it almost becomes like Dawah¹⁰. You giving the message, you giving the message across about what Islam says about this or that.

Woman C feels that it is fine for a Muslim woman to work as long as she conducts herself in a proper manner and her intentions must not be to worry about how she looks. As far as she is concerned:

“if they had to stick with that old notion that women have to stay at home, then none of our Muslim girls would be going to school and when they grow up what kind of mothers are they going to be?”

In a similar vein Woman B believes that being employed and educated prevents Muslim women from stagnating. She is careful to communicate that she is not advocating the acquisition of degrees for all Muslim women, but that they needed to be involved in activities that would give them a sense of achievement. In this way they would earn respect and:

“if they gave themselves a sense of achievement and they felt better about themselves, their husbands would feel better.”

For both Woman B and Woman C, being employed brings with it a degree of respect. However, being an employed Muslim woman is not without its difficulties:

Woman A: Being employed and being a woman, ja, it has brought with it demands, erm, like I said, I think now more so than ever women are starting to be, er, obviously more accepted and more encouraged in the workplace, but I think Muslim. There's still that, that stigma, that misconception, out there, so, you know, although you might be a woman and accepted and encouraged and whatever, but when it comes to being a Muslim woman there's added pressure to juggle and to be able to negotiate that.

Woman B: As a Muslim female it poses more challenges, you know. Er, because also how you're judged from the outside. As a Muslim female you have more obligations than say a non-Muslim female doctor would have. Maybe non-Indian, I don't know if that makes sense. You know, we have social priorities. Okay? If there's a daawat (invitation) in the family you bloody well have to be there and bake that cake. So I don't know if that's so much as a Muslim, but it's more as a cultural thing. I sometimes feel that as a Muslim female you may be doing the same amount of whatever work as a male. But you don't get recognised for that ... you know? Not that you do it for recognition but erm, you're just termed less of

⁹ Islamic Missionary Work

a, of a professional. And it's a general man sort of thinking, it's not a general woman sort of thinking. That you're thought, you're supposed to, or, or men look at you as, as, inferior. You're not on par with them. So, whether that's greater being a Muslim, I don't know.

For Woman C this challenge has led to her constantly expanding her knowledge base:

Woman C: It is always good for you to have an advantage. Because sometimes you come across people who are just there ... to downplay whatever you say.

Both Woman B and Woman C felt that their employment had impacted on their identity:

Woman B: Just being employed has shaped who I am. I think it, it gives you a chance to learn. To me medicine has been my, my er, my linkage to the world and er it's taken me so many places and shown me so many things. And I think also, if I think of, of my profession and where it has got me and that I can help people, then it, it's not so erm ... you know life is not, you don't, you can't go through life with blinkers on. And there's no set rules, you know. So you can't say that you, you can only be a mother and you can only be – as long as you don't sacrifice that job of being a mother and a child, er, er, a wife. Then, you know, there are other things in life that you can do. I mean, knowledge is important. So we all need to educate ourselves.

Woman C: Well, it's given me a lot of confidence. To deal with ... a lot of ... I would say almost anything. Er, if there's ever a problem between me and anyone else, I stand up for myself. I, I'm not afraid to speak what I think and it's given me a lot of confidence. Also, it's given me some respect in the eyes of others. But erm ... working for myself it gives me an identity ... erm, it makes me who I am, for me to work.

Despite all of the women in the study claiming that they were comfortable with employment there did appear to be certain areas where their employment led to some form of conflict.

Woman A experiences some conflict in terms of wanting to balance “domestic bliss” with her need to fulfil her role at work. As she explains, work has “become very much a part of me.” She believes that her perceived lack of fulfilment of her role as a wife is a perception that is shared by her husband:

Ja no, my husband is a good support to me personally, but I know, sometimes he says, you know maybe you should be there for me. So I know that he would want, he would be happy to have me just be at home and not work. Erm but at the

¹⁰ Islamic Missionary work

same time he's fine with me working. But I, I feel, I think he wants more attention. I suppose my husband has come to just accept it. And I think in a way maybe he just tolerates it until I decide to stay home. I maybe just want to be a wife, you know, just be a wife, and not a working wife. But like I said I do not see myself as being at home as a wife forever, I'll probably want to go back. I'd definitely want to go back again.

Woman A manages this conflict by separating her work self and her home self:

Ja, I might say when I'm working, when I'm doing a presentation, or doing training, er ... I'm working, I'm a woman and I'm working. And I don't think wife features, wife falls way to the background and I, maybe it's a bit of me, like you just want to give your all and sometimes wife gets in the way, so you just push it right at the back. And then when you come home, you're the wife again, erm, you're not working. It's simple I think, it's sometimes difficult, but it's simple. You just keep work at work and wife at home.

For Woman B being able to balance work and home is dependent on the support that she receives from her husband. However, she does express her feeling that she does not give her best to her children but:

I suppose I just stick with it and erm, I know there's advantages to it erm, and that I know that it's maybe something for me.

For Woman C there should be no conflict with regard to being a Muslim woman and working:

I think your, it's clear in Islam that you have to go out of your way to seek knowledge. It doesn't say whether you're a male or female. I'm not very orthodox in my views, but I think that a, it's fine for a Muslim woman to work. As long as you conduct yourself in a proper manner, it is fine. You, you know, as long as you not going to work with the idea of, oh how am I going to look today or you know.

4.3.8 Threats to maintaining a Muslim female identity

All of the women in the study believe that women and Muslim women in particular are subject to being stereotyped negatively by the external environment.

Woman A: You know, where people would stereotype you because you're wearing a scarf or a cloak. Sometimes you are undermined, you are underestimated. And they look at you, you in your scarf, you know, fully clothed and that, and er, it, er, automatically it's sort of breaking down stereotypes, because they see you know, oh you know you're assertive, you're in command of the situation, you're actually articulate, you actually have a voice, you can speak for yourself. And, er, when they get over that initial shock, you just see the respect

that comes out. But that's not to say that it's easy, that's not to say that we don't get challenged. There's still that, that stigma, that misconception, out there, so, you know, although you might be a woman and accepted and encouraged and whatever, but when it comes to being a Muslim woman there's added pressure to juggle and to be able to negotiate that.

Woman B: As a Muslim female it poses more challenges, you know. Er, because also how you're judged from the outside. Not that it's important what people think of you, you know. Er, but again it is a social thing, you know. As a Muslim female you have more obligations than say a non-Muslim female doctor would have.

WOMAN C: Even in our Muslim community ... not with the more progressive people, but if you look at the orthodox people and maybe the much older generation, they also tend to look down ... on women. So you have to be that, just ... a little bit stronger.

WOMAN D: Sometimes people just look at you and it's like I bet you can't do that because you are a woman. A lot of men are like that, where it's I know you can't do that because you're a woman. So there are times like that when it can get a bit difficult. Sometimes I think it does, especially if you as a woman you are driving or working. I think that people have perceptions and expectations of you that are not always accurate.

All of the women in the study resisted the idea that globalisation would have any effect on their identity. They all maintained their certainty that who they were was stronger than a phenomenon that would take away from that identity:

WOMAN A: I think my culture has very much remained central, erm ... ja, ja no I can't say that it's had a very large impact on me.

WOMAN B: Everybody cannot follow the same path. Otherwise you take away the person's individuality. I think also we just live very sheltered lives, you know.

WOMAN C: It hasn't really affected me that much, all right. If you want to know what I think about globalisation I'm not really for it because I feel the stronger nations will end up erm oppressing the weaker nations and it will mean more for them. It's not for certain communities to retain their identities. I'm not willing to let go of who I am and my culture, my background, my religion. I, I still you know, I still hold all of that very dear to me. And I am not willing to change.

WOMAN D: You know, I would say okay being Muslim okay there are certain rights and wrongs okay, there are correct ways and incorrect ways of doing things and I

would like to think that that has predominantly shaped who I am, okay. But being exposed to other ideas and that sort of thing, I would say adds, not a dilemma for me at all okay, but for the younger people around me okay, like say my sister or other people around me, and you sort of wonder you know, I mean where are they headed now.

In making sense of their lives as Muslim women who were working these women all prioritised religion over culture. Traditions that proposed the subjugation of women were equated with culture and in prioritising their Islamic identity they put forward the premise that Islam allowed them to be progressive. Therefore, the perceived subjugation of women in Islam was inaccurate. Rather, oppression was based on culture and not Islam.

Woman B: I think people that er, you know I think that people confuse religion with culture. And I think a lot of the things we do is because of what our mothers did and our grandmothers did and whatever, and that gets confused with religion. What do they call it, we have a nice word for this, rivaas (rituals), you know, all these rivaas. Like if a baby is born, you've gotta do this and you've gotta do that. That is not religion that is culture. And sometimes I think I feel that I tend to be a bit against culture. And it upsets everybody else around me (laughs). Culture has to be there. Culture gives a group identity. I don't know, being a woman is just giving you different roles, you know. I believe that men and women are born equally, but women have different roles than men do. I believe that it's a woman's job to bring up the children, together with her husband. But it's a woman's job to do the cooking and cleaning. It may be a lot of my religious beliefs as well as social, you know, more a cultural thing.

WOMAN C: I think that the original Muslim women like the wives' of the Prophet, BiBi Ayesha and all of them, they were very strong and they were respected for who they were. And it's just that over the years, it's not Islam that has made certain Muslim women feel that they are not allowed, they not supposed to speak out you know, or that they should sit quietly here or not do this. I think it is more erm, the societies that they were living in. Like you know, if you were living in India you ... you, certain of the Indian erm, you know it will be affected by, the way Indian culture is, it will affect it, the Muslim women who were living there and that sort of passes down here. You know I've been brought up as a Muslim but also as an Indian. So I can't really separate it but I'll say the Muslim, the Islamic influence is stronger than the Indian influence.

4.4 Male constructions of Muslim women's identity

During the course of their narrative, the husbands often positioned themselves as “knowing” their wives, i.e. they were in a unique position to provide insight into their wives identity. There was also a measure of pride in the manner in which they spoke of their wives thirst for knowledge and their achievements. In the construction of their wives identity they often made reference to her strength and her strong-minded nature. On some level the manner in which they constructed their wives identity served to construct their own position as liberal-minded and supportive of their wives personal development.

4.4.1 Religious construction of identity

In attempting to articulate a sense of the identity of their wives, the husbands in the study provided descriptions that alluded to both an identity rooted in religion, but also provided descriptions of individual attributes that characterised who these women were. Overall, there appeared to be a general feeling among the husband's in the study that their wives primary identity was informed very strongly by religion:

MALE B: I think the first part of identity would be that she is a Muslim female.

MALE D: Being a Muslim comes first and foremost. In her life Islam comes first. When she goes out she portrays what a typical Muslim woman should be. When we go out, you go out with, how can I say, with the knowledge that you are a Muslim first.

MALE A: First and foremost, before she's anything else, she's a Muslim, she'll specify her Iman¹¹, and then after that everything else will come.

Male C: The things that she does are all set against the background of what her religion tells her.

At the core of the allusion to Islamic identity being the primary identity for their wives' the husbands pointed to Islam being a complete way of life. It permeated all aspects of their wives' lives. This continued emphasis appeared to be their way of cementing their wives' Muslim identity, of bringing to the fore that Islam was practised by their wives' and was not just an aspect of identity that was appropriated when required:

Male A: In terms of her past experience, her dress, in terms of her day to day activities, everything is structured around her, her Islam. She's very spiritual. So that would come through in her everyday activities, in whatever she does, she first

¹¹ Belief in one God and that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was his final messenger

reacts as a Muslim, and after that, whatever else. Because to be a Muslim, the concept of being Muslim is it's a comprehensive thing, it's not only a religion as such, it's a complete way of life. It's complete. Everything you do, you do as a Muslim. Whether it's living, eating, erm, going somewhere, speaking to somebody, you do it in terms of being Muslim, with the etiquette of being a Muslim, with the backbone of being a Muslim.

Male D: We will go on holiday, we will go swimming, we'll go hiking, and we'll do anything. But first in the context is being a Muslim. Whether she is in the pool or whatever, she'd come out and she'd perform her salaah first. And in her life that does come first, and that is one of the qualities I admire about her.

In constructing the identity of their wives' the husbands positioned their wives as holding an esteemed role in both family and society. To some extent it appeared that they were idealising their wives' charitable nature:

MALE D: In her family's home if people need to know something Islamicly they will ask her first, because she has reached that level amongst her family and amongst my family as well, that they will ask her first. And myself as well, if (there is) something I do not understand but I will ask her first. She takes lots of joy in teaching others, being a community person.

MALE B: She's also the first port of call, especially when it comes to women issues. You know, very confidential and delicate issues. I know from the medical profession point of view her hours of working have become a point of concern, and that is causing a lot of restriction in other activities that she's wanted to do, er, for example she'll probably want to spend more time with relief, with the Islamic medical association to which she belongs, to women's programmes, to Muslim AIDS programmes to which she belongs.

In addition to the articulation of a Muslim identity, there were also elements of individual personality attributes, in particular independence, strength and confidence that were alluded to in the personification of their wives:

Male B: I think she is quite dynamic in her own way and I always tell her that.

Male C: Independent. She has a mind of her own. She is able to articulate things the way she wants to.

Male D: She's a very strong woman. She always got a great sense of who she is. She is not very easily fazed by anything.

The development of these attributes was linked primarily to being employed and being educated. It was noted that the nature of the work that these women engaged in meant that they developed specific characteristics that at first glance may seem at odds with the general portrayal of a Muslim woman.

Male D: Her employment has really helped her, because she never used to speak much, when we were at school together, she never used to speak at all.

Male C: Well, they (education and employment) give her a strength and confidence, and ability, and the articulation that you talk about. It comes not only from being nurtured or from your upbringing but it comes through education, it comes through the type of work that you do.

Male A: From what I understand, I, I'd like to think that her employment has had a positive effect on her ... her beliefs ... on many things, er, on her outlook ... toward life ... given her a lot of confidence, er, she's developed a lot of skills and qualities, er to my understanding her work environment has really been good ... has a positive effect on her.

4.4.2 Gendered constructions of 'other' Muslim women

Even though all of the husbands who were interviewed viewed their wives as being strong, independent women who were able to reconcile their religious beliefs with their careers, their views of the roles of Muslim women in general was marginally different. While their construction of their wives appeared to be liberal and accommodating of their wives' choices, their construction of the role of Muslim women in general indicated remnants of the belief that women were more suited to being the caretaker of hearth and home.

Male A's construction of Muslim women in general was done in relation to 'Western' women. He was dismissive of the concept of equal rights for men and women and held the view that the rights afforded to women in Islam would ultimately lead to women being complete beings:

Muslim female should understand that being a Muslim female she's given a helluva lot of rights and respect and honour in Islam, unlike what is really portrayed in Western media and Western countries, erm, their concept of being a woman is, is totally out, in my opinion, I mean what they tout as being a woman, their concept of women's rights is far out from what's, er, what's right, it, it's totally flawed, it has no basis in Islam, in any normal civilised world, it's er, it's just not on. I

mean, I mean, the concept of covering is such a ... such a wonderful thing! I mean, it increases your femininity, it says a lot about you. I mean, you can't be a man. I mean, being a woman you dress differently, you conduct yourself differently, er, I mean, you don't have to be exploited, you can drive, you can go out, you can teach, er, like in Saudi for instance, you're allowed to teach, to drive, unlike what is portrayed, women are allowed to do what they want to. But there are certain ... regulations, certain laws, which if you hold on to, then you'll be protected, then you'll be happy, then you'll be ultimately successful, you'll be happy with your life. American and Western women are, most of them are unhappy and always searching for ways to improve themselves, searching for that, that thing that you're missing, that spark, that you see missing in their life, there's always something that's missing, something not right, something imbalanced, in their whole, their whole day to day life. So, Islam affords men their rights and women their rights. They both have their duties and responsibilities, they can't be the same because they're brought up differently, their attributes are different, physically, they do things differently, so they can't have the same set of rights, it's impossible. They take a man and they equate a woman to man, and they want the same rights as men.

For Male D his wife embodies what a Muslim female should be. His construction reveals a woman who is above reproach, who manages to be docile, dutiful, independent and confident all at the same time:

Muslim female ... exactly what she (his wife) is. Because a Muslim female, when I see her conduct herself at work it is as a Muslim female, she's polite, she's honest in her dealings, she's well mannered. She'll put other people's feelings and considerations before herself. But at the same time she holds her own female, that comes first. I guess female would come second and Muslim would definitely come first.

Male B's construction of a Muslim woman differs from his construction of his wife. His view reveals quite a conservative view of Muslim women in general which is a marked contrast of his more liberal view of his wife:

Scarf wari, ijaar wari¹². I think if you'd asked me about ten years ago I would have said, er, pregnant, I won't say barefoot, I'm not so bad, I would say pregnant, I would say housewife, I would say, er, er, pillar of the home from the educational point of view. But, I think, I think, now my stance is slightly different. I would definitely say educated. I don't mean being educated and employed, I mean educated and even being a housewife, but definitely educated. I think Muslim females in today's world need to be empowered from an educational point of

¹² This is a colloquial Gujarati (Indian language) term for a woman who is covered from head to foot

view. Again, not with degrees or anything, but from a basic Islamic point of view. Because for so long, we always use religion when it suits us, er, to say that women need to be at home to look after the children, but women have their rights as well. I would definitely see Muslim females as being educated, still being leaders or pillars of strength in their home. The first domain for education, that's where it starts. And then whatever goes with that, if they want to be employed it's up to them. I think Muslim females are actually in a situation at this stage where they have not really faced previously. I mean it's a very challenging phase where, for once they've been given a sort of, a voice, so to speak, which wasn't there about fifty years ago. Secondly, there are more Muslim females in positions of authority; I'm not talking about education only, than there ever was before. That's a distinct advantage to empower specifically Muslim females, er ... with, with criteria with which they can live the rest of their lives. At the same time and again there is a contradiction, I think it is very important for Muslim females to realise that the family system, okay, or being Muslim, a wife, mother is more important than being employed as it were, so much so that your future or your education or my education has not come from the fact that I am a pharmacist or a doctor or am I sports physician, or I might be a Hafez (Muslim scholar of the Qu'ran), it has come on the fact that the woman in my life, which is my mother, has shaped a lot of what we are, I am today.

Even though Male C resisted resorting to stereotypes in his construction of his wife and tried to get the point across that there was no contradiction in being a working Muslim woman his narrative revealed that he would approach a Muslim woman differently:

Male C: My approach towards her (another Muslim woman) would be different. I would certainly have a lot more, I will be careful in my approach. It's not a question of having more respect because respect gotta be equal across the board. I think it is more a question of being cautious. Well, knowing that from a religious background, you know, conversations between men and women, erm, are not considered appropriate, and so from that point of view, I would respect and knowing what my religion says, I would respect that.

It seems that there are two ways in which Muslim women are constructed. On the one hand they are able to pursue an education and be employed. On the other hand, it is thought that they would be most satisfied fulfilling a traditional role of being the nurturer of the family system. Male B's sentiment that Muslim women should be educated as to their rights in Islam appears to serve the purpose of ensuring that these women are aware that there is a broader role available to them. However, he counteracts this by noting that their choice should ultimately reflect a devotion to home and family.

There were some differences among the husbands in their construction of gendered roles in relation to their wives identity.

Male C did not perceive that his wife conformed to any stereotypes due to her gender:

It's never been a situation where there's been a dominant male or a brother and therefore there is a segregation of so-called roles. So that has never affected her, I would think.

Male A had quite specific views with regard to the differences between men and women and the implication of these differences for women in particular. He felt that this wife had managed to balance her ambition with her responsibilities as a Muslim woman, but ultimately he prioritised family life as the essence of womanhood and satisfaction with life:

If you look at it in terms of the Islamic way, the family life is the more important thing, and children. You're allowed to work, you're allowed to go out, to shop, to be educated, you can do all of that, but, that's all well and good, but family life is very important and, er, but every husband, and kids and honour and respect are just as important. Her satisfaction, her ingrained way and identity of a woman is to nurture and bring children up. You can't expect, okay, men can, but for a man to, to bring up a child, it's not, women have that natural way in bringing up kids, I mean, it's ingrained in them. That's the natural talent of a woman, that is, they've been created as such, and ... they can go out, but they do realise that it's a balance that is important. It's really important I think, the family life, the concept of a family life, you can work for one year, two years, fine, but ultimately you won't be a happy person, I think, I don't know, but I think it's important the husband and children.

For Male D his wife's gender did not inhibit her from participating in activities, rather it impacted on her behaviour in the presence of others:

She plays soccer with us, and everything. But if somebody else comes, she will sit down. Because that is not how a typical Muslim woman should be. And when my friends are around, okay, we've all grown up together, she will be to one side. We, we go shooting often, you know. And I do not feel out of place and she does not feel out of place, as long as the two of us are doing it together. If you look at her mother, she won't sit down and if we are all playing she will play with us. And I don't think that it is wrong ... Respect, yes, a woman, especially in my family and their family as well, they know their place. When we have people over, you know your place. But at the same time you can play with others. You know, when we go out, we have a ball of a time, we play soccer, badminton and everything and people look at us quite strangely because here you got a woman with a kaftan and a scarf on running around and kicking a ball. They look at us strangely, but in my eyes and in my family's eyes and her family's eyes there's nothing wrong with

that because the respect is there. When others come around close, they know that it's time to sit down, they won't be rudely dressed or making a noise or anything, so to us that's fine.

Male B highlighted the difficulties that women face in trying to move away from being mothers:

From the time of Adam and Eve, you, you're still looked upon as the inferior sex. You still have to prove yourself in every respect, no matter what. I mean forget the, this equal enterprise thing. At the end of the day, in any profession, in any work environment, through student life, you can tell for yourself. A woman has to somehow prove herself, right. So number one is that in society or the way tradition looks at it, you're always gonna be a mother. You are always going to be a wife, okay. And you are always going to be a working person, whichever order you want to put it in, that depends entirely on your traditions, your cultures and your religion and what is norm to you, okay. I think from an Islamic point of view, and the way Woman B sees things, she is first a Muslim woman, from a religious point of view, okay. As I said before then she becomes a mother and a wife. If you had to speak to a man he would always give you the answer that he is the provider first, okay, and then the husband in the marriage and then maybe, you know, the, the, the ... sorry, the breadwinner, the father and then the husband, okay

4.4.3 Intimacy and identity construction

In making sense of the role of marriage in the identity development of their wives' it appeared that the husbands had quite a moderate view of the role of marriage. As opposed to locating marriage as central to their wives' identity construction, they viewed it as one component of their wife's life:

Male C: Well, she remains independent, individual and still articulate and I do not think marriage has had an affect on that or has dampened those spirits that she's had. I would say is that I believe she has become more rooted in her faith.

MALE B: I think it's first of all given her a sense of responsibility. I think marriage has, has ... brought her closer, okay, to religion, first of all. Because now you seeing things from a common bond. You always are getting the other point of view. So I think marriage has made her very responsible and at the same time has helped her to focus more on things that matter in life. Number one religion, number two on the medical profession and number three on family values. That's where the balancing act comes in. It's a delicate balancing act between, living her life as a professional and dedicating your, er, yourself to being a devoted Muslim wife and a mother at the same time. When it come to family, yes I think at times she will make compromises. I also know that she looks upon me, okay, she,

she's very dynamic, she's very clued-up in what she wants to do. If she wants to do something, she makes her mind up, she will always get my support, my permission, so to speak, and my viewpoint, but that's just to make her feel better and know that she's doing the right thing. But if her mind is set to do something she will go out and achieve that. And I respect her for that, okay, obviously well within reason. And whatever she's wanted to do, I don't think I've, I've really stifled her in any way. When it comes to giving her space ... whatever she decides to do, okay, if it's not in conflict with family values or religion, I will never stand in her way, and she knows that, right. So from that point of view it is quite easy. She would not need my permission, but she will always need my blessing, if I could put it that way.

MALE A: She still has her own personality, she has her own belief system, has her own challenges, she still has her own ambition in life. But, er, she also has, er, taken marriage, er, in her life, as, as, as something that, erm, something that's er, that, that, would let me say something that completed her in a sense, that, er, ja, completed her as a person and as a Muslim, so that it was like a missing link in her. Before marriage, there was probably something missing, some missing piece of a puzzle, some piece of her Islam. I'd like to believe, to think that it has been put now into place.

MALE D: If both want to rule the nest it's not going to get anywhere. She has taught me a lot about Islam, about being a Muslim. What is important to be a Muslim, and that is one of the reasons I chose to marry her.

With regard to the development of a Muslim identity, there was some allusion to the role of family and of the community in the development of a religious identity. However, it was highlighted that a strengthening of their wives Muslim identity seemed to occur after marriage.

Male B: I think it has made a big impact in, in our lives. But I think ... more so after we got married. I think marriage has, has ... brought her closer, okay, to religion.

Male C: What I would say is that I believe she has become more rooted in her faith.

Male A: Before marriage, there was probably something missing, some missing piece of a puzzle, some piece of her Islam.

However, the development of a Muslim identity within marriage was not limited to the wives only. For some of the husbands, their wives commitment to Islam served to promote their own commitment to their religious identity.

Male B: I came from a very orthodox home, and religion was always important in my life. But there was a stage also where you go through adolescence and peer pressure and you tend to be more modernist, and I think when we got married, we were still in that phase and when we started growing together, it was sort of a rekindling of our values, but it was done together.

Male D: She has taught me to be a Muslim.

4.4.4 Resisting the effects of globalisation

During their narrative it became clear that as invested as the husbands' were in drawing attention to their wives' Muslim identity, they were just as invested in highlighting their wives' resistance to globalisation. Globalisation was not viewed as having any impact on the identity development of their wives'. The concept of globalisation was viewed as being representative of a commercialised American culture and therefore dismissed. It became clear during the course of the interviews that the value of any phenomenon or event that had the potential to impact on identity was diminished. This resistance not only served to reinforce the strength of their wives' Muslim identity, but also highlights some of the tensions around retaining an Islamic identity amid the myriad of choices that are presented to any individual on a daily basis.

This imperviousness to the processes of globalisation appears to be related to steadfastness to religious beliefs. Ultimately, it is thought that the religious conviction of these women allows them to retain their identity as Muslim women despite global events:

Male C: Her upbringing, religion.

Male A: She doesn't like shopping very much, I mean she likes her home, it's very seldom you'll find her interested in the concept of shopping, she might show interest in an American car or something. She has good Islamic beliefs and she's mature enough and educated enough to know what's right and what's wrong, she can differentiate that for herself, you know.

Male D: No matter how much the world gets smaller, she remains with the same values that she has always. And I always find it strange and I ask her how did you manage to be so quiet as school and come out in the top percentage in your class, matriculate and go to varsity and all these things and still have an identity as

a Muslim female and I always admire her on that. Because no matter what it is, like globalisation, no matter how small that world gets, she will still be the bigger person because she knows who she is. She will not be easily influenced by the outside world. Because like I said her religion definitely comes first to her. And if this world had to be as small as a tennis ball she will still be a hundred times bigger than that.

MALE B: She is very steadfast, she is very honest, and I'm not saying that because she's my wife but ... she's, she's far more honest than I am, I can tell you that much. She is very steadfast, very honest and she won't do things because it's what people would want or, or what the general trend would be to do. She'd do things because in her mind it fits or is deemed right and she feels that it is morally okay by her. So I do not think globalisation has actually made her, has actually shaped a lot of who she is today. So, if she has decided to have a viewpoint which is right, which might not be what other people want to hear, won't deter her.

4.4.5 Prioritising religion over culture

A fundamental feature of the identity development of their wives was identified as the influence of family in shaping self. Central to this feature of identity development were the influences of Islam and of Indian culture. It seemed that the husbands in the study prioritised an Islamic identity over tradition or culture. Islam was linked to progression whereas culture and tradition were equated to ritual and oppression.

In commenting on his wife's identity, Male C noted that his wife had a strong religious identity and this was due to her upbringing. That this religious identity is so rooted was related to her being raised in an Indian family:

Families have always been close. You always had a situation where you have had the elders in the family, not necessarily the parents oversee things, but your grandparents also. So there's been always that bond. And with that in mind you were always gonna have a deep rooted sense of where you are going, what you should be doing, what's right, what's wrong.

But he was of the view that religion and culture were not the same thing:

Well, culture is not necessarily the same as religion. Culture is something that you adopt because of the community that you are in. Not necessarily because of the religion which you are in.

Male D's narrative highlights some of the contradictions that may be inherent in trying to make sense of the influence of religion over the influence of culture. That his wife and the

women in her family will be included in what may be considered typically male activities such as soccer and going shooting is in his view a reflection of the progressive manner in which women are treated in their family circles. However, accompanying this articulation is his understanding that his wife “knows her place” and therefore while she is free to engage in mixed-gender activities she is well aware of the boundaries that need to be maintained in order to maintain her status as a Muslim woman:

She plays soccer with us, and everything. But if somebody else comes, she will sit down. Because that is not how a typical Muslim woman should be. If you look at her mother, she won't sit down and if we are all playing she will play with us. And I don't think that it is wrong ... Respect, yes, a woman, especially in my family and their family as well, they know their place. When we have people over, you know your place. But at the same time you can play with others. When others come around close, they know that it's time to sit down, they won't be rudely dressed or making a noise or anything, so to us that's fine. I mean, the way she grew up and the way we grew up, myself, is exactly the same. And the values her family and my family bestowed in her and myself is exactly the same. So, the traditional values like I say, okay that might not be there, but the values of Islam is still totally in this family and that is what I really respect about her. The meaning of it, they have their respect. Not the place where a typical Indian man would say, okay now you must just sit down. They know that okay now there's other men coming so respect, you know, they'll sit down or whatever or they'll start speaking amongst themselves or whatever. Islam is not rigid. People perceive it as rigid. And coming from the religious background that both of us come from, and my brother being a moulana and my father is very prominent in the community, especially when it comes to Islam, her father as well, and they support it (i.e. female extra-curricular activities). And they always instilled in us that you are a Muslim definitely first and foremost. When you leave the door in the morning you tell yourself I am a Muslim. When you conduct any business you are a Muslim, when you dress you are a Muslim. But at the same time they will tell you that it is not rigid. As long as you do it in confines of your teachings of Islam then you are a hundred percent correct.

In his narrative it appears that Male A equates the development of gender roles with culture:

If you're born as a man, you're expected to behave like a man and do things that men would normally do ... and ...er ... ja ... it's a cultural thing ... being with Woman A I admire her and her woman qualities and her attributes and ways.

Male B observed that religion was the primary marker of his wife's identity, but that he had initially been quite influenced by tradition. He noted that religion is often confused with tradition and culture, and that this confusion may be used to justify practices that are suppressive of women:

Sometimes we confuse tradition with religion, and sometimes a lot of tradition becomes religion. And that is not really fair. Because how are we to judge when we are actually confusing the two. So much so that I'll give you an example, that, I've just come back, we spent time in Afghanistan, and, er, I was there for three weeks and I did not see one woman without the hijab and there's no Taliban there, but I don't think that's all religion, I think that is tradition. Because a lot of them are not educated from an Islamic point of view, right. But yes, the tradition will say that the women actually stay in the background ... So, I think, in her (his wife) case religion impacts much more on her than tradition.

4.4.6 Impact of education and employment on Muslim women's identity

None of the husbands felt that their wives' employment was in contradiction to any religious beliefs. As noted by Male C:

As I say, I do not think there is a contradiction between your religious beliefs and being employed. There is nothing wrong in it, as far as I know. So I do not think that there is anything to reconcile.

However, Male A explained that for his wife working in an Islamic environment made it easier for her to be employed and to retain her Islamic identity. However, he reiterated that the strength of his wife's religious convictions would allow her to retain her beliefs in any environment:

But being strong in her beliefs and being a strong-minded person, as such, she'd probably need no help and she'd probably gain a lot of respect in any environment, er, she'd go out there with her abbaya¹³, her scarf, her beliefs and with her Islam and with her central idea of being a Muslim and she'd win people over, she wouldn't shed that to adapt to the environment and she wouldn't compromise her beliefs. I think she'd find it more difficult if she was working in some other environment. Although I mean a person could work in any environment and still hold fast to their beliefs, and, er, you could still enjoy your work, and nothing holds you back. Although it might be slightly more difficult, maybe slightly more challenging.

MALE A: Being employed? Okay, she was employed already at the time of our marriage, so, er, in terms of before marriage, even before employment and after employment, I wouldn't be able to say much because, I ... I ... didn't know her before employment ... I only know her after employment ... but er, from what I understand, I, I'd like to think that her employment has had a positive effect on her ... her beliefs ... on many things, er, on her outlook ... towards life ... given her a lot of confidence, er, she's developed a lot of skills and qualities, er, to my

¹³ Loose outer garment that is worn over clothing when out in public

understanding her work environment has really been good ... has a positive effect on her.

Male A also noted that while employment has shaped her personal beliefs, he did not think that being employed was really important for her. What her employment has done was enhance her knowledge of Islam:

She might have been, for instance, a housewife, or employed elsewhere, and she might have has similar values and a similar outlook towards life. But her work has given her a lot of experience, developed her skills a great deal, that's really excellent, and also, and also her confidence, it sort of refined her beliefs, because she's working in an Islamic environment, she's learned a lot about Islam, it's still connected to her beliefs and her outlook towards life.

Male C reflected that his wife's employment broadened her view of the world:

I think that (being employed) also contributes to who she is. It gives her a broader spectrum of life, other than at home. So from that perspective, of course, it's going to influence her. The type of work that she does, is different, it's not the, you know ... something that, er, carries with it a boredom tag, she is an attorney. They give her a strength of confidence, and ability, and the articulation that you talk about. It comes not only from being nurtured or from your upbringing but it comes through education, it comes through the type of work that you do.

Similarly Male D observed that employment impacted on his wife's confidence:

Her employment has really helped her, because she never used to speak much, when we were at school together, she never used to speak at all.

For Male B his wife's employment provided a means for her to practice in the context of Islam. In addition, being a medical professional was not about creating a superfluous amount of wealth. Rather:

I think she enjoys what she does and she runs a very effective, efficient, decent family practice, er, specialising more in women's issues and, and I think in children's health, that's where she would like to see herself. It gives her a sense of responsibility, number one. It gives her a sense of being able to provide for people. She would never be able to sit at home and do nothing. She would get very bored, right.

With regard to whether there is any contradiction in terms of maintaining and Islamic identity and being employed Male B observes:

MALE B: I think there is a certain amount of internal contradiction, yes, whether you want to admit that, whether you want to face them, whether you like it or

want to realise they are there, that's a different totally separate issue. But, it is how you deal with it and how you approach it, that's, that's where the challenge lies.

For Male C the only contradiction that may arise from being Muslim and being employed would be managing the perceptions that exist in the external environment with regard to Muslim women:

I don't think so, save for perhaps one aspect and that is that she wears a scarf on her head and it was something that she chose to do. And that might possibly have given her some difficulty from a work sense. You do not ordinarily get attorneys and, erm, walking around with scarves, you know, you picture them conceptually, always this male dominated industry, or if it's female, they're always wearing the so-called suits. So I suppose from that point of view she may have had difficulty in reconciling. But I think she has come to terms with that.

Education was viewed as adding to their wives' skills and confidence. However, the general view was that it had not impacted on their wives' identity significantly.

MALE A: Being educated. I don't think it has that much to do with her as a person, erm, Woman A, if Woman A had not been educated she'd probably still be the same person, er, as I mentioned before this, it's given her insight into many matters. It's given her understanding to deal with things with maturity, she's always been mature, but it's given her maturity in another degree, in another way, her confidence, but she'd still be the same person. Education is not an important factor in a person's personality.

MALE D: People do not understand it that you can study Western, er, subjects, right, but she has coupled that with Islamic studies as well. Lots of people will say hey, how can you be Muslim and go to study. She's done it and she hasn't lost her identity and she hasn't lost her religion, in fact it's made her stronger. And I don't think it will begin to influence anything.

MALE B: I think education has given her sound footing, okay, but I don't think it has shaped where she is today, it has armed her, with, to be a doctor, but I think if you look at, okay, maybe education in inverted commas now, from the Islamic values that has taken over her life, of religion and family values, that a lot of who she is today plays a bigger role than just a secular or traditional medical education, or school education that we have.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides an analysis of the discourse of Muslim women and men on the subject of Muslim female identity. The analysis provides an understanding of how the participants' narratives both reproduce and contest dominant notions of women and Islam. For both the women and men who participated in this study, at the core of the identity of a Muslim woman is her adherence to the Islamic faith. Being Muslim supersedes all other affiliations, interactions and circumstances.

The identity constructions of the Muslim women in the study both challenges and reproduces some of the dominant notions of the oppression of Muslim women. These women present themselves as Muslim women, who are independent, invested in their careers, yet, steadfast in their practice of *hijab*. What has been highlighted in their articulations of identity is that there is no single identity that may be ascribed to them. Rather, the process of being who they are involves a constant negotiation between their religious, cultural and gendered identities. Thus, there is no single identity that prevails over time, rather, that there appears to be a construction of a hybrid identity.

The construction of the identity of their wives by the male participants in the study also revealed that there is no single identity that may be ascribed to their wives. In making sense of who their wives were, the male participants created an impression of a strong Muslim woman, who is able to maintain her religious identity despite being educated, employed and living in the era of globalisation. In positioning their wives in this manner, they also positioned themselves as liberal and in doing so distanced themselves from culture, which was positioned as the proponent of the oppression of Muslim women.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter is the final chapter of the research report. In order to understand the impact of the interviewer on the outcomes of the study, a reflexivity component has been included in this chapter. A summary of the findings to the research questions are also presented here. In addition, this chapter outlines the limitations of the study and possibilities for future research.

5.2 Self-reflexivity

The practice of qualitative research is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive, an interactive process shaped by the researcher's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity and those of the people in the setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Said (1981) noted that truth about such matters as 'Islam' is relative to who produces it and therefore the writing of text about human reality brings into play many more factors that can be accounted for by labels like objective.

As a Muslim woman conducting the interviews the interviewer had a personal investment in moving away from the stereotypical portrayal of Islam and Muslims. As the study progressed it became increasingly important to try and understand the self and other constructions of the Muslim couples without being clouded by the vast array of information that puts forward essentialist notions of the relationship that exists between the Muslim husband and his wife. Thus it may be that certain aspects of the power relations that exist within the couple may have been overlooked.

Due to the fact that interviewer was a Muslim female there may have been an assumption made on the part of the participants that the interviewer would understand and buy into their worldview. Thus there was no need to provide further explanation of some of their thoughts and views.

Having just completed a psychology internship, the interviews may have assumed a therapeutic feel. Some of the interviewer's comments and questions were interpretative

and leading and had the effect of closing down certain points in the conversation. As a result certain key points were foreclosed due to the researcher's interpretative comments.

The data that was obtained for this research report may be viewed as a co-construction of reality. There are a number of factors that will have influenced the impact of the interviewer on the participants and on the data that was obtained, including gender, culture and religious background.

5.3 Summary of findings

The aim of this study was to investigate how married, educated and working Muslim women constructed their identity and how their husbands' constructed their wife's identity. The socially constructed nature of identity is highlighted the narratives of the participants. The identity constructions of the Muslim women and men in the study both challenges and reproduces some of the dominant notions of the oppression of Muslim women. What has been highlighted in their articulations of is that identity is not natural and stable but constructed. The process of being who they are involves a constant negotiation between their religious, cultural and gendered identities. Not only did their constructions of Muslim women's identity reveal that there is no single identity that prevails over time, rather, that there appears to be a creative construction of a hybrid identity.

In articulating who they were the women who participated in this study identified with multiple subject positions. They described themselves in terms of their social roles as mothers or wives or daughters. These Muslim women also described themselves as strong and steadfast.

The one common identity position that all of the women assumed was that of being a Muslim woman. Their religious identity was proclaimed as taking precedence over any other identification that may have been presented. All of the women who participated in the study covered her hair, or practised *hijab*. None of the women saw their practise of *hijab* as in any way signalling their oppression or limiting their access to secular spaces and activities. It seems that their modest dress served as a marker of assumed propriety and respect, thus enabling them to access secular spaces. They appeared to take pride in the fact that they were able to retain their identity as Muslim women in secular spaces.

For the women in this study it seems that Islam has been appropriated as a mechanism that allows them access to broader spaces, that is, it allows them access to the outside world. By proclaiming their religious identity first they have managed to subvert any

objections that may be raised to them accessing secular opportunities such as education and employment.

The subject positions that these Muslim women assumed challenged broader societal notions of Muslim women as silent or oppressed. In doing so, they have also challenged broader societal notions of Muslim men as the oppressor. In their descriptions of how they have come to be who they are they highlighted the facilitative roles of both their father and their husband. Thus, in constructing themselves as having the freedom to make choices with regard to their education and their employment, they also position Muslim men as enabling this freedom, and as being different from the 'traditional man'. In contrast, they have positioned their mothers as 'traditional' and themselves as representative of the 'modern Muslim woman'.

By alluding to societal discourses of gendered roles, the perceived limitations of *hijab* and the lack of restriction placed on their professional selves by Islam, these women have highlighted the merge between the individual and the societal context. Of note, is that the subject positions they have articulated is constructed as being enabled by Islam and not restricted by it. Their identity formation has not been, and is not, without tension between their self-representation and over externally ascribed identities, and this means that they are continuously renegotiating their social position and their cultural identity. In order to challenge the subordinated role of women as keepers of the domestic sphere, these women have linked subordination to cultural practices. As a means of distancing themselves from these cultural expectations of women, they have appropriated a strong Islamic identity. By assuming this Islamic identity they have also highlighted their resistance to the impact of globalisation, further strengthening their position that they are able to access public spaces without compromising their values and belief systems.

The male participants in the study all articulated their wives primary identity as being Muslim. Linked to this articulation was an observation that as Muslim women their wives were spiritual and committed to their faith. This commitment was reflected in their dress, but also in their knowledge of the religion and their willingness to engage in community work. Of note is that most of the male participants felt that marriage had brought their wives closer to religion.

The Muslim women in this study were also described as being strong and independent women. This strength and independence appeared to be linked to their employment. This strength and independence also impacted on their wives ability to resist the effects of

globalisation. This meant that despite the changing world, these Muslim women had managed to retain their Islamic identity.

In articulating the above constructions of their wives identity the male participants in this study constructed themselves as liberal and as “knowing” who their wives were. While none of them perceived there to be any difficulty with a Muslim woman working there were nuances of gendered constructions of Muslim female identity in general. This emerged in different ways in their talk. For some of the men, it seemed that their views of Muslim women in general were more conservative and reflective of a traditional discourse, where women are viewed as the keepers of the home and the noble mothers of Muslim children. However, these notions were not essentialist, and there were points of contradiction in their talk, where they noted that women were bound by traditions that had no basis in the religion of Islam. There appeared to be some distancing from cultural notions of Muslim women which was viewed as being oppressive. They provided a subject position for their wives that drew on a repertoire of freedom from oppression, and the oppression of Muslim women was viewed as an occurrence in ‘traditional’ spaces, which they were careful to note, was not their space.

For some men in the study it seemed that Muslim womanhood was thought to be superior to non-Islamic womanhood, and some of the constructions of the Muslim women in the study personified them as ideal women. By doing so they subverted any self or external objections that may be raised with regard to their wives accessing secular spaces. This highlights an ideological shift, where Muslim women do not have to fulfil a domestic role to be considered good Muslim women.

5.4 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study is that in utilising a qualitative methodology, the data is filtered through the lens of the participants and the student. At the core of a constructionist methodology is the acknowledgement that the participants’ reflection on Muslim female identity is a reflection of their socio-cultural and personal experiences. In addition, the fact that I share the same religious and cultural background as the respondents, while acting as a means of building rapport and understanding cultural references, also means that I am limited in my reflection on the data as someone from the “in-group”. It is therefore difficult to function as the objective observer, and it must be acknowledged that a different student with a different analytical lens would have viewed the data differently.

Another limitation of the study is the possibility of obtaining socially desirable responses from the participants. Considering that the interviewer shared a religious and cultural background with the participants, there may have been a possibility that participants would have wanted to present a worldview that is liberal and supportive of Muslim women who are interested in education and employment.

Another limitation of the study was that each member of the couple was interviewed individually. This meant that there was no point of challenge or contestation in terms of individual constructions of Muslim female identity.

5.5 Possibilities for future research

This study investigated the construction of Muslim female identity from the perspective of both Muslim females and Muslim males. One aspect of identity construction that was not investigated was language. All of the participants in this study were of Indian origin, and it may be useful to understand how language constructs identity in Muslim communities. For many Muslims of Indian origin their mother-tongue is usually an Indian language, and as illustrated in this study, with a valuing of religion over culture, it may be useful to understand how culture and religion intersect in identity development. Research into the perception of gender roles and gender role identity among Muslim men and women will also allow insight into changes in traditional perceptions of gender. A study that examines differences in perception of the veil among Muslim women who are veiled and those who are not may provide some insight into how Muslim women construct meaning with regard to veiling. Future research in the area of Muslim identity may also investigate identity construction among adolescent Muslim girls and boys in order to understand how young Muslims are making sense of their identity.

5.6 Conclusion

There are many assumptions that exist regarding the beliefs and practices of Muslim women. This study is an attempt at contributing to the body of knowledge that tries to illustrate how Muslim women construct their identity within particular socio-cultural, economic and individual circumstances. In addition to understanding how Muslim women and Muslim men construct Muslim women's identity it also highlighted how these Muslim women negotiate their religious identity in a country that is not an Islamic state and in a world where Muslim women are often perceived as voiceless.

The participants in this study both contested and reproduced some of the dominant discourses around Islam and Muslim women. In addition, they also challenged some of the dominant discourses surrounding Muslim men as the oppressors.

For all of the women in this study religion was used as a mechanism to empower them to access secular spaces while retaining their Islamic identity. One aspect of this empowerment was their practice of veiling. The *hijab* functioned to legitimise their choices with regard to education and employment. In effect, they have defined themselves as Muslim with their *hijab*, but in doing so they have challenged cultural and societal expectations of Muslim women by being educated and employed.

The constructions of Muslim women by the male participants in the study served to distance themselves from the 'traditional male' repertoire. The oppression of Muslim women was ascribed to culture and tradition, and was clearly articulated as having no basis in Islam. However, while these men provided an image of their wives as being strong individuals, and whose careers they encouraged and supported their construction of Muslim women highlighted some of the gender stereotypes that they continue to retain. There appeared to be some tension between being 'modern Muslim' men and between holding on to notions that the Muslim mother played a pivotal role in maintaining an Islamic home environment.

Reference List

- Abbas, T. (2001). Media capital and the representation of South Asian Muslims in the British press: An ideological analysis. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 245–257.
- Adams, G. & Markus, H.R. (2001). Culture as patterns: An alternative approach to the problem of reification. *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 283-296
- Afkhami, M. (1995). *Faith and freedom: women's human rights in the Muslim world*. New York: Syracuse.
- Ali, S. (2005). Why here, why now? Young Muslim women wearing hijab. *The Muslim World*. Vol. 95, pp. 516-530.
- Beall, A. E., & Sternberg, R. J. (1993). *The psychology of gender*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Best, D. L. (2001). Gender concepts: Convergence in cross cultural research and methodologies. *Cross Cultural Research*. Vol. 35, Issue 1, pp. 23–44.
- Breakwell, G. M. (1995). Interviewing. In Breakwell, G.M., Hammond, S., and Fife-Shaw, C., (Eds.) *Research Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Brown, K. (2006). Realising Muslim women's rights: The role of Islamic identity among British Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 29, pp. 417-430.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Croucher, S. (1998). South Africa's illegal aliens: Constructing national boundaries in a post-apartheid State. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 21, Issue 4, pp. 639–660.
- Denzin, K.N., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Droeber, J. (2003). "Woman to woman" – The significance of religiosity for young women in Jordan. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 26, No. 5, pp. 409-424.
- Durakbasa, A. (2001). Formation of gender identities in republican Turkey and women's narratives as transmitters of 'herstory' of modernisation. *Journal of Social History*. Vol. 35, Issue 1, pp. 195–204.
- Durrheim, K. (1999). Research design. In *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. Rondebosch: University of Cape Town.
- Dwyer, C. (2000). Negotiating diasporic identities: Young British South Asian Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 475–486
- Eaton, L. (2002). South African national identity: A research agenda for social psychologists. *South African Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 32, Issue 1, pp. 45–53.
- Echabe, A. E. & Castro, J. L. (1999). The impact of context on gender social identities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. Vol. 29, pp. 287–304.

- Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In, Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., Yates, S. J. (Eds.). *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- El-Solh, C. F. & Mabro, J. (1995). *Muslim women's choices: religious belief and social reality*. Providence: Berg.
- Evans, S. L., & Bowlby, S. (2000). Crossing boundaries: Racialised gendering and the labour market experiences of Pakistani migrant women in Britain. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 23, Issue 4, pp. 461–474.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Franks, F. (2000). Crossing the borders of whiteness? White women who wear the *hijab* in Britain today. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 23, Number 5, pp. 917–929.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *The research interview*. London: Continuum.
- Gilroy, P. (1997). Diaspora and the detours of identity. In Woodward, K. (Ed), *Identity and difference*. London: Sage.
- Gordon, L. R. (1995). *Fanon and the crisis of European man: An essay on philosophy and the human sciences*. New York: Routledge.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, S.L. (1998) Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, K.N., & Lincoln, Y.S., *The landscape of qualitative research: theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Hall, S. & du Gay, P. (1996). *Questions of cultural identity*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hallak, M. & Quina, K. (2004). In the shadows of the twin towers: Muslim immigrant women's voices emerge. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 51, Nos. 5/6, pp. 329-338.
- Hamdani, D.H. (1999). Canadian Muslims on the eve of the twenty-first century. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol. 19, Issue 2, pp. 197–210.
- Hansen, T.B. (2002). *Diasporic dispositions: 'Coolies' and 'Asiatics' no more*. www.himalmag.com.
- Harré, R (1998). *The singular self: An introduction to the psychology of personhood*. London: Sage.
- Harrington, C. (2002). Agency and social identity: Resistance among Pakeha New Zealand mothers. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 109–126.
- Hassan, R. (2000). Challenging the stereotypes of fundamentalism: An Islamic perspective. *Muslim World*, Special Edition, Spring 2000.
- Hermans, H.J.M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 7(3): 243-281
- Hewitt, J. P. (1997). *Self and society: A symbolic interactionist social psychology*. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

- Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and method in psychology*. London: Sage.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social identity*. London: Routledge
- Jhazbay, I. (2000). An emerging Muslim identity in the global village: the South African presentation at the international conference on Azmat Al-Hawiyya. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.20, Issue 2.
- Kelly, K. (1999). Hermeneutics in action: empathy and interpretation in qualitative research. In *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. Rondebosch: University of Cape Town.
- King, A.D. (Ed), (1991). *Culture, globalization and the world system*. Hampshire: Macmillan.
- Kramarae, C. (1990). Changing the complexion of gender in language research. In, Giles, H. & Robinson, W.P. (Eds.). *Handbook of language and social psychology*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Kuran, T. (1997). The genesis of Islamic economics: A chapter in the politics of Muslim identity. *Social Research*, Vol. 64, No. 2.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Marsella, A. J., Devos, J., & Hsu, F. L. K. (1985). *Culture and self: Asian and western perspectives*. New York: Tavistock Publications.
- Miles, R. (1989). *Racism*. London: Routledge.
- Momin, A. R. (2001). Pluralism and multiculturalism: An Islamic perspective. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science*. Vol. 18.2.
- Neuman, W.L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (1998). *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. London: Sage.
- Pattynama, P. (2000). Assimilation and masquerade: Self constructions of Indo – Dutch women. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*. Vol. 7, pp. 281–299.
- Peterson, V. S. (1996). The politics of identification in the context of globalization. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 19, Nos. 1/2, pp. 5-15
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Predelli, L. N. (2004). Interpreting gender in Islam: A case study of immigrant Muslim women in Oslo, Norway. *Gender & Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 473 – 493.
- Holten, R. (1998). *Globalization and the nation state*. McMillan Press: London
- Read, J.G. & Bartowski, J.P. (2000). To veil or not to veil? A case study of identity negotiation among Muslim women in Austin, Texas. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 395–417

- Rozario, S. (1998). On being Australian and Muslim: Muslim women as defenders of Islamic heritage. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 21, Issue 6, pp. 649–661.
- Ruby, T.B. (2006). Listening to the voice of hijab. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 29, pp. 417-430.
- Said, E.W. (1975/1995). *Orientalism: western conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin.
- Said, E.W. (1981). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Said, E.W. (1994). Afterword to the 1994 Printing. In, Said, E.W. *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin.
- Salih, R. (2000). Shifting boundaries of self and other: Moroccan migrant women in Italy. *The European Journal of Women's studies*, Vol. 7, pp. 321-335.
- Sarantakos, S., (1998). *Social research*. Hampshire: Macmillan Press Limited
- Schwedler, J. (2001). Islamic identity: Myth, menace, or mobiliser? *SAIS Review*, Vol. XXI, no. 2.
- Seale, C. (1998). Qualitative interviewing. In Seale C. (Ed.), *Researching society and culture*. London: Sage.
- Sechzer, J.A. (2004). "Islam and woman: Where tradition meets modernity": history and interpretations of Islamic women's status. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 51, Nos. 5/6, pp. 263 – 272.
- Seedat, M. (1998). A characterisation of South African psychology (1948 – 1988): The impact of exclusionary ideology. *South African Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 28, Issue 2, pp. 74–84.
- Silverman, D. (1998). Research and social theory. In Seale C. (Ed.), *Researching society and culture*. London: Sage.
- Singelis, T. M. (2000). Some thoughts on the future of cross-cultural social psychology. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 76–91.
- Smith, J. I. & Haddad, Y.Y. (1982). Eve: Islamic image of women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 135–144
- Stevens, R, (1996). *Understanding the self*. London: Sage.
- Stewart, A. J., Lykes, M.B. (1985). *Gender and personality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Taylor, S. (2001). Locating and conducting discourse analytic research. In, Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., Yates, S. J. (Eds.). *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. (1999). Social cConstructionist methods. In *Research in practice: Applied mMethods for the social sciences*. Rondebosch: University of Cape Town.

- Thapan, M. (2001). Adolescence, embodiment and gender identity in contemporary India: Elite women in a changing society. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 24, No. 3 / 4, pp. 359 – 371.
- Thompson, J.B (1990). *Ideology and modern culture*. Polity Press.
- Thompson, J.B. (1984). *Studies in the theory of ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tohidi, N. (1996). Soviet in public, Azeri in private: Gender, Islam, and nationality in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 19, Nos. 1/2, pp. 111–123.
- Vahed, G. (2000). Changing Islamic traditions and emerging identities in South Africa. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, pp. 43–74.
- Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. (1992). Mapping the language of racism. Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Yow, V. R. (1994). *Recording oral history: A practical guide for social scientists*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1. If you were asked the question 'who am I' what would your response be?
2. When you think of yourself as (response to 1) what are the images that come to mind, in other words, describe your experience of being (response to 1)?
3. How would you describe the impact that religion has had on shaping who you are?
4. In what ways has being employed shaped who you are?
5. How has marriage shaped your current sense of self?
6. How has acquiring an education shaped who you are?
7. What does being South African mean for you?
8. How has globalisation impacted on shaping who you are?
9. How has being a woman shaped who you are?
10. When I say 'Muslim female', what does this mean for you?
11. How do these various dimensions of your identity support and/or conflict with each other and how do you reconcile them?

Appendix B: Informed consent form

Participation in the Masters Research Project conducted by Farzana Sader, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand

Title of project: THE IDENTITY OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA: MARRIED COUPLES' PERSPECTIVES

1. The purpose of the project

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on Muslim women's identity. The purpose of the study is to understand how Muslim women, who are married, educated and working, construct their identity. In addition, the study will obtain constructions of Muslim women's identity from the perspective of the husbands of the women participating in the study. Approximately four couples will participate in this study.

2. Procedures

As agreed in our telephonic conversation, I will commence with an individual interview with the female participant. Thereafter I will conduct an interview with the husband. The duration of each interview will be an hour long. The interviews will be audio-taped and then transcribed. You may stop the interview at any point should you feel uncomfortable with the process.

3. Risks in participating

There are no personal risks inherent in the study. However, should you find the disclosure of personal information disturbing, or should you feel concerned regarding anything that your partner may have disclosed, you will be able to stop the interview at any point. Should you participate in the entire interview and thereafter feel uncomfortable a counseling session with a registered psychologist will be made available to you.

4. Benefits of participation

There are no clear benefits to participation in this study. Participation may help you examine your (or your wife's) identity and how your (her) life experiences have shaped who you are. By participating in this study you will contribute to the understanding of the construction of the identity of Muslim women. You may obtain a copy of the research report directly from Farzana Sader, whose contact details have been made available to you.

5. Anonymity and confidentiality

The recorded interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet. The transcripts of the recorded interviews will also be stored in a locked cabinet. Access to all audio recordings and transcripts of these recordings will be limited to Farzana Sader. There will be no identifying markers on the audio-tapes; each audio-tape and transcript will be de-identified and a code-name will be assigned to each one. The audio-tapes will be transcribed by Farzana Sader and a second transcriber. The second

transcriber will not have access to any information on the participants in the study and thus will not be able to identify any of the participants. The initial introductory conversation will be deleted off the audio-tapes to further ensure your anonymity.

6. Compensation

There will be no compensation (material or monetary) for your participation in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

7. Freedom to withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. You may also choose not to answer a question that is posed to you at any point during the discussion. You are also free to disagree with the interviewer at any point during the discussion.

8. Participants consent

I, _____, hereby agree to participate in the Master's research of Farzana Sader, titled, *The identity of Muslim women in South Africa: Married couple's perspectives*, as partial fulfillment of her requirements for a Master's degree in Community-based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I understand that the aim of this research is to ascertain how married, educated and working Muslim females construct their identity and how their husband's construct their wife's identity. My participation in this study will comprise one hour-long interview.

I understand that I can refuse to participate at any point in the research. I also have the option of not answering any of the questions that are posed to me. I am aware that my identity will be kept confidential and that my name will be changed for the purposes of written reports or presentations of the data. I agree to the interviews being audio-taped and transcribed. I agree that direct quotes may be used for the purpose of the thesis or written publications as long as my identity is kept confidential.

Participant's signature _____

Student's signature _____

Date _____